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# *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*

By

Moshe Idel



Published by Continuum  
The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX  
80 Maiden Lane, Suite 704, New York, NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

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First published 2007

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Idel, Moshe, 1947–

Ben : sonship and Jewish mysticism / By Moshe Idel.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-8264-9665-2 – ISBN 978-0-8264-9666-9 1. Mysticism–Judaism.

2. Cabala–History. 3. Son of God (Judaism) I. Title.

BM526.I2963 2007

296.3'1–dc22

2007025855

Typeset by Data Standards, Frome, Somerset, UK

Printed and bound in the USA

ISBN-10: 0-8264-9665-2 (hardback)

0-8264-9666-0 (paperback)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8264-9665-2 (hardback)

978-0-8264-9666-9 (paperback)

To Yehuda  
Who opened new vistas

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## Preface

The following pages are a first attempt to address the different categories of sonship in Jewish mystical literatures as a whole. My interest in the topic started when preparing a section of my doctoral thesis on Abraham Abulafia, in 1976, and since then I have collected pertinent material, which becomes here a full-fledged monograph. Many aspects of sonship have already been succinctly analyzed, and sometimes only touched on in a series of studies on Judaism, more conspicuously in Alon Goshen-Gottstein's monograph on *God and Israel* concerning early rabbinic literature, in Jon Levenson's study of sonship and sacrifice in ancient Judaism and early Christianity, in Yair Lorberbaum's *Image of God*, in Avraham Elqayam's analyses of Nathan of Gaza, in several of Yehuda Liebes's studies and in my own on Jewish mysticism. Nevertheless, when engaging the topic as recurring in Jewish mystical literatures as a whole it turned out to be much vaster than I originally imagined, and an initial modest effort turned into a much broader project.

Some of the necessary research and most of the writing were carried out over a number of years, but in a more intense manner during a leave of absence from the Hebrew University, when I served as Amado Professor of Sefardi Studies at the department of History at UCLA, and at the Shalom Hartman Institute of Advanced Studies in Judaica in 2004. The Charles Young Research Library at UCLA has been extremely helpful. My warmest thanks go to these institutions.

I have benefited from the conversations and remarks of several scholars and friends. First and foremost Yehuda Liebes, as well as Adam Afterman, Harold Bloom, Brian Copenhaver, Jonathan Garb, Moshe Halbertal, Mark Hirshman, Israel Knohl, Yair Lorberbaum, David Myers, Shlomo Naeh, Ishai Rosen-Zvi, Adiel Shremer, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Philip Wexler. Their help has only diminished any errors in the work, and those that eventually remain are my own.

This book is an attempt to examine the different subcategories of the wide category of sonship as found in Jewish mysticism. The aim of this book is to offer neither a theology, systematic or not, nor a proposal to find a new comprehensive clue to understanding Jewish mysticism, even less for a new understanding of Judaism as a whole. Its scope is much more limited and modest: to point out the many instances where Jewish thinkers, especially the mystics among them, resorted to concepts of sonship and their

conceptual backgrounds, and thus to show that they were not reticent in dealing with a variety of understandings of the hypostatic son. I hope that by this survey and the various distinctions it suggests, not only the mystical forms of sonship in Judaism may be better understood, but the concept of sonship in religion in general will be enriched in some way too.

In many of the following chapters, discussions which have more methodological dimensions are found in my analyses, especially reflections on problems relating to the transmission of religious themes and literatures from late antiquity to the Middle Ages. They are part of what I call a panoramic approach which strives to take into consideration as many possible sources as possible in order to better understand the emergence or the surfacing of themes that belong to the constellation of ideas that describe sonship.

Finally, I will note that most of the present work was written during 2004. Since then I have shifted my interests in other directions, but I have updated the content herein as much as possible.

Moshe Idel,  
 'Erev Rosh ha-Shanah 5768  
 Jerusalem, 2007

## Abbreviations

1QH	<i>Hymns</i>	Jud.	Judges
4Q369	Prayer of Enosh	JBL	<i>Journal for Biblical Literature</i>
1 Chron.	1 Chronicles	Jer.	Jeremiah
2 Chron.	2 Chronicles	JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians	Jn	John
1 En.	1 Enoch	Jos. Asen.	<i>Joseph and Asenath</i>
2 En.	2 Enoch	JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
3 En.	3 Enoch	JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
1 Kgs	1 Kings	JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
2 Kgs	2 Kings	JTS	<i>Journal for Theological Studies</i>
Lev.	Leviticus	JSJT	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought</i>
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Lk.	Luke
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Malac.	Malachi
1 Tim.	1 Timothy	Mt.	Matthew
Acts	Acts	Mk	Mark
AHDMLA	<i>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du Moyen Age</i>	Neh.	Nehemiah
AJS review	<i>Association of Jewish Studies Review</i>	Num.	Numbers
Apoc. Elijah	<i>Apocalypse of Elijah</i>	PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
BT	Babylonian Talmud	Phil.	Philippians
Col.	Colossians	PT	Palestinian Talmud
Dan.	Daniel	Prov.	Proverbs
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Ps./s	Psalm/Psalms
Est.	Esther	Rev.	Revelation
Exod.	Exodus	Rom.	Romans
Ezek.	Ezekiel	Theod.	<i>Theodotus</i>
Ezra	Ezra	QS	<i>Qiryat Sefer</i>
Gal.	Galatians	REJ	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
Gos. Thom.	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
Hab.	<i>Habakkuk</i>	Wis.	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>
Hos.	Hosea	Zech.	Zechariah
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>		
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>		
JAOS	<i>Journal of American Oriental Society</i>		
Isa.	Isaiah		
Josh.	Joshua		
Jub.	<i>Book of Jubilees</i>		

## Introduction

### *1. Open channels: On theophanic and apotheotic vectors in Judaism*

The continuous existence of an open circuit between the divine and the human worlds is part and parcel of most religious worldviews. With movement between these worlds achieved either by humans ascending to the divine realm or by divine intervention in the earthly world below, the belief in such open channels is vital in sustaining an intense religious life. Images of objects – buildings, ladders, columns, and pillars, clouds or cosmic trees and, most often, altars, mountains and temples – as symbols for places of communication with the divine permeate the mythology of many religions, expressing the belief and animating the practices according to which the channels between the worlds are held open.<sup>1</sup> In instances where more intellectualistic types of religion are concerned, the exchange between the worlds is more a matter of two poles understood as intellects, exchanging acts of cognition. Very rarely would religions operate with assumptions of the existence of acoustic walls separating the supreme entities from the lower ones, in an absolute manner.

The need to keep the cosmic channels open is sometimes grafted onto another, more primal emotional urge: that of organic reproduction, or procreation. I refer not only to the human propensity but to the divine one as well, namely, the imagined desire of religious persons that the divine realm itself should strive to reproduce and, by so doing, establish a sort of relationship via a son or other sort of offspring with the lower creatures, by a kind of theophany. At times, reproduction is effected through the imprint of the image of the divine on some part of creation. One of the most obvious examples of this form of reproduction is found in the first chapter of Genesis, which describes the creation of man in the image and likeness of God. This move is part of what can be called the theophanic vector. Theophany may have a visual manifestation, or contain some form of verbal proclamation or, as happens more often, consist in a combination of the two.

The hypostatic Son of God can be conceived of as representing two of these modes of revelation and mediation: a manifestation and a proclamation of the Father's will or being. In principle, a son of the divine may fulfill a variety of functions: sometimes he may play the role of creator of the world, a cosmokrator or a pantokrator; he may be a revealer of divine truth, or a messenger of the divine; or a door to the father, like the Philonic and

sometimes Gnostic concept of *horos*; or even a path to the divine, in whose image this son has been created, as in Christianity; he may constitute the seal or stamp of the divine; and last but not least, a redeemer sent by the divine father. In order to fulfill one or some of these functions, my assumption is that some similarities between the Father and the Son are assumed on the one hand, and between the Son of God and the recipients of the message or revelation on the other hand, a principle I shall describe as 'double sonship' since in some cases the recipient is also conceived of to be a son of the Son. Those similarities, that define the connections between the three factors, will preoccupy us in an attempt to describe the concept of sonship. In a way this assumption can be described by the dictum 'as the father as the son'. Thus, I assume that sonship in religion is not only a matter of mediation, and keeping the circuit between the worlds open, but also of imagining the ideal of human life, creating a paradigm to inspire a certain type of life.

Let me emphasize from the beginning that this theory of a double sonship should not be seen in terms of a static hierarchy, which only subordinates the lower to the higher, but also as an invitation to the lower to ascend to the higher. In the main forms of double sonship to be discussed below, it is not only the resemblance of the lower to the higher that is emphasized, but also the possibility of sharing some essence either because of a primordial affinity, or because of the development of the lower entity, which strives to assimilate to the higher. Thus to become a son is not only to be subordinated to the higher but to become close to it or, ideally, to unite with it, thus transcending one form of sonship for another, higher one. Or, to formulate it in a simpler manner, the human son aspires to assimilate himself as much as possible with the higher son, and thus become a Son of God himself.

To be sure, the specific nature of the open circuit depends on the character of God in the religious system and consequently, on the nature of the offspring. In archaic religiosity, for example, the anthropomorphic mode is dominant, and therefore descriptions of God, of the Son and of humans accentuate the *morphe*, the external form and its manifestations, through characteristics such as beauty, size, power, face, and speech. In the philosophers' descriptions however, God is sometimes characterized as an intellect, while the Son of God, the perfected man, is imagined as embodying human intellect. In such cases, the term *eidos* – in the way in which the Greek philosophers used the term – is used, rather than *morphē*. In descriptions that emphasize man as active, with a body conceived of as performing religious activities, God too is imagined as both anthropomorphic and dynamic. Even when God and his mode of mediation are described in philosophical terms accentuating the importance of the intellect, the basic urge that gave rise to the conception is still

anthropopathic, since it reflects the philosopher's special interest in depicting God in terms that reflect his own values.

However, just as God was sometimes imagined to reproduce Himself in a cosmological and cosmogonical process, and by so doing to descend and produce the circuit described above, man too at times strove to join with God, an urge that may be described as apotheotic. If the main narrative of the theophanic urge is cosmogonic (dealing with the creation of the world), theogonic (describing the emergence of the deity) and theosophic (dealing with the inner structure of the divine realm), then the apotheotic urge is concerned much more with rituals and mystical techniques designed to ensure the mystic's ascent on high. It is the techniques of self-perfection (rather than the unfolding of the divine realm and its perfection) that the apotheotic vector elaborates. By achieving this ultimate goal, the mystic in search of apotheosis may also serve as a sort of Son of God and thereby play a role in a theophanic event. Those travelling 'on high' in the divine realm return with much hidden information which they subsequently disseminate, and this constitutes a kind of theophany. This anabatic-katabatic structure is, in my opinion, one of the most important models in the history of religion, especially as far as it can be the explanation for the manner in which religions emerge.

Let me emphasize that the following discussions relating to the concepts of the Son of God in Jewish mystical literatures do not assume that this concept is fundamentally a Christological one, or that its appearances in various types of Jewish mysticism stem automatically from Christianity. Some form of implicit divine sonship is attributed to certain figures in the Hebrew Bible, as in Ps. 2.7, 72.2 and Isa. 9.5, or in Deut. 14.1. In the Hebrew Bible, concepts of royal sonship and of national sonship have been transposed to visions of *hyothesisia* in early Christianity, namely Jesus's sonship of God (or sometimes his adoption) and the sonship of the believing Christians. However, unlike the view of the Christian thinkers, who understood the new forms of sonship as superseding the older ones, as part of the *Verus Israel* claim, the Jews did not conceive those older forms of sonship as obsolete. Thus, two main forms of sonship have competed in various religious writings over the generations. However, while the primary sources dealing with the concepts of sonship in the Hebrew Bible, in pagan sources in late antiquity, and even more so in the Greek Bible, have been analyzed time and again in much detail by a long series of scholars, the post-biblical Jewish discussions of this topic remain to this day at the margin of scholarship concerning the later forms of Judaism. The extent of the phenomenon of sonship of God in these sources, their basic contours and their main categories, seem to be dealt with in a concentrated manner here for the first time. The disproportion between the huge investment of

scholarship in pre-Christian Jewish documents, or in those contemporary to nascent Christianity, like the Qumran literature, on the one hand, and the post-biblical documents, especially the medieval ones, on the other hand, is conspicuous, and has much to do with the search for the sources of Christianity. Here, we are not concerned with this issue, but with conceptual developments that primarily took place from the early Middle Ages, most predominantly in the writings of Jewish mystics.

Eventually, in some forms of post-biblical Jewish literature, new conceptual understandings of divine sonship have been advanced over the centuries in many cases, most of which will concern us in this study. Though no one should exclude the likely possibility of a lateral Christian impact in some of these cases, to be discussed in the following chapters, I assume that additionally many non-Christological forms of sonship of God were found in late antiquity. Some of them found expression in the Hebrew Bible, and a Jewish author could, at least in principle, have had access to them. In any case, as we shall see in Chapter 5, even Christian thinkers distinguished rather explicitly between their specific theology of the Son as identical with God, and the different pagan categories of sonship. In my opinion, Christianity is not so much the religion of the Son, but rather that of the one and ultimate incarnate Son, while in some forms of Judaism more democratic conceptions of sonship are prevalent, which rarely include the element of divine embodiment, and almost never of incarnation as we shall see below in this Introduction. To be sure, in Christianity it is also possible to find discussions of sonship that are not related to the hypostatic son, as in the case of 1 Jn 3.2-3. Indeed this declaration has been chosen as the motto to one of W.R. Inge's books, entitled *Christian Mysticism*, indirectly pointing to the affinity between sonship and mysticism.

The present study is to be seen as part of a broader scholarly project which attempts to explain various important developments in the history of Jewish mysticism as an ongoing competition and synthesis between two main vectors: the apotheotic and the theophanic. The former represents the impulses of a few elite individuals to transcend the human mortal situation through a process of theosis, by ascending on high, to be transformed into a more lasting entity, an angel or God. In contrast to this upward aspiration is the theophanic vector, which stands for the revelation of the divine in a direct manner or via mediating hierarchies. I thereby suggest a dynamic approach to the history of Jewish mysticism, one that assumes a multiplicity of separate developments and cross-currents, and recognizes the importance of tensions, frictions, even sharp antagonisms and, more rarely, syntheses between these vectors, rather than a theological approach that finds the defining moments of religion or mysticism in static concepts. In so doing, I attempt to avoid subscribing to extreme forms of unilinear histories of

Jewish mysticism and, from the phenomenological point of view, homogenous understandings of its contents that are basically concerned with theosophies, and are either represented in the conceptualization of Gershom Scholem and his school on the one hand, or in simplistic historicist approaches that anchor specific developments beyond what the evidence shows in particular circumstances, on the other.

By ascribing importance to these two vectors, my working hypothesis is not that the history of Jewish mysticism is a closed development that ignores the possible impact of the spiritual environments in which Jews lived. On the contrary: both the theophanic and the apotheotic vectors adopted much, both terminologically and conceptually, from encounters with majority and sometimes also minority cultures. It is not simply a matter of drawing from such cultures isolated themes or disparate concepts but, rather, also a question of drawing much more comprehensive structures of thought.<sup>2</sup> These two vectors reflect adopted and adapted material from a variety of sources over centuries, and their special religious concern caused them to change, though some of their elements remain nevertheless recognizable both terminologically and conceptually after long periods of development. In a way, I opt for a version of *long durée* in matters of traditional forms of mystical literatures. This is a matter of understanding not only the vitality of religious traditions, traditions which include elements transmitted orally over long periods of time, but also the relative cohesiveness of these cultures and the geographical areas that hosted many of the developments to be addressed below. Many of the traditions, transitions, developments, and tensions took place in what was described by Fernand Braudel as the Mediterranean World, and the topic under scrutiny here, sonship, either human or hypostatic, was shared by influential civilizations, like the Mesopotamian, the Egyptian, the Roman, the Jewish and the Christian ones. When seen from a distance, namely when compared with Chinese, Japanese or Hindu traditions, the big differences between them appear to be much less crucial than imagined beforehand.

To return to the two religious vectors described above. In previous publications I have had the opportunity to describe them succinctly.<sup>3</sup> Those short expositions, the present description and I hope a future analysis<sup>4</sup> aspire to treat various developments affecting the entire realm of Jewish mystical traditions as expressing, inter alia, certain major tendencies, thereby transcending the compartmentalization of the different mystical schools conceived by scholars as self-sufficient or solely influenced by immediate cultural or religious circumstances. More complex approaches requiring the creation of a more comprehensive scheme may help foster a better understanding of some of the main developments in Jewish mysticism, while

the more historicistic approach, which may at times clarify specific details, may supplement an understanding of various other developments.

The apotheotic vector is totally marginal in the Hebrew Bible and it appears solely in the brief descriptions of the ascent to heaven by Enoch and Elijah.<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew Bible as a whole represents the theophanic vector in which God reveals Himself in history and in the specificity of rituals He dictates. It is God's will and His imprint on the commandments and history that constitute a prime value dominating the worldview of the Sacred Scriptures. Human will is supposed to subordinate itself and become as consonant as possible with the divine will. Even the few apotheotic moments described above in the Bible are presented as initiated by God, rather than as an initiative of the two biblical figures. However, ancient material that is related to the apotheotic vector and omitted from the canonical writings, like the various Enochic materials, started to move more toward the center of Jewish literature during the inter-testamental period, contributing substantially to the emergence of the apotheotic elements in nascent Christianity. The special status of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Great Angel, Adam, the Anthropos, Glory, the divine Wisdom or Jesus, as supernal beings, sometimes understood as hypostatic entities, is in some cases related to theories dealing with ascensions on high in which such figures attained a special divine status. Especially important in this context are various discussions found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which scholars have detected apotheotic elements that may parallel themes already identified in the earliest strata of Enochic literature. Thus the oldest presumed Enochic documents – namely the Ethiopian Enoch, *1 Enoch*, the Aramaic remnants of part of the book at Qumran and various Dead Sea discussions, certain Christian documents, and various passages in Heikhalot literature – represent the initial stages of the ascent of the apotheotic vector, which grew over time and was elaborated in certain Jewish circles from the Middle Ages up to eighteenth-century Hasidism, while in Christianity they declined after the triumph of the theory of the apotheosis of Jesus.

Certain developments in matters of theophany are grafted on another interesting development in post-biblical Judaism: the growing importance of median entities in the religious worldviews that emerged after late antiquity.<sup>6</sup> The median structures, simple or more complex, served both the theophanic and the apotheotic vectors. The former makes use of median realms as modes of revelation, while the latter resorts to techniques in order to reach some form of identification between the aspirant and median structure. For example, the concept of the supernal man or the divine Son could invite a more theophanic understanding, namely that His perceptions serve as modes of divine revelation to humans. However in other cases, forms of ascent toward and adherence to those beings are emphasized. This

is also the case with the divine name: in some instances it serves as a revelation of something in the nature of God, while in others it is used as part of a technique intended to facilitate an apotheotic experience.

Significantly, angels played an even more vital role in both vectors. The emergence of an elaborated angelology in the apocalyptic, apocryphal and Qumranic literatures is well known. So too is its proliferation in the various types of Gnostic literature, which adopted certain Jewish angelological elements. In Heikhalot literature this development is even more conspicuous, and it impacted on many later developments in Judaism. Important here is the centrality of the linguistic understanding of the nature of angels, which informs some discussions found in this literature.<sup>7</sup> Rabbinic literature, reticent in general insofar as matters of angels are concerned, did not explicitly oppose this development. Jewish magical literature, which is difficult to date in a precise manner, contributed significantly to the appropriation of new names and concepts.

While the traditions dealing with these various topics differ, they overlap and even converge from time to time in specific writings. No one single development is presupposed in the following pages, nor do I presuppose the preponderance of one development over others. However I would like to survey one particular development, among others, that served as the background for medieval discussions that I address in the following chapters. Late antiquity Judaism – its nature full of cross-currents; multiform, as Robert Kraft put it; or consisting of 'Judaisms' as Jacob Neusner would say – as well as Jewish-Christianity, Gnosticism and early Christianity preserved a number of traditions that are far from representing a systematic articulation or monolithic view. As the occurrence of each of the issues above in ancient Judaism and late antiquity is treated in numerous other studies, it would be difficult to mention all of the relevant discussions, yet those that make the most important contributions to the present endeavor are mentioned in the following pages and in the footnotes. However, I would like to emphasize that it is not my intention to claim that Jewish sources had a binitarian or ditheistic approach as their central theology, since I assume that ancient Judaism was, theologically speaking, much less monolithic than the theological approach that many scholars in the field assume. My approach in general is that in matters of spirit and belief there is hardly any agreement among individuals considering these matters through the centuries, and sweeping statements about theories or theologies that were embraced unanimously even in a specific culture may often be misleading.

## 2. *Literary corpora and their historical, linguistic and conceptual concatenations*

The two main religious vectors mentioned above are investigated here insofar as they are found in the specific cultures reflected in mystical literatures in Judaism, to be understood in their traditional and other complex intellectual contexts. The main documentation is found in texts, which are sometimes part of larger bodies of literatures (called corpora) that are the major tradents of this culture. The better the literary documentation, the more accurate they make possible the picture of a culture. At the same time, the more variegated the tools used to interrogate these bodies of literature, the richer our understanding of them will be. While major changes in scholarship take place only rarely, new methods of interrogation no doubt trigger significant turns in scholarly thought. Yet more important for the development of scholarship are, in my opinion, changes that emerge from the discovery of a massive new literary corpora. In the last 50 years, the discovery of three main literary corpora has enriched scholarship dealing with late antiquity Judaism and early Christianity. Two of these, namely the Dead Sea (Qumran) scrolls and the Nag Hammadi library, were made available gradually and only since the late 1950s, after they were first recovered from oblivion by the original comprehensive surveys. Though scholars knew of some of the content of these bodies of literature prior to that period – either because of the Damascus Covenant or quotes from Gnostic authors found in Patristic literature – the sheer quantity of new material discovered caused a qualitative leap in understanding. The third and later corpus, the Heikhalot literature, was introduced into scholars' circles earlier due to the publication of studies by Adolph Jellinek in the nineteenth century, and by Hugo Odeberg in the twentieth century, and especially due to the insightful analyses of Gershom Scholem. Yet a new impetus was created through the studies of a younger generation of scholars like Ithamar Gruenwald, Peter Schäfer, David Halperin, Michael Swartz, Martin Cohen, Yehuda Liebes, Philip S. Alexander, and Rachel Elijor, among many others.

Furthermore, the ongoing development of scholarship dealing with the magical literatures in late antiquity may contribute to a much more variegated understanding of the broader phenomenon of Judaism. Especially interesting is the more recent surfacing of a large number of magical bowls dating from the fifth and sixth century, which have been investigated mainly by Shaul Shaked. At the same time, investigations of the Jewish polemical literature found in David Berger's *The Jewish-Christian Debate* and Daniel Lasker's *Jewish Philosophical Polemics* allow for comparison between various views of sonship in Jewish medieval philosophy and those found in Jewish mystical literatures. I shall nevertheless resort in Chapter 3 to the views of

Abner of Burgos, alias Alfonso da Valladolid, a convert to Christianity, who combined Kabbalah and philosophy in his polemical exchanges with R. Isaac Pulgar.

Two of the literary corpora most pertinent to this discussion, the Dead Sea scrolls and the Heikhalot, are part of complex religious phenomena that, each in its unique way, considered itself to be the paramount expression of Judaism. While the latter has been accepted as such in many Jewish circles, the former has been marginalized conceptually and has virtually disappeared sociologically. The Gnostic writings of Nag Hammadi, which reveal some anti-Jewish views, nevertheless supplied additional material in which scholars began to discover more and more affinities with ancient Jewish theologoumena.<sup>8</sup> Recent studies have been published dealing with the affinities between other corpora, like Samaritan and Mandaean literatures, and Jewish esoteric literature.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these corpora, the renewal of interest in ancient Jewish-Christian literature became more prominent in scholarship, as revealed by the writings of Joachim Schoeps, Jean Danielou, Marcel Simon, Shlomo Pines, Gilles Quispel and Larry W. Hurtado.<sup>10</sup> Especially important for the following discussion are the writings of the latter two scholars, who were interested in aspects of Jewish esoterica found in the literature they analyzed. Furthermore, a strong interest in apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature by Jewish authors in the inter-testamental period is exemplified in the studies of Michael Stone, John Collins, Martha Himmelfarb, James VanderKam, Andrei Orlov, James Kugel, and Hindi Najman, among many others. Through these bodies of literature, visions of Judaism and of the meaning of Jewish figures emerged that differ from both biblical and rabbinic literature. Especially significant is the cardinal role that has been played by a variety of angels, biblical heroes and other mediators in the general economy of such writings. At this time, the study of Jewish esoterica is conducted in a comparative manner, which takes into consideration similar elements that are found in the literature mentioned above, as well as in that of Philo of Alexandria. Though scholars are reluctant to draw material from different corpora in a single more comprehensive analysis, such a cautious approach is at times excessive, and actually impedes the emergence of a better understanding of developments in late antiquity Judaism and, as I claim below, of various esoteric forms of Judaism in the Middle Ages. This reluctance is the reason why, despite immense scholarly contributions to the understanding of late antiquity Jewish esoterica, little has changed in research dealing with the sources of the various forms of medieval Jewish esotericism. It could also be said that it is the reason why scholars of late antiquity did not take an interest in medieval material, driven as they were by a strong historicistic tendency that is still obvious in the

field. In fact, both medieval and Renaissance creativity were deeply affected by late antiquity material and operated with them in truncated, distorted and often combined ways. The vortex of creativity so evident in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the three main cultures that concern us here, the Jewish, the Christian and the Muslim, should be understood in the context of encounters with waves of books and oral traditions stemming from late antiquity that entered at different stages and in different proportions these three cultures and fertilized their religious thought and literature.

It should be pointed out that the various literary corpora mentioned above not only represent different conceptual points of view. Rather, different religious communities composed them in different languages, and they were preserved and transmitted in complex ways. Such differences affect the transmission of the texts and their content, and give rise to issues regarding the content that are hard to resolve.<sup>11</sup> For example, the datation of the Parables found in *1 Enoch* is crucial in order to address the issue of divine sonship in Christianity. If the Parables are pre-Christian, as some scholars claim, the entire question of the historical filiation of the concept of the Son of Man appears in a totally different light than if the datation is post-Christian. In the first stages of developing a scholarly approach to Judaism, Heinrich Graetz attempted to describe the Heikhalot literature, with its anthropomorphic elements, as the result of the impact of Islam, thereby 'purifying' Judaism of anthropomorphic theology. This trend is still well represented in scholarship in the field, though in a much more subtle manner.<sup>12</sup> I assume that the gist of the concepts expressed in this literature is pre-Islamic.

Questions relating to accretions in almost all of the texts to be dealt with below complicate the possibility of establishing a firm historical sequence for different formulations of an idea. For example, whereas the datation of the Talmudic texts is not such a controversial matter, in comparison the datation of books like *Sefer Yetzirah* or the Heikhalot literature are matters on which there is little consensus between scholars today. Yet beyond objective problems related to historical preservation and means of transmission in certain specific communities, there are questions of quite a different order, namely theological ones. The old religious debates about what is most representative of the Hebrew biblical heritage, Jewish Rabbinism or the Christian form of apocalypticism, and attempts to locate the origins of these ideas in sources that carry authority, are not easily overcome. The intense treatment of material in the Qumran library typifies the problematic. The persistent questions raised in many studies make me wonder whether these texts are investigated primarily as the major source of particular Christian concepts or as the first formulations of Jewish mysticism, and much less as religious texts with an important contribution to make in

their own right. Both cases give rise to inevitable forms of anachronism that are sometimes necessary in order to create a broader context for the topics under investigation. The real answer to this quandary is that there is no simple answer. Both the halakic dimensions and the apocalyptic aspirations are part and parcel of Judaism as formulated in the period that precedes the emergence of both Rabbinism and Christianity. Each dimension represents therefore, in its specific way, a religious factor already active before Rabbinism and Christianity. However, each of the two developments represent a different religious modality, and as such their originality cannot be compared.

However, from both the historical and the phenomenological points of view, the problem is not only the origins of these phenomena, but also later developments. Had Christian developments taken them closer to the Hebrew Bible than the rabbinic literature, or not? As I shall claim below, from at least two major points of view the answer is negative: the Hebrew or Aramaic language, used initially by most Hellenistic Jews and early Christians, was gradually eroded as a means of religious creation and communication, and subsequently the reservoir of associations that produces the *imaginaire* was shaped by other linguistic modalities, and by new and strong conceptual influences related to those new languages: Greek or Latin. This *reservoir sémantique*, to use Gilbert Durand's term, was dramatically different when some believers did not read the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew, though they still accepted its authority. So, for example, the Hebrew term for son, *Ben*, can be connected to its Hebrew root *BNH*, to build, and thus to *Binyan*, building and *Boneh*, builder, but also to a variety of pseudo-etymologies like *Binah*, or *Havanah*, which mean understanding. The semantic field that operates, correctly or not, in discovering the meaning of a certain word evidently differs from language to language, and from culture to culture. The same can be said for the ways in which words are derived. So, for example, the Greek term *teknon*, used in the construct form with God, as the child of God, stems from the verb *tiktein*, which reflects the act of giving birth, while the Latin term for son, *filius*, creates ideas of connectiveness and derivation in Romanic and other languages, like filiation, or *filiarité*. On the other hand, the concept of sonship in English has only poor parallels in other languages, especially in Hebrew. This lack of abstract nouns concerning sonship, especially in the earlier layers of Hebrew, is semantically compensated by the extraordinarily wide combination of the term *Ben* with other nouns, in order to create forms of human and non-human relationships which are close to sonship, like *Ben Bait*, literally the son of the house, implying some form of familiarity, or *Ben Mawwet*, literally the son of death, implying mortality. The widespread use of the form *Ben* is therefore one of the major ways in which the early strata of Hebrew

represents the belonging of an individual to a larger category, while in Greek, especially in the Greek Bible, the term *hyothesis* – a term not found in the Septuaginta – reflects a more abstract approach, uncharacteristic of the nomenclature found in early Hebrew sources. As we are going to see in the following pages, Jewish authors did not invent such an abstract term for sonship, and have none even nowadays.

To what extent these linguistic developments in the post-biblical period created different religious phenomena that were phenomenologically speaking closer or further away from the religious universes active in the Hebrew Bible is a matter that, in my opinion, can be addressed quantitatively and qualitatively. In any case, to make this point more concise by referring to a syntagm used by Rudolf Bultmann (following the ‘eschatological kerygma’, and that of the Early Church), another one emerged, the ‘kerygma of the Hellenistic church’. This new kerygma differs from the traditions characteristic of the historical group of Jesus, in that it incorporates some Jewish – especially stemming from the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo of Alexandria – and pagan Hellenistic theories. From some points of view, this departure from the religious universes represented by the Hebrew Bible started in Diaspora groups of Jews active in Alexandria, long before the emergence of complex Christologies. The more dynamic aspects of the eschatological and embodied Son versus the more static posture of the Hellenistic spiritual son represent a profound rupture, whose wounds many theologies attempted to heal. Though Antiochian Christianity was more concerned with the incarnate Jesus, the Alexandrian theologians were more concerned with the complex of Christ as Logos.

I am also aware, to be sure, that some illustrious figures in early Christianity respected Hebrew as a language that preserved important meanings clearly, as is the case in Origen’s rather sacramental attitude to some Hebrew words, especially names, or that of St Augustine. However, this is more a theoretical attitude than a practical demand for the study of Hebrew, and study of the Hebrew Bible continued to be done in Greek and Latin. I would say that linguistic separation is one of the main moments when the paths of Judaism and Christianity bifurcated dramatically. Though the more recent scholars of late antiquity Judaism, like Ellias Bickerman, Saul Liebermann, Martin Hengel, Eric Gruen and Lee Levine, to mention only a few names, have added much to the understanding of the role Hellenistic culture played in the first centuries of the Common Era in Palestinian Judaism, the most comprehensive and authoritative Jewish documents that moved to the center of rabbinic Judaism have nevertheless been written in Aramaic and Hebrew, a cultural decision that shaped the entire development of post-biblical Judaism, just as most of the early Christian documents have been formulated in Greek.

To be sure, by saying so I do not judge the intrinsic value of either of these religious developments as better or worse because of such proximity. Giving priority to this closeness would constitute a theological statement, which I avoid in principle. However, the following reflections are an attempt to understand the nature of the religious developments central to the main theme I will address in the following pages. Or, to ask the question in a more blatant manner: how many Christians understand the meaning of the name of Jesus, or have an idea about the linguistic *imaginaire* that inspired his activity, and are able to pronounce the name of his main description: *Ben*, the son, in biblical Hebrew. This linguistic departure – as well as the better known Paulinian rejection of the biblical ritual – connected to the more universalistic turn of Christianity, mitigated – or sometimes even obliterated – some important aspects of the understanding of the mediator as theophoric, a major issue that will concern us very much below.

However, to turn to rabbinic Judaism, I assume that some ancient Jewish circles could understand Jesus’s claims more easily than modern scholars do, though not necessarily accept his religious views. As Martin Buber expressed himself quite pertinently in two instances, ‘we Jews knew him (Jesus) from within, in the impulses and stirrings of his Jewish being, in a way that remains inaccessible to the people submissive to him’. I take this statement to be much a more adequate description of the worldviews and sensibilities of rabbinic Jews in ancient times than of Jews today, both believers and scholars, who are closer to European understandings or misunderstandings of religion than to ancient Judaism. Unlike what Eliade called the religious ‘immobilism’ of greater states and empires, like Egypt for example, minorities are much more mobile. Dramatic changes in history generated various forms of Christianity, and produced different forms of understanding of its nascent forms.

Are these forms all equally close to the religious universes of the authors of the Hebrew Bible? Religiously speaking they are all equal, and faithfulness to their own origins or to the Hebrew Bible does not affect the validity of those Christian faiths themselves. The variety emerging from the adaptation of the fluid eschatological aspirations to new environments is in fact one of the explanations for the immense success of Christianity, not only in comparison to Judaism but also in its confrontations with paganism, Gnosticism and especially Manicheism. Developments in rabbinic Judaism were less dramatic from both the conceptual and linguistic point of view, and we shall return to issues related to these developments in the Concluding Remarks, when we shall discuss the issue of corporate personality.

It is only toward the end of the first millennium of the Common Era that substantial changes in the elite forms of Judaism took place, in different

centers of the Jewish world and in different directions, producing a variety of literary corpora. The affinities between them, evident as they are from some points of view – languages, for example – are quite complex from the conceptual points of view. This is why the concatenations between the various literary corpora to be dealt with in the present study are, however, problematic. Ranging from the Qumran literature to Polish eighteenth-century Hasidism, and even covering elements related to Christianity, as well as references to Islam and even Hinduism, the discussions below may at times become tenuous. The linkage of so many cultures is evident already in the Middle Ages when the Hellenistic, Judaic, Christian, and Muslim heritages were well known, and when a variety of literatures stemming from Buddhism and even Hinduism were available in translations and adaptations in Western Europe. The complexity of this situation drew little attention in twentieth-century scholarship, despite the important remarks of Moritz Steinschneider about translations and mediation by Jews found in Jewish culture.<sup>13</sup> To put it in a more categorical manner: already in late antiquity, but even more so in the Middle Ages, it becomes difficult to speak about a monolithic single context and accuracy demands recognition of a variety of pertinent contexts. Any attempt to explain complex mystical literatures that assumes a single dominant context presupposes from the very beginning the final conclusion of the research; what remains is merely to fill in the alleged ‘proofs’. This is all the more true when the issues at hand are sensitive from the point of view of the authors. Doctrines concerning divine names, the theophoric dimensions of people and angels, or the controversial status of a mediating Son found in post-Jesus movement forms of Judaism, do not readily facilitate an understanding of the texts or their exposition.

Last but not least: the magnitude of the material regarding sonship in its pre-Christian forms in the ancient Near East, and even more so in Christianity throughout its long and complex history, along with their vast scholarly treatments, certainly transcend the capacity and expertise of this author. However the fact that this issue has remained on the margin of Jewish studies, combined with the fact that relevant material has been unearthed in manuscripts, has given rise to a survey of such material as part of a more comprehensive project, mapping the two vectors described above.

Early Jewish, Jewish-Christian and Christian literatures, extant in different languages, preserved a significant amount of Jewish esoterica and mythologoumena, which is otherwise evident only in an obscure manner in the later Hebrew or Aramaic Jewish literary corpora. This fact has been widely recognized by scholars, though its implications for understanding later developments in Jewish esoterica have not attracted sufficient scholarly attention. The compartmentalized and historicist academic approaches separated rather drastically the late antiquity scholars from the medievalists

and vice-versa. It is not difficult to recognize the superficial nature of the acquaintance of the vast majority of scholars dealing with late antiquity Judaism with scholarly developments in the study of Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages, most of which is written in Hebrew and examples are legion.

In this context let me point out that the following discussions deal with instances in literary corpora that differ from more numerous textual treatments of Jesus as a son of God found in Jewish polemical literature written in Hebrew in the Middle Ages, which basically totally reject the idea that something like that is possible. Since my main focus is on forms of sonship in other sorts of Jewish literature than the polemical one, and I am not concerned with attempts to vindicate or refute Christianity, or to examine the details of the arguments for or against Christian views of Jesus’s sonship, most of the indicated polemic Jewish literature dealing with this topic remains beyond the scope of this research project.

### *3. Some name-theophanies in ancient and late antiquity forms of Judaism*

In this next section I would like to survey a series of themes occurring in antiquity and late antiquity that will play a significant role throughout this book. Therefore, the survey is not intended to exhaust the various occurrences of these themes, but point to their existence in the earliest strata of Jewish religion or in texts influenced by it, like Christianity, Judeo-Christianity or Gnosticism. One of the main mythologoumena that recurs in discussions below is related to the special, hypostatic status of the divine name.<sup>14</sup> With the emergence of the modern study of ancient Jewish esoterica, attention was drawn to the scant remarks preserved in late antiquity and patristic literatures that transmit or reflect Jewish views. This is obvious in the case of the testimonies of Philo of Alexandria, Origen,<sup>15</sup> Justin Martyr,<sup>16</sup> the Pseudo-Clementine treatises,<sup>17</sup> extracts from the writings of the Gnostic Monoimos the Arab, and the writings of Ephrem the Syrian, which also attracted recent attention from scholars of Judaism.<sup>18</sup> Especially important in this context is Jarl Fossum’s monograph on the topic of the divine name in many late antiquity texts.<sup>19</sup> My intention in the following two sections is to provide a broader context for the emergence of some aspects of medieval esotericism in Jewish circles, but less to propose new understandings regarding the ancient traditions. This exposition is necessary in order to offer the reader a succinct picture of a landscape whose main details and even contours were covered by the emergence of more systematic and canonized forms of discourse at the forefront of Jewish, Judeo-Christian and Gnostic communities in which the themes discussed in the following chapters were first formulated and propagated. But they are

nevertheless pertinent for a better understanding of the topics to be analyzed below.

There can be no doubt that one of the major topics of ancient and medieval Jewish esotericism is that of divine names and the various ways of pronouncing them. Though the topic has already received scholarly treatment,<sup>20</sup> it is an immense field that awaits more detailed and penetrating investigations. Important for our discussion is the theory of the hypostatic existence of the divine name in the Temple according to the book of Deuteronomy, as well as the central place the name of God plays in the book of Psalms. It should be assumed that instances of speculation over divine names, which were hardly consistent with each other and even less part of any coherent tradition, were found in late antiquity among different Jewish groups and radiated from there to impact upon later speculation.

The first text I will address is seminal and its analysis is most pertinent to following discussions. In Exod. 23.20-24, God addresses the people of Israel in one of the most theophanic instances to be found in biblical literature:

20. Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

21. Take heed of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is within him.

22. But if you shall indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries.

23. For my Angel shall go before you, and bring you in to the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

24. You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor go after their works; but you shall completely overthrow them, and break down their images in pieces.<sup>21</sup>

These verses are the starting point of many of the developments to be treated below, including those written by Philo; others related to the mysterious Magharyah, as well as to early forms of Christology; to the apocryphal literature, like the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; to Gnosticism or to various understandings of the archangel Metatron in Jewish mysticism, as pointed out in the note above. Given the profound impact reflections on this passage have had on developments in matters of angelology and Christology let me address some of the main elements of these verses necessary for our further discussions.

Here we see an angelic theophany, that is described as playing an

enduring role in the peregrinations of the tribes in the desert. The angel, anonymous to be sure as is the case with angels in the vast majority of biblical literature, has nevertheless a name within itself: the divine name. By dint of the name, it is obvious that it will be referred to as 'my angel'. Its presence may be understood as attracting some form of worship, which should not however be addressed to other gods. Indeed, this angel is not just a visual yet silent apparition, a sort of pillar that guides the tribes day and night; rather it has a voice that is its own, though at the same time it is God who is speaking. The ambiguity here is quintessential: though God is the speaker, it is the angel's voice that is heard. Thus it seems the angel serves as a form of loudspeaker for the divine act of speech. A comparison with v. 23 reveals the same ambiguity: while the angel is acting, God refers to himself in the first person. Of momentous importance is the formulation in v. 21: *shemiy be-qirbbo*: 'my name is within him'. This statement reflects a certain duality, a coupling of manifestation and proclamation, to resort to the famous theological distinction. This biblical phrase has influenced thousands of discussions in Jewish literature in which authors have attempted to flesh out its more elaborate meanings. Given the great importance of linguistic speculations in Jewish thought, the issue of a nominal presence remained part of the agenda for many centuries, and I shall revert to this issue throughout this study and especially in my Concluding Remarks.

Though it is not quite obvious, it may well be that this sort of angel is identical to the face of the Lord that goes before the Israelites according to Exod. 33.14. The angel, to follow this reading, serves as a form of mask for the divine, which speaks through it. Such a reading appears to be confirmed by the expression '*malakh panav*', the angel of His face, in Isa. 63.9: 'the angel of his face will redeem you'.<sup>22</sup> This redemptive role of the angel is quite reminiscent of the Exodus scenario. However, what concerns me in particular in the Exodus discussion is the explanation attached to the importance of the angel: the divine name is depicted as found *within it*. No real separation between the divinity and the emissary is assumed; rather, the divinity is dwelling within the emissary by means of the name. God is present by means of His name being carried within an emissary that performs His will and that should be revered by the people. This presence of the name within a sort of container is also evident in other examples of theophany in biblical literature where, for example, the name dwells in the temple.<sup>23</sup> In both cases God is described as present within a visual form by virtue of His name; moreover, there is even some aspect of ritual connected to this presence. According to the biblical account, this theophany of the name is mobile in the period of the desert since the theophoric angel is imagined to serve as a guide that becomes stable once the Temple is built, wherein the name is imagined to be present.

These two examples can be described as part of an evolving category, or a constellation of ideas, that I propose to call the ‘theophoric mediator’. In some cases discussed below, the mobile angel and the tabernacle are combined, as we are going to see in the next chapter in the cases of the so-called ‘Tabernacle of the youth’. These cases and many others discussed below are examples of theophanic–theophoric mediators as part of the wider theophanic vector. As noted above, this angel has already been understood early on in Philo as the ‘firstborn Son’, which designation will preoccupy us later on in this Introduction. However, this early understanding of the divine representative as an angelic son, perhaps one of the first available interpretations of the verse, is crucial for some of the main points in this book, since it assumes some dimension of sonship related to two angels, Yaho’el and Metatron, and derived in an exegetical manner from this verse.

Let me examine the biblical material mentioned above from another point of view. The angel relating to guidance and redemption is imagined to have two main aspects: he is the face of God and he possesses the name of God. The face represents what I propose to call the morphic, external aspect, while the divine name represents the nominal, internal aspect, as specified in the biblical verse dealing with the name within the angel. I shall refer to these two aspects of revelation and mediation in the following discussion either as separate aspects or by the unified term ‘morphonominal’. This distinction is important also insofar as speech is concerned: the inner aspect is the speech of God, while the face of the angel only externalizes it.

The similarity between these two aspects and other aspects of biblical thought is remarkable. As Michael Schneider has pointed out recently, there are several other verses in the Hebrew Bible in which a distinction between operations related to face and breath can be discerned.<sup>24</sup> This is the case in Ezek. 1.12 and 39.29, as well as in Pss. 51.13, 104.29–30,<sup>25</sup> and 139.7. Putting together the two stories of the creation of Adam in the first two chapters of Genesis – creation through the replication of the divine image in the first chapter (belonging to P), and the insertion of the breath of life into the mouth according to ch. 2 (belonging to J) – we reveal a further example. Whether or not the two chapters were put together intentionally in order to combine the corporeal creation with a more spiritual one, as in the case of the two phases involved in creating the statues in the Babylonian ritual, is an issue that transcends our framework of discussion here. Indeed, in some early Jewish post-biblical literature these two modes of creation are juxtaposed, as in the book of the *Life of Adam and Eve* where image and breath occur together.<sup>26</sup> This is also the case in the quite early *Sybilline Oracles*, where the creation of man is depicted as follows: ‘Let us make a man wholly in our form and give him life-sustaining breath.’<sup>27</sup>

This seminal distinction between different though complementary

aspects will serve us in the following discussion in which I examine the special relationship between God and a theophoric mediator from this double point of view: the external similarity between the divinity and the mediator – face, image, seal, luminosity, beauty, or son – and the more essential continuity between the divine realm and the mediator insofar as the inner aspect is concerned – breath, spirit, word, or name. In a way this duality reflects the complex character of a mediator: on the one hand, it must represent the higher to the lower and does so by the inner aspect, while on the other hand, it must be recognized by the lower in some form of manifestation or shape that is identifiable as representative of both the higher and lower realms.

Needless to say, these resemblances reflect a more common situation: that of similarity between a son and the form or the face of his father, where the son is also called by the father’s name. These two criteria relate to certain analyses below where sonship is less evident but where the existence of these two forms of continuity approximate sonship. Interestingly enough, both form and name are regarded as modes of identification between a mystic or a magician and God. In an ancient magical recipe it is written that ‘For You are I and I am You. Your name is mine and mine is yours. For I am your image.’<sup>28</sup> This morphonominal similarity also involves the special strength of the human that possesses the divine name and the divine form. Though this study will concentrate on the more explicit discussions where the term ‘Son’ occurs in one form or another, these discussions define sonship by resorting to terms of either a morphic or a nominal sense.

By highlighting the importance of these verses in the Introduction, and also in three of the first chapters of this book, we can observe an interesting phenomenon in the developments occurring in systems emerging both in Judaism and at the peripheries of Judaism. While the accent has previously fallen on the linguistic aspects of these verses, sometimes quoting them explicitly, subsequent developments are much less concerned with the specific aspects of the formulation, but much more with the ontological problems related to manifestation.

However, important as the verses from Exodus are, no serious discussion of sonship in the way it developed in Jewish and Christian sources can neglect the seventh chapter of Daniel, in which a vision of the supernal world includes a reference to a mysterious figure described as a ‘Son of Man’:

9. While I looked, thrones were placed, and one who was ancient of days [*’attiq yomin*] sat, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like pure wool; his throne was like a fiery flame, its wheels like burning fire.

10. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; they sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

11. I looked then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; and while I looked the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

12. And as for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like a son of man [*ke-bar 'enash*]<sup>29</sup> came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14. And there he was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.<sup>30</sup>

The different elements found in these verses inspired a long series of elaborations that culminated in early Christianity's appropriation of the 'Son of Man' term for Jesus, and it is quite probable that Jesus even used this phrase to describe himself. The relationship between the two main figures in this vision depends greatly on the version of the text that is adopted, and there is a significant discrepancy between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint translation that is crucial to an understanding of this figure.

Especially pertinent for our assumption that there is a strong connection between sonship and the presence of a divine name on the entity considered to be a Son, is the early Jewish text known as *Ben Sira* or Ecclesiasticus. There we find the following line: 'Have mercy O God, upon the people called by Thy name, upon Israel, whom Thou hast likened to a first-born son.'<sup>31</sup> Here the parallelism between the name of God and the firstborn points, in my opinion, in quite an evident manner to sonship and the aspect of the name of God is expressly related to the 'el suffix of the name Israel. Though the texts to be analyzed below in this section are later, they do not automatically reflect the influence of this passage, but presumably drew from similar theories.

Let me discuss now a short passage from the Dead Sea scrolls, which exemplifies the existence of an affinity between the concept of the Son and the divine name, an issue that will preoccupy us considerably in the following chapters. In the 4Q246 document, the so-called 'Son of God' text, representing an Aramaic parallel to the book of Daniel, it is written, according to this translation, that:

[G]reat will he be called, and will be designated by his<sup>32</sup> name.

He will be called son of God, and they will call him son of the Most High.<sup>33</sup>

I will not survey in detail the variety of interpretive trends that have been applied to this document, which range from identifying the Son of God as an anti-Christic figure, historical king, or Octavianus Caesar, to more 'sublime' identifications of the Son of God as a theophanic mediator.<sup>34</sup> In the context of this discussion it will suffice to note the parallelism between the concept of sonship and the nature of the 'divine' name: just as 'his name' refers to the father's name, so also the phrase 'son of God' is composed of two entities that are related.<sup>35</sup> Xeravits proposes to amend [*Rab*]ba' – G[reat] to *Bar Rabba*, namely 'the great son'.<sup>36</sup> If correct, this may be an attempt to elevate this particular son over any other. According to this scholar, the document antedates the Qumran community and entered its library from outside.<sup>37</sup> The question as to whether we have here a theophanic figure, a quasi-angelic one, or alternatively an adopted king who reached his status by a process of apotheosis, cannot be answered by this document. Apotheotic views are manifest in 4Q491, which has been interpreted in a messianic manner.<sup>38</sup>

If indeed the fragment 4Q246 is pre-Qumranic and its source is independent of the community, it constitutes an interesting parallel to 1 *Enoch*, in the part of the Parables where the Son of Man, a figure close to the Son of God, is described again in the context of his name. In a rather perplexing passage that has attracted much scholarly speculation, especially regarding the role of the Son of Man and his relationship to Enoch, we read in 1 *Enoch*:

And at that time that the Son of Man was named, in the presence of the Lord of Spirits  
And his name before the Head of Days.<sup>39</sup>  
And before the sun and the 'signs' were created  
Before the stars of the heaven were made,  
His name was named before the Lord of spirits.<sup>40</sup>

This passage also reflects the impact of Daniel's description of the Son of Man. The Lord of the Spirit and the Head of Days on the one hand, and the Son of Man on the other hand, represent a couple that reflect the passage in Dan. 7 relating to '*Attiq Yomin* and the *Bar-'Enash*, the Son of Man.'<sup>41</sup> There is a clear distinction between the Son of Man, actually his face (the morphic aspect), as we learn from 1 *En.* 46.1, and the later mention of his receiving a name, his nominal aspect. This name is envisioned as pre-existent in a manner reminiscent of the name of the Messiah in various early rabbinic statements.<sup>42</sup> According to one version of this rabbinic stand, the pre-

existence is described by resorting to the verse: 'Before the sun his name is Yinon'<sup>43, 44</sup> in a manner reminiscent of the much earlier description 'Before the sun' (see above). Some form of pre-existence is therefore attributed to the name of theophanic figures in both ancient Judaism and in rabbinic material. In *1 Enoch*, it seems that this pre-existence of name is accompanied by the investiture of the theophanic figure with its function, at a much later moment. Such a reading reinforces attempts by scholars to resolve the quandary posed by the above text.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere in *1 Enoch*, the name of the Son of Man is conceived to be an important issue that is revealed.<sup>46</sup> In any case, it seems that the topic of the name is quite central in this book, as we learn from several references to the name 'the Lord of the Spirits' in ch. 46.6, 7, 8. Interestingly enough, the faces of the defeated kings are mentioned there (46.6) in order to describe their degradation. If indeed this part of the book of *1 Enoch* predates the emergence of Christianity, and this seems to be the consensus of scholars today, the morphic/nominal nexus is well represented again. Therefore, we may conclude this part of our exposition by assessing the existence of an ancient morpho-theophorism in two sectarian Jewish writings that presumably precede the emergence of Christianity.

Likewise, we find in the well-known *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10.3 and ch. 8 the confession of Yaho'el. Here he states that he is a great power by virtue of the ineffable name that is found within him,<sup>47</sup> in a manner reminiscent of the biblical verse from Exod. 23.21 adduced above. He appears in the form of a man and describes himself as having extraordinary powers, similar to those of a vice-regent.<sup>48</sup> However, it is also possible to understand the nominal relationship between God and the angel by assuming that God is also called Yaho'el, as is clear from Abraham's prayer in ch. 12.11 of this book.<sup>49</sup> It should be pointed out that the face of God plays a significant role in this Apocalypse, as does his name. It is from God's face that the light of the world emanates.<sup>50</sup> In general, as mentioned by Gruenwald, this apocalypse reflects one of the earliest forms of Merkavah mysticism, steeped in a description of Ezekiel's vision, though without naming it.<sup>51</sup>

Let me turn to a much later testimony. In a quotation in the name of the mysterious sect of Magharya preserved in a testimony of the Arab author al-Shahrastani, it is said about the Great Angel that:

It is possible in the normal course of events, that he should send an Angel spiritual to the point of having all his attributes, and should confer his name upon him saying: 'This is My messenger, and his position is as Mine among you, and his utterance is My utterance,

his command is My command, and his manifestation before you is My manifestation.' This is the condition of that angel.<sup>52</sup>

As Fossum has pointed out, this passage is inspired by the 23 verses from Exodus quoted above, while at the same time its content might have been the source of some angelomorphic understanding of Jesus in the Greek Bible, as al-Shahrastani explicitly claims in the context of Arius.<sup>53</sup> However, now the angel is a much more elaborate entity which has been ascribed many other functions. The attribution of the name of God and the duality of external appearance (the angel is described as possessing the form of Adam) is evident and follows the Exodus discussions. However, this passage falls short of describing this angel as the Son of God.

At this point let us turn to literature written in the inter-testamental period and immediately afterwards, namely before the articulations of the rabbinic statements in Jewish circles and in those influenced by Jewish traditions. Especially important in this context is Philo's view in *The Confusion of Tongues* par. 146 – which will be quoted and discussed later in this Introduction – of the heavenly Man (distinct from the created Adam), as the firstborn, the word, the beginning, Israel, the High Priest, and what is most pertinent to our discussion below, the most important name of God according to the Jewish tradition: the Tetragrammaton.<sup>54</sup> This is the earliest, the most influential and perhaps the most important and explicit instance of a theophoric mediator belonging to what I call the theophanic vector, and at the same time, connected to what we shall designate below as 'the double sonship'. Elsewhere in the same book of Philo's, this *anthropos* is identified as both the firstborn and as the eldest son.<sup>55</sup> Thus, a clear connection is evident between a hypostatic and incorporeal entity called Man, the concept of Son and firstborn, to whom a divine name is applied. An ontic continuity designated by sonship is paralleled by a nominal identity, exemplified by the bestowing of the divine name on the first entity that is described also as a son that emerges from God. The description found there of the birth of the firstborn, which utilizes the verb *anateile*, which means to spring off, is of utmost importance for later developments and we shall return to this issue below.

The nexus between the vision of the Christian savior as the Son of God and of his being the image of God is obviously extremely important for understanding the beginning of Christianity. We can add to this the context of receiving an exalted name. This topic was recently studied in depth and independently by two scholars, Hannah and Gieschen, and I refer here only to a few examples.<sup>56</sup> Jesus has been described as 'the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation'.<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere, he is attributed an exalted name: 'Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave him the name that

is above all names, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend.’<sup>58</sup> I assume that the exaltation has something to do with Glory or some form of morphic transformation, to which the nominal aspect is added. I wonder to what extent this passage is related to the potential theophoric aspect of Jesus’s Hebrew name *Yeshu’a*, which could be understood as derived from *Yeshu’a*, namely Joshua and from the more explicit Hebrew theophoric form *Yehoshu’a*. Gieschen has concluded that in some instances in the Greek Bible, reference to the name of Jesus implies that he possessed the divine name, namely the Tetragrammaton;<sup>59</sup> by accepting this conclusion we may understand some examples in early Christianity as dealing with a theophoric mediator, in which the Son of God has not only some replica of the form of God, but also a divine name.

Especially important in this context is a passage from the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, quoted time and time again in the context of the status of the divine name in late antiquity, where it is said about Jesus that:

In those sundry days, He spoke to us by a Son,  
Whom He appointed the heir of all things,<sup>60</sup>  
Through whom He created the world.  
He reflects the glory of God<sup>61</sup>  
and bears the very stamp<sup>62</sup> of his nature,  
upholding the universe by his word of power.  
When he had made purifications for sins  
He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,  
Having become as much superior to the angels  
As the name he has obtained is much more excellent than theirs.  
For to what angel did [God] say at any time:  
‘Thou art my Son, today, I have begotten thee?’<sup>63</sup>  
Or again: ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.’<sup>64</sup>  
And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says:  
‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’<sup>65</sup>

We may enumerate four different aspects in which the similarity between God and Jesus is evident: the nominal, the emanative, the morphic, and the very mention of the theme of sonship. As to the nominal: here it is not just an issue of receiving the divine name, but the assumption that this name is higher than that of the angels. We may assume that while the angels have theophoric names in which the suffix *-el* occurs, Jesus was understood to have some form of theophorism related to the letters of the Tetragrammaton. It may be that the theophoric form of the name *Yehoshu’a* was indeed intended here. As to the emanative aspect: this passage is reminiscent of a theory that will be dealt with below about the emanation of wisdom from God as a radiation of light, found in a fairly explicit manner

in the book of *Wisdom of Solomon* 7.25.<sup>66</sup> Here it is not the external shape that is important but the luminosity, the glory that is shared by God and Jesus. The term ‘stamp’ or ‘character’ represents the morphic similarity of the Father and the Son, and may have had something to do with the faces of the two, since it is on the face of Jesus that the glory is reflected according to other early Christian sources.<sup>67</sup> Like the theory of luminous emanation, this view of luminous faces also has earlier Jewish sources.<sup>68</sup> In any case, elsewhere in the Greek Bible the morphic resemblance is quite obvious: ‘Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.’<sup>69</sup> As to the angels’ worship of the exalted Jesus, this is a situation we see in several other sources, including both Adam and Enoch/Metatron.<sup>70</sup> Last but not least: in the passage above sonship is understood in the way in which Ps. 2.7 used it, namely, the exalted adoption of an elite figure in a certain moment. Given the occurrence of the angels, scholars have already pointed out the possible affinity between the early Christian author and the Qumran literature.<sup>71</sup>

To summarize the observations above regarding the Greek Bible, I see this passage as consisting of a collection of sonship principles already found separately in earlier Jewish sources, and their application to a specific historical figure, who became, for the first time in such an explicit manner, the center of a full-fledged son-cult.

Reminiscent of some of the Jewish theologoumena related to the divine name inscribed on some regalia is the following passage found in Rev. 19, describing the epiphany of Jesus:

His eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems;  
and he has a name inscribed<sup>72</sup> which no one knows but himself.  
He is clad in a robe dipped in blood,<sup>73</sup> and the name by which he  
is called is the word of God . . . On his robe and on his thigh he  
has a name inscribed, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.<sup>74</sup>

The nominal and morphic aspects are here quite evident. Interestingly enough, the regalia are related to names inscribed upon them. Most interesting is the mention of the thigh, an issue that may hint at some affinity to the biblical story of Jacob in Genesis.

In the context of these early Christian passages, mention should also be made of a very important discussion found in the late antiquity *Prayer of Joseph*, a short piece preserved by Origen:

I, Jacob, who is speaking to you, am also Israel, an angel of God,  
and a ruling spirit. Abraham and Isaac were created before any  
work. But, I, Jacob, who men called Jacob but whose name is  
Israel am he who God called Israel which means, a man seeing

God, because I am the firstborn<sup>75</sup> of every living thing to whom God gives live. And when I was coming up from Syrian Mesopotamia, Uriel, the angel of God, came forth and said that I [Jacob-Israel] had descended to earth and I have tabernacled among men and that I had been called by the name Jacob. He envied me and fought with me, and wrestled with me saying that his name and the name that is before every angel, was to be above mine. I told him his name and what rank he held among the sons of God. Are you not Uriel, the eighth after me? And I, Israel, the archangel of the power of the Lord and the chief captain among the sons of God? Am I not Israel, the first minister before the face of God? And I called upon my God by the inextinguishable name.<sup>76</sup>

The angelic form of Israel, some form of hypostasis reminiscent of the Philonic Logos, boasts about his special status, which is described both as the firstborn and as the first among the sons of God. Describing himself as the firstborn of all the living creatures, he claims to be also the angel of the face. As such he perceives himself as being superior to Uriel, who is the eighth lower angel in comparison to him. Interestingly enough, it seems that the structure of a complex unit compounded of eight angels was conceived of as pointing to some form of hierarchy. So, for example, Metatron claims that his exalted status notwithstanding, there are eight angels higher than him.<sup>77</sup> I assume that the last sentence points to some form of priesthood that the angel assumes for himself by calling the divine name.

Let us turn to the nominal aspect concerning Israel. This is obviously a theophoric name. However, in the text there are two explanations. The first, which is evident, is those who look to God, an interpretation that already had a short history.<sup>78</sup> The second is more subtle and found in the expression 'angel of the power of God'. I assume that this power-oriented etymology takes the Hebrew root *SRR*, which means to rule or to exercise power, as the source for the letters *SR* in the name. It should be emphasized that the term 'firstborn' implies sonship, and indeed there is an ancient gem in which Jacob is described as the son of Iao.<sup>79</sup> In short: here we have a theory about the sonship of a very high angel that is described as the angel of the face. As we shall try to show in Chapter 1, Metatron, also an angel of the divine face, may play the role of an angel in the Heikhalot literature, which comes considerably later.

Parallels to and even a continuation of these trends are found in many other examples dealing with divine names extant in early Jewish-Christian material, and these speculations found their way into Egyptian Christianity and Gnosticism.<sup>80</sup> The Samaritans even applied the divine name to a human,

Moses, and this seems to be part of an esoteric tradition.<sup>81</sup> The nexus between divine names and human individuals, in some cases described as Sons of God, angels, or other hypostatic entities, is found, as we shall see in Chapter 1, in some rabbinic sources as well as in medieval Jewish sources (and these will preoccupy us especially in the following two chapters). I would like to draw on this nexus in discussing material reflecting concerns from late antiquity regarding esoteric traditions surrounding the special status of divine names. To be sure, my selection of the specific and quite disparate material below does not imply that these texts impacted on later Hebrew material, but rather, such a selection presents an illustration of the very existence of some form of tradition long before the medieval Jewish masters returned to deal with these topics in a more concentrated manner.

Some theories related to the secret names of God or angels have been coupled at times with another mediator factor – the Son of God. In an important text belonging to the Valentinian school of Gnosis, *The Gospel of Truth*, we read:

Now, the name of the father is the son. It is He who in the beginning named what emanated from Him, remaining always the same. And He begot him as a son and gave him His name,<sup>82</sup> which He possessed. It is he in whose vicinity the father has all things; He has the name, and He has the son. The latter can be seen; but the name is invisible, for it alone is the mystery of the invisible, which comes into ears that are wholly full of it, because of him. And yet the father's name is not spoken. Rather, it is manifest in a son. Thus, great is the name! Who, then, can utter his name, the great name, but him alone who possesses the name – and the children of the name in whom the father's name reposed and who in turn reposed in his name! . . . for what does not exist has no name . . . but what exists, exists along with its name<sup>83</sup> . . . He is the father, His name is the son . . . The son alone gave names. So the name belongs to the father, just as the name of the father is the son.<sup>84</sup>

The affinity between the son, or the morphic aspect, and the name, or the nominal aspect, is therefore part of a well-defined vision. The former is the external manifestation, the latter the hidden one, invisible but found within the former. Another short Valentinian text, which is also close to Jewish-Christian views, provides elaboration of the relationship between the name and the possessor of the name. This text is interesting since it introduces, in addition to the more natural language of the birth of the son, the language of emanation, which suggests a closeness of identity, which is both morphic and nominal at the same time.<sup>85</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 1 in Hebrew

material belonging to the Heikhalot literature, face and name are at times conceived of as being identical, though no form of explicit filial relationship is mentioned.

Scholars had already pointed out the affinity between the Valentinian text and the Gnostic fragment quoted immediately below,<sup>86</sup> but as far as I am aware there is no detailed analysis of particular elements found in the next passage:

However much a portrait is inferior to an actual face, just so is the world worse than the living realm. Now, what is the cause of the (effectiveness of the) portrait? It is the majesty of the face that has furnished to the painter a prototype so that the portrait may be honored by his name. For the form was not reproduced with perfect fidelity, yet the name completed the lack within the act of modeling. And also god's invisible cooperates with what has been modeled to lend it credence.<sup>87</sup>

It has been pointed out that the inferiority of the creature in comparison to its model is Platonic in its source and accounts for the creature's imperfection.<sup>88</sup> However, I was unable to find an explanation for the source or meaning of the deficiency, or for the precise manner in which the deficiency is overcome, namely by conferring or possessing a name. In other words, according to the last passage the name that is somehow related to the divine realm is added to the creature. Without the addition of the name, so I assume, something is lacking in the lower replica. Moreover, the occurrence of the face is reminiscent of the affinity between the angel of the face and the divine names, recurrent in many Jewish texts and already adumbrated in my opinion in the Exodus discussions treated above.

Interestingly enough, in another Valentinian treatise the Demiurgos is described as follows:

He is embellished with all the names, which are an image of Him,<sup>89</sup> who possesses all the attributes and all the honours. For he too is called father and god and demiurge and king and judge and place<sup>90</sup> and dwelling and law.<sup>91</sup>

To be sure, no son is mentioned here, only a father. However this father is not of the highest divine realm, but rather of a lower one. Especially important for our discussions is the fact that there is a clear affinity between the names of the highest divine realm, and the concept of image. This affinity may have something to do with the concept of face and name, as seen in the short Valentinian source quoted above. This demiurge seems to be an angel, an archon.<sup>92</sup> To what extent the figurative aspects of the letters of the divine names are conceived of as representing the divine or the

angelic power is not clear. However, it may be that we have here some form of linguistic iconism, which means that the form of letters constitutes the visual aspect of revelation, as we shall see later in the case of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo and Abraham Abulafia.

We may speak about three stages of the name in the *Gospel of the Truth*: that which is found with the father, that which is given to the son, and that which the son gives to lower entities, including Adam. This threefold existence of the name is reminiscent of discussions found in a medieval treatise by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the prophet of Erfurt, a *Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, that relate to permutations of consonants of Yaho'el, discussed in Chapter 2. According to Layton's interpretation the prototype is Adamas, a divine figure in whose image Adam has been created, a view reminiscent of Philo of Alexandria. Thus, the lower being is completed by receiving the name which points to the relationship between the lower and the higher images, and it may well be that Adam is a common denominator of God, of Adamas the prototype, and of the created Adam.<sup>93</sup>

A similar view that assumes that completion is achieved by the descent of the divine name on the anthropoid figure of Jesus is found in another Judeo-Christian text, the so-called *Excerpts of Theodotes*, preserved by Clement of Alexandria. There it is said that:

At the beginning, the angels had been baptized in the redemption of the name which descended upon Jesus, under the form of a dove, which rescued him. For Jesus himself needed redemption so that he will not be kept by the Ennoia of deficiency.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, the state of redemption is achieved by the descent of the name both onto Jesus and the angels and, at least in the first case, such redemption has to do with repairing some form of deficiency. The reception of the name involves an ontological change. It is plausible to assume that the image stands for the formal aspect of a certain being, while the name constitutes the more dynamic power that is inserted within it. This vision of the name as different from the image is found elsewhere in the *Excerpts of Theodotes*, where the name of God is related to Jesus while the image is related to the Holy Spirit.<sup>95</sup>

Interestingly enough, immediately afterwards the reception of the 'seal of truth', which plausibly stands for the name, is mentioned. The Greek syntagm *aletheia sphragisma*, namely 'the seal of truth', seems to be a precise parallel of the Hebrew phrase *Hotam 'Emmet*, which is also a designation of the divine according to some rabbinic sources.<sup>96</sup> This vision of the seal may reflect an earlier usage as exemplified by a text of Philo's (which somehow probably stems from the Bible),<sup>97</sup> where the term *sphragis* is used for the Logos in the context of the story of the creation of man in the divine

image,<sup>98</sup> while in the *Odes of Solomon* the seal of God is found on the angels.<sup>99</sup> Very important in this context is the theory of sealing the six extremities of the world by using permutations of the three consonants *YH W*, according to *Sefer Yetzirah*.<sup>100</sup> Last but not least, there is an affinity between the view of the seal in relation to the image of man, namely his external form, and the sealing of the different parts of the body by means of various magical names, for apotropaic reasons.<sup>101</sup> The motif of the seal, when it appears with the paradigmatic hypostatic entity, as indeed happens both in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages, reflects the morphic form that connects the father and the son in the relation of sonship, even when it is understood metaphorically. On the other hand, the seal is often also related to the name of the person, and thus reflects also the nominal aspect of sonship.

On the other hand, I would note that as a proper name, 'Emmet, 'truth', occurs in both Hebrew and Greek ancient texts. For example, a female angel named *Aletheia* is found in a Gnostic text<sup>102</sup> while in Qumranic literature we find an angel designated as *Mal'akh 'Ammito*;<sup>103</sup> elsewhere in this literature it seems plausible that the word 'Emmet points to God,<sup>104</sup> as is the case later on in Arabic where the term *Haqq* means both God and truth, and also in Samaritan thought<sup>105</sup> and plausibly also in Christianity.<sup>106</sup> It is interesting to examine the meaning of the phrase *benei'emet*, the sons of 'Emmet, which occurs in Qumranic literature as a potential reference to the Sons of God.<sup>107</sup> It is plausible that a type of hierarchy exists consisting of three levels: God as truth, the angel of truth and the sons of truths. If the sons of truths are subordinated to the angel of truth, we may speak about a type of double sonship, a concept that I shall develop later on in this Introduction.

This vision of Truth as a name of God may explain why the word plays a role similar to the divine name in instances related to both the creation and destruction of the Golem. In both the case of the Gnostic texts and in the Golem traditions, special words represent the dwelling of God within an anthropoid structure.<sup>108</sup> Just as the angels function by dint of the divine name found within or on them, so too does the Golem and – as we shall see in the second section of the next chapter – man in general. In this context I would like to mention a third important instance of the acquisition of the divine name, in this case involving the act of being clothed in the name as in a garment. This instance is ancient and was available to Jewish masters until the Middle Ages.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the relationship between the various entities and the divine name reflects some form of special status or power.

In the *Tripartite Tractate*, another important Gnostic text, we learn that: the aeon of the Truth, being a unity and multiplicity, is honored

with little and great names according to the power of each to grasp it – by way of analogy, like a spring which is what it is, yet flows into rivers and lakes and canals and branches, or like a root which extends into trees with branches and fruit, or like a human body which is partitioned in an indivisible way into members of members, primary members and secondary, great [and] small.<sup>110</sup>

On the grounds of the last late antiquity quotations I would contend that if we put together Philo's views on the Logos as son of God, name, image, and seal found in disparate discussions in his writings, it would be possible to see the Alexandrine thinker as one of the major sources for the theories reflected in the Jewish-Christian, Gnostic and neo-Platonic sources.<sup>111</sup>

To return to the passage adduced above from the *Excerpts of Theodotus*: I assume that the difference between 'image' and 'name' has something to do with the difference between the *tzelem* which stands in Gen. 1.26–27 for the corporeal resemblance between God and man, and the divine spirit or breath in Gen. 2.7 conceived of as being higher. Interestingly enough, in the latter case when the divine spirit is infused in man, the Tetragrammaton refers to God, as opposed to the *tzelem*, which is apparently related to the name 'Elohim. It should be mentioned that the last consonants of the biblical words dealing with Adams's infusion by the divine breath constitute the term *hotam*, seal, as noted by pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms.<sup>112</sup>

According to another Gnostic text, attributed to Monoimos the Arab (possibly of Samaritan extraction, hence with Christian leanings while simultaneously reflecting Greek philosophical themes and Jewish theologoumena), it is assessed that the supernal son is symbolized by:

that one indivisible tittle is . . . one tittle of the [letter] *iota*,<sup>113</sup> with many faces, and innumerable eyes,<sup>114</sup> and countless names, and this [tittle] is an image of that perfect invisible man . . . constitutes a perfect son of a perfect man.<sup>115</sup>

There can be little doubt that the son here reflects the duality of the many names and faces, an issue that I discussed above. I assume that the tittle of the *iota* may be interpreted as the beginning of the letter that commences the name of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is the numberless names that interest us more. I shall have more to say about a hypostatic entity called by many names in Chapter 2, where Metatron is called both by the divine name, and by numerous other names, all in the context of being named son.

Let me point out that the theophoric nature attributed to the mediator as Son diminishes in some cases the personal aspects of the figure that is imagined to play this role, and contributes to its more impersonal nature. In fact, we may describe a central process in sonship as the oscillation between

the personal and impersonal constructs of this category, reflecting the Jewish elements and the Hellenistic ones, respectively.

#### 4. *Some distinctions concerning sonship*

Let us address another issue which may have repercussions for the idea of sonship in ancient texts and for medieval Jewish views of emanation (to be further discussed in Chapter 4).

According to scholarship, there are two main modes of sonship in the ancient Near East: the first is the adoptive model, of Mesopotamian origins. This mode is represented by the idea of the initially human king who is adopted at a particular moment, when he is installed in his function as the Son of God, and thereby acquires supernatural qualities. The second mode is inborn sonship, represented by the Egyptian vision of Pharaoh, in which special qualities are inborn at the birth of the king.<sup>116</sup> In the first case, we may speak about a strong apothecic theory similar to phenomena known in the Roman world.<sup>117</sup> In the second case, we may speak about a more theophanic assumption, whereby the king is a representation here on earth of God, who has within himself something divine from birth. Aspects of these two conceptualizations may have influenced the development of the perception of the Israelite kings, as the schools of myth-and-ritual claim, as well as influencing the Enochic movement.<sup>118</sup>

For the sake of the more general discussion both in this Introduction as well as in the rest of this study, let me address what I would like to call 'sonship principles'. In the following chapters, I shall address texts found in the Jewish mystical traditions in which the term Son, *Ben* in Hebrew, or more rarely *Bar* in Aramaic, appears, and more rarely anthropomorphic structures that function like a son, especially the Zoharic concept of *Ze' yir 'Anppin*, the Lesser Countenance, a divine son figure, and the dramatic role it played in the economy of Lurianic Kabbalah. However, though these texts are not rare, they constitute a minority in comparison to many other texts where the term 'Son' occurs. It goes without saying that the vast majority of such texts dealing with human beings who are not theophoric mediators, or fallen angels as such, will remain beyond the scope of the present inquiry. My main interest however, is in occurrences of these terms in the context of a strong affiliation to God and the assumption of some form of special status within a metaphysical hierarchy. Whether the connection to God is congenital or acquired is an issue that, while important, does not impact on the topic I address. Thus, connectedness to the divine being is not a sufficient criterion for inclusion in the following survey, just as the mere usage of the term Son does not suffice for a text to be included in my analysis. Rather, I strive to address texts in which both

the morphic and the nominal aspects appear, which create a fuller religious category that can be called morphonominalism, though I do not do so in an exclusive manner.

To be sure, the term *Ben* in its various forms, including the plural form *Banay* and the singular *Beniy*, 'my son', are found in many cases in Jewish mystical literature in narratives in which God or a Great Angel uses these words to address the mystic who has climbed to the supernal realm. However, in such cases the words do not point to an ontic transformation but, rather, constitute a metaphorical salute or welcoming, nothing more. Neither does the use of 'Son' in contexts in which the entire nation is involved, as some designation for a corporate personality, attract my attention.<sup>119</sup> Rather, here it is just another way of expressing fondness. The criteria that guides the following selection of texts is as follows: I assume that the coexistence of morphic and nominal affinities between God and another entity, namely external similarities, which include facial similarities and those of regalia, together with the use of a name similar to that of God, justifies the relevant entity's inclusion in the category of Son even if the term Son itself does not occur, and only where language indicating strong affection between God and the transformed human is used.

Let me turn from the linguistic units related to sonship to look at its various categories. Though distinctions made in the following chapters are attempts to identify major groups of ideas related to sonship, and describe them by means of modern terminology, the very idea that there is more than one category of sonship is certainly not new. The awareness of the possible existence of different kinds of sonship is evident in a Gnostic Valentinian text attributed by Origen to Heracleon, where we read that:

The world 'children' must be understood in three ways: first, by nature; secondly, by inclination; and third by merit. 'By nature', he goes on, '(the child) is one begotten by someone himself begotten, and is properly called 'child'; by inclination, when one who does the will of another person by his own inclination is called the child of him whose will he does; by merit, when some are known as children of hell, or of darkness, and lawlessness, and offspring of snakes and vipers . . . He now calls them children of the Devil, not because the Devil produced any of them, but because by doing the works of the Devil they become like him.'<sup>120</sup>

Here we have an attempt, based on material found in the Greek Bible, to organize the various forms of sonship. Grounded in dualism, it is reminiscent of the Dead Sea distinction between Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness. Interestingly enough, though adoption is not a distinct

category, the last two cases imply that imitation of the other can create a relationship described as sonship.

Through close scrutiny of Jewish mystical literatures I shall survey four main types of sonship that appear to different degrees in the different schools that constitute Jewish mysticism:

- a) **Generation:** either born in time or atemporal, the Son of God reflects his Father either by his face, countenance or head, or by his name, or by both by acting as a reflection of the supernal source. This category assumes an organic linkage, a birth in the image, which is a congenital issue. In general this category is represented by the Egyptian theory of the 'King as Son' and this approach is best represented later on in some early Christian perceptions of the savior, which reflect Jewish mythologoumena, as conceived by an organic infusion of the divine spirit. From this point of view, the creation of Adam in Gen. 2.27 through an infusion of the divine spirit is a form of blueprint. This category reflects the first view of Heracleon 'by nature'. In Christianity this category takes the form of the incarnation of the father in the son, while in the sources to be discussed below this is quite rare and perhaps limited to Sabbatai Tzevi alone.
- b) **Emanation:** here, the Son of God is similar to the Father because he has emanated from him. The affinity is less organic and more continuous, and thus the morphyic element is less important. We saw this view in the Valentinian source quoted above, and we shall revert to it below when discussing Philo's view. According to theological views canonized by the Council of Nicaea, consubstantiality is conceived of as a dogma that resorts to the concept of the *homoousia* together with the concept of the only-begotten Son.<sup>121</sup> In many cases below, this type of sonship is evident.
- c) **Adoption:** the Son of God does not emerge congenitally from the divine but, rather, though initially human he is subsequently adopted by the divine as part of the spiritual development of an entity, an exalted human, who becomes a son. This view represents the gist of the Mesopotamian theory that the king is adopted when he is installed (though according to Simo Parpola a view of the king as a son born of God is also found). The major force behind the emergence of this type of son is the divine power, which reacts to certain developments on the human side. So, for example, according to Ps. 89.27-28 the return of the Jews to God and their calling Him 'My Father' will trigger their adoption as firstborn sons. Philo also had an adoptive vision of the sonship of men, and according to Ebionite Christology, Jesus was adopted at the time of his baptism,

while according to the *Extracts from Theodotos* 33.1 Jesus was adopted, and similarly in psilanthropism.<sup>122</sup>

This category may also include the concept of *homo assumptus*, and is implied in rabbinic literature insofar as the righteous are concerned, or as Enoch/Metatron was understood in some cases (much of this will be discussed in Chapter 1 below). In the Magical Greek Papyri, the magician becomes a Son of God at a certain moment, which allows him not only to perform miracles but also to ascend on high.

- d) **Vocation:** a human becomes a Son of God as the result of a spiritual development that is initiated by man, while God or the divine realm is less active in the choice. It is the human that takes the initiative and adheres to a cosmic structure entailing sonship, becoming a 'son' in the process. Though the language of adoption may also be eventually used in this category, the logic of the system distinguishes this view from the preceding one. It is in this category that sonship becomes not a predetermined election but a *vocation*, and for this sake particular techniques are proposed and even recommended for the aspirants.
- e) The previous four categories are part of the *imaginaire* of the open channels between the divine and the mundane realms that I mentioned at the beginning of this Introduction. While the first two categories are basically theophanic, the other two are much more apotheotic. It should be emphasized that in some cases, different forms of sonship may be conjugated together in the same system, generating what can be described as an additional and complex fifth model.

So, for example, we should be especially interested in the complex fifth type of sonship found in the Philonic vision of the Logos as both Son of God and as father of the sage, which had an immense impact on Christian thought, first Paul, and later on Gnosticism. In the context of Deut. 14.1, 32.18, 32.6, and Gen. 1.26, 42.11, and implicitly also Exod. 4.22, the Alexandrian thinker wrote the following description of what can be called a theory of three types of sonship:

But they who live in the knowledge of the One, are rightly called 'Sons of God', as Moses also acknowledges when he says, 'Ye are the sons of the Lord God' and 'God who begat Thee;' and in another place, 'Is not He Himself thy father?' Indeed, with those whose soul is thus disposed it follows that they hold moral beauty to be the only good . . . But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a Son of God, let him press to take his place under God's First-born, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, their

ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called 'Beginning' and the Name of God and His Word [Logos], and the Man after His image [*eikona anthropos*] and 'he that sees' that is Israel. And therefore I was moved a few pages above to praise the virtues of those who say that 'We are sons of one man.' For if we have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God, we may be sons of His invisible image, the most holy Word. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God. And often indeed in the law-book, we find another phrase, 'sons of Israel' hearers that is sons of him that sees.<sup>123</sup>

Thus, the Logos is explicitly presented as a Son of God, is called by His name, and the humans who follow his path are described as children, because they are created in the image of the Logos, namely of the son, himself the image of God, an image shared by the children. However, close as the passage is to the theory of creation in image in Gen. 1.26, here the image is not morphic, namely related to an external shape, since Philo opposed anthropomorphism. Here it refers to the intellect as the real image of God, and of man.

Philo's aniconism is a result of his drawing his theory of the nature of the Logos from Greek philosophical sources. He distinguishes here between three types of sonship: that of the Logos in relation to God, that of those humans described as Sons of God, and finally those who are only the Sons of Man, namely Sons of the Logos. We may assume that the Sons of God are the elite of the past like Moses or Enoch, who were taken to the immediate presence of God and to the spiritual world. According to several instances in Philo's writings, Moses became what he called a God. Though there are two types of humans that are sons of a supernal intellectual entity: – Sons of God and Sons of the Logos, – we may assume that in the present Philo assumes that the Sons of the Logos are the most relevant category. In any case, we may imagine, following this passage, that there is a hierarchy in which God, Logos and the Sons of Man constitute a double sonship, existent in the present.

I would like to emphasize that the double sonship represents a type of mediation that differs from the more cosmological aspects of the single sonship, which is concerned much more with the way in which the supernal divinity created the world. Double sonship, on the other hand, is concerned with creating a framework for religious and in many cases mystical life, rather than with knowledge of the structure of the universe per se.

The question may be asked as to what extent this passage constitutes an original Philonic interpretation, which attributed to an archangel the supreme attributes mentioned above and linked it to the Greek theories of

Logos, or whether Philo inherited a certain hypothetical theory about the important role of such a Great Angel from some Jewish circles or traditions, and only added his intellectualistic interpretation. This is hard to answer and for the time being any proposal is a matter of speculation. The existence of the traditions about the Great Angel of Magharyah mentioned several times above facilitates the possibility that the second alternative is plausible. Let me draw attention to the fact that though the divine name is attributed to the Logos, here or elsewhere there are no speculations related to the details of the linguistic components of this unit, which is no doubt indicative of the marginalization of the Hebrew language in Hellenistic Judaism.

It should be pointed out that it seems that Philo is the first author we know to have imagined a supernal transhistorical being called Israel, of which the historical Jews are descendent. Subsequently, as seen above, such a view of Israel is found in the *Prayer of Joseph*, and in many other instances in the Middle Ages, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 3. However, what seems to be quintessential in Philo is the intellectual nature of the Logos, which reflects the nature of the affinity between Israel and the 'sons'. It seems to me undeniable that such an affinity must be intellectual, part of what I would call the Gestalt-coherence between various parts of a religious system. This type of coherence emerges from an exchange of properties between the father and the hypostatic son, and between the hypostatic son and the human son, and in Philo's case the main property is wisdom. In fact, even the projection of the title of son on a hypostatic entity creates an interchange of properties that is enforced by the 'intellectual' addition.

Such an assumption, that the central cohesive factor is an intellectual entity, raises the question about the validity of the genetic relationship between the sons of the Logos and the hypostatic Logos, and even more so between the Jews as a nation. In other words, the type of affinity presupposed between the sons of Israel is less national and organic or, to formulate it differently, it is less a matter of corporate personality, but much more a matter of cohesion between people whose spiritual orientation is similar: all see God or behave in a similar manner. This is quite a different approach to the biblical and the rabbinic one, which are much more particularistic. Instead, the assumption is that there is an intellectual affinity between the source of knowledge on high and those who may become the sons of such a source, by their virtue and intellection. Such a universalistic position will recur in some instances in the writings of Jewish medieval philosophers and in those of Abraham Abulafia, to be analyzed in Chapter 3. However, what is even more important from the point of view of the history of religion, the allegorical understanding of Israel and sonship as proposed by Philo adumbrates the Christian view of *Verus Israel*, a view that, to be sure, Philo did not formulate against the Jews in an explicit manner. In

both cases, however, the defining moment of sonship is neither genetic nor ritualistic.

In this context we may ask whether Philo considered himself a son, and if the answer is yes, then what type of son, of God or of the Logos? No doubt the Alexandrian thinker saw himself as someone who had had special forms of religious experiences, namely ecstatic ones, and he might have thought himself, though I cannot prove it, to be a son of a divine entity. In any case, Philo's famous description of his ecstatic experience in *Quis rerum divinarum heres* 69–70, may help to point to the way he felt he was in contact with the supernal world.

This Philonic theory of double sonship had an impact on the Paulinian vision of Jesus and has been combined with the theory of individual Christians becoming sons by adoption, quite explicitly in Irenaeus (see note), while Abraham Abulafia's understanding of himself as an adopted son depends on his vision of the cosmic Agent Intellect as a son. In fact, the more cosmic visions of sonship open the door to a degree of adoptionist self-understanding for some individuals. This situation can be designated as a 'double sonship', the first being genetic or emanative and related to a supernal Son of God, the second one being adoptive, and related to an ordinary human. It seems, therefore, that Philo's passage may represent the first formulation of such a double theory of sonship. Only later is it found in the Greek Bible, especially in Rom. 8.14–15, 23, though in an implicit manner.

Here, the first, hypostatic category of sonship is described as intentionally oriented to generate the second, human sonship. This passage, like other texts dealing with double sonship to be discussed in the following pages, suggests some form of coherence, namely a resemblance between the two sons. Whether this theory is a new construct, forged for the first time in Alexandria, or a reverberation of the Babylonian theory (where the king is the great man, the shadow of God and also his son, and man is the shadow of the king), is hard to ascertain. In any case, it should be pointed out that the 'first' sonship is paradigmatic or exemplary, and serves as a source of inspiration for the 'second' human one. In Christianity, however, this exemplarism is double: that of the exceptional personality of Jesus and his vicissitudes, and the more paradigmatic, metaphysical one, Jesus as the instrument of creation, and the aim of worship, for example. Such a double sort of exemplarism seems to be absent in the Jewish texts to be dealt with below.

The distinction between the two dimensions of the double sonship, the generative-emanational on the one hand, and the adoptional on the other, is important for understanding the appeal of this model in the history of religion, including the texts to be discussed in the following chapters: on the

one hand there is a strong metaphysical dimension supplied by the belief in the extraordinary being understood as the Son of God, and on the other hand, the more existential belief in the redemptive potential of such an entity, imagined to be capable of rescuing humans by his passion and love (in Christianity), or by the act of intellection stemming from an hypostatic intellect described as Son (in philosophical views like that of Philo's and others to be analyzed in Chapter 3). A representative of a transcendental entity descending toward the mundane world is conceived of as capable of elevating the human, fallen in Christianity, or *in potentia* in some forms of philosophies, toward a higher form of being, sometimes described explicitly through a filial relationship *vis-à-vis* the Son. In the more magic models of sonship, the divinity descends upon the human in order to change him/her into a son, while in the other main model to be discussed in Chapter 4, the theurgical one, the human as son is capable of having an impact on the supernal son, by means of the human's ritual activities.

In the following chapters I will make an effort to deal with the complexities related mainly to ontological visions of the Son of God as reflected in Jewish texts belonging to different schools of Jewish mysticism. As in various other studies, I believe that learning from developments in scholarship in late antiquity makes it possible to better understand certain medieval phenomena.

To formulate the project that I propose here methodologically: given the fact that more and more scholars perceive the Enochic movement as an important resource for understanding later developments in the Qumran literature, inter-testamental pseudepigraphy, early Christianity,<sup>124</sup> and even developments in forms of Jewish mysticism in late antiquity and their repercussions in the Middle Ages, the question may be asked whether our understanding of all of these developments would not profit from a broader view that discerns the differences as well as the affinities between specific themes occurring in the various corpora. In other words, the affinities between a special ontic status, for example, in the form of election or sonship and the conferring of the name of God on this entity, may point to the existence of a single constellation of ideas that operates, *mutatis mutandis*, in different corpora written over centuries. This particular constellation of ideas assumes a double continuum between, on the one hand, the highest divine realm and the morphic resemblance that produces the external aspect of sonship; and, on the other hand, between God and His name conferred upon the Son, what we can call a nominal continuum. In a way, the second continuum at times explains the dynamics of the first. Whether theophanic (as in seeing in sonship an ontic fact in the special status of the vice-regent from the outset), or as part of an apothecotic event (as in the adoption of a mortal human figure), these ideas continue a lengthy development that has

been enriched and altered by encounters with other forms of thought, such as Neo-Aristotelian material stemming mainly from the philosophical writings of Al-Farabi and Maimonides.

While the following two chapters will make this clearer, I wish to point out now that in this constellation, the nominal element is one of the central components even if terms relating to sonship may not always appear. Unlike the strong emphasis on and centrality of man, the 'Ben 'Adam' in the inter-testamental literature, which organizes other related aspects like Election, Righteousness, Messianism and angelic status,<sup>125</sup> in the Hebrew written literature, the nominal aspects are already important in the Talmudic and Heikhalot literature, and in many of the various forms of Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages. While the passage from Dan. 7 dealing with the *Bar Nasha'* is cardinal in the more anthropomorphic-ontological constructs of late antiquity, the 23 verses of Exodus are more important in the constellation of ideas that we deal with in this study. The importance attributed to the divine name in the medieval material that we are analyzing overshadowed the anthropomorphic elements found in Daniel, even though it did not obliterate them. It should also be noted that in 4 Ezra 7.27-30, God refers to the Messiah as His Son<sup>126</sup> and to the ascent of the Messiah on high in a way reminiscent of Enoch's apotheosis.<sup>127</sup>

Another development that is plausibly independent of the theories above concerns the existence of a theory in some ancient Jewish and Jewish-Christian texts that describes the emergence of an exalted entity from God by a process of emanation, beginning with an element found within the divine that permeates it. In some of its forms, this theory even assumes the re-absorption of the emanated entity within the emanator. The earliest evidence of such a theory is found in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a Jewish-Hellenistic treatise written in the first century BCE, in which a cosmic entity called Wisdom is described as follows:

For Wisdom is more mobile than any motion, she pervades and permeates all things by reason of her pureness. She is an exhalation from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty, therefore nothing tainted insinuates itself into her. She is an effluence of everlasting light, an unblemished mirror of the active power of God and the image of his goodness. Though but one, she can do everything; and abiding in herself she renews all things ... She is fairer than the sun, and surpasses every constellation; Compared to the light of day, she is found more radiant ... She stretches in might from pole to pole and effectively orders all things.<sup>128</sup>

The hypostatic entity referred to as Wisdom is described as an 'exhalation' or, more precisely, as a breath, *atmis*. From this description, the emanated seems to reflect an uninterrupted connection to the divine. The Greek term that translates as 'effluence' is *aporroia*, and this same term can also be translated as emanation according to some scholars.<sup>129</sup> According to Dodds, the foregoing passage seems to be the first instance of a theory of emanation<sup>130</sup> that does not assume a strong subordination of the emanated power in relation to the emanator as part of a stark hierarchy. The relationship of Wisdom to the world is described such that the former transcends multiplicity and changes, while remaining one and unchangeable. In other words, there is an essential identity between Wisdom and God that is quite conspicuous in the theological system of the book *Wisdom of Solomon*, which denies mediation.<sup>131</sup> I wonder whether the passage does not indicate a duality of the inner presence of God as breath stemming from the *Dynamis* and the external aspect, reflected by the luminous component stemming from the Glory. In this book, Wisdom is conceived of as a savior figure that is described in 10.17-19, inter alia, as the power that saved the Jews from Egypt<sup>132</sup> and as a synthronic entity.<sup>133</sup>

The concept of emanation appears also in the Valentinian passage quoted above referring to the emergence of the son from the father. Though it also employs more organic language regarding birth, the passage is nevertheless grounded in an emanational structure. This emanational position is explicated in relation to sonship in Origen's *De Principiis*. Origen explicitly recognizes the source of his interpretation of the New Testament Christology in a more emanative form<sup>134</sup> and writes later on:

Let us now examine the expression, [from the *Wisdom of Solomon*] 'Wisdom is the purest efflux of the glory of the Almighty;' and let us first consider what the glory of the omnipotent God is, and then we shall also understand what is its efflux. As no one can be a father without having a son, nor a master without possessing a servant, so even God cannot be called omnipotent unless there exist those over whom He may exercise His power; and therefore, that God may be shown to be almighty, it is necessary that all things should exist.<sup>135</sup>

Beforehand, Origen described the breath as follows: 'Another power accordingly is produced, which exists with properties of its own, a kind of breath, as Scripture says, of the primal and unbegotten power of God, deriving from Him its being, and never at any time non-existent'<sup>136</sup> and as such it is envisioned as identical with the son:

By which it is shown that that breath of God's power always

existed, having no beginning save God Himself. Nor was it fitting that there should be any other beginning save God Himself, from whom it derives its birth. And according to the expression of the apostle, that Christ 'is the power of God,' as it ought to be termed not only the breath of the power of God, but power out of power.<sup>137</sup>

The theme of breath as expressing a theory of emanation, reminiscent of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, is particularly interesting as it recurs in much later writings, for example, in the mid-thirteenth century Nahmanides' influential *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, that sets out a kabbalistic vision of emanation on the one hand and of *apokatastasis* (a view found already in Origen) on the other. Elsewhere in the same book, the great Alexandrian theologian writes:

But even now I think it necessary to drop a word, although cursorily, of warning, since the question before us is, how wisdom is the purest efflux of the glory of the Almighty, lest any one should think that the title of Omnipotent was anterior in God to the birth of Wisdom, through whom He is called Father, seeing that Wisdom, which is the Son of God, is the purest efflux of the glory of the Almighty. Let him who is inclined to entertain this suspicion hear the undoubted declaration of Scripture pronouncing, 'In wisdom hast Thou made them all,' and the teaching of the Gospel, that 'by Him were all things made, and without Him nothing was made;' and let him understand from this that the title of Omnipotent in God cannot be older than that of Father; for it is through the Son that the Father is almighty. But from the expression 'glory of the Almighty,' of which glory Wisdom is the efflux, this is to be understood, that Wisdom, through which God is called omnipotent, has a share in the glory of the Almighty. For through Wisdom, which is Christ, God has power over all things, not only by the authority of a ruler, but also by the voluntary obedience of subjects. And that you may understand that the omnipotence of Father and Son is one and the same, as God and the Lord are one and the same with the Father.<sup>138</sup>

Though there can be no doubt about the fact that the Greek Bible and the *Wisdom of Solomon* served as Origen's main intellectual sources, I wonder to what extent the Platonic distinction between God the Father and the intelligible, apparently understood as a son, played a role in the above passage.<sup>139</sup> To turn to another relevant passage from the same book of Origen's:

Therefore He is the efflux of the glory of God in this respect, that He is omnipotent – the pure and limpid Wisdom herself – glorified as the *efflux of omnipotence* or of glory. And that it may be more clearly understood what the glory of omnipotence is, we shall add the following. God the Father is omnipotent, because He has power over all things, i.e., over heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, and all things in them. And He exercises His power over them by means of His Word, because at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth.<sup>140</sup>

It is evident that following the Greek Bible, the name of the Son is conceived of as omnipotent and as once again transforming the mediator into a theophoric entity. Last but not least, the theory of Wisdom in the *Wisdom of Solomon* also exercises influence in the way in which Origen describes wisdom as a mirror: 'But wisdom is also called the stainless mirror of the *energeia* or working of God.'<sup>141</sup>

In these passages, we find a combination of emanative and impersonal sonship on the one hand, and the birth of the son on the other, the latter category dealing with morphic and nominal similarities between Father and Son. The problematic that interests me most in the last citations is the oscillation between the morphic-genetic elements of sonship and the emanative element, which tends to obscure the shape of the son and instead describe an elongation of the Father within an emanated entity called the son. This problematic will reappear in medieval Jewish texts in which emanation becomes important, and both sources reflect the quandaries created by the interaction of anthropomorphic traditions, as found in the Hebrew and Greek Bible on the one hand, with Hellenistic philosophical material found in Jewish, Alexandrian and Pagan sources on the other hand. In a way this tension, which cannot be solved in a simple manner and requires elaborated theological discourses, reflects the stark difference between Greek-philosophical and cosmically oriented ways of thought, and the more personalistic ones, characteristic of the Hebrew Bible and some aspects of later Judaism.

I would like to now address a passage found in the second-century Christian author Justin Martyr, whose importance for understanding ancient Jewish mythologoumena and their possible reverberations in later Jewish mysticism has been pointed out by Shlomo Pines.<sup>142</sup> According to this passage, some figures envisioned Christ in a special manner:

[a] And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment

executed on Sodom . . . [b] the power sent from the father of all which appears to Moses, or to Abraham, or to Jacob, is called an Angel, because He comes to men (for by Him the commands of the Father have been proclaimed to men); it is called Glory because He appears in a vision sometimes that cannot be borne; is called man, and a human being, because He appears arrayed in such forms as the Father pleases; and they called Him the word, because He carries tidings from the Father to men; but maintain that this power is indivisible and inseparable<sup>143</sup> from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens; as when it sinks, the light sinks along with it; so the Father, when He chooses, say they, causes His power to spring forth, and when he chooses, He makes it return to Himself. In this way, they teach, He made the angels.<sup>144</sup>

The group – whose views differ from that of Justin’s (cf. [a]), described in passage [b] – was (as has been plausibly pointed out by Shlomo Pines) a Jewish one.<sup>145</sup> According to Justin, unlike the later Christian visions of Jesus, this group conceived of the savior as both a man and an angel. Moreover, this hypostatic/angelic entity was described as appearing in revelations in at least two instances, the Judgment of Sodom and the Revelation of the Bush, and in both cases the Bible describes the divine apparition by resorting to the Tetragrammaton. I assume that at least to a certain extent the description of the supreme angel as springing forth owes a debt to Philo, who describes the firstborn son as Logos and as springing forth from the Father, as pointed out above.<sup>146</sup> It seems, therefore, that it is possible to identify Philo’s view as representing an important parallel to the group described by Justin: in both cases, emanation does not mean separation or a significant diminution of the divine essence found in the emanated entity. Thus a redemptive power, designated as Christ, is described at the same time as Son of God, angel and man, and repeatedly represented by the occurrences of the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew Bible.

This vision of Jesus as an angel is an ancient though rare view in Christianity and, as pointed out above, it is a view that subsequently disappeared from this religion, though still lingering in some Gnostic sources until the Middle Ages. Though differing from Justin’s non-Trinitarian view, the passage [b] belonging to the hypothetical Jewish group displays a certain similarity to Justin’s own description of an entity called Glory, angel and man – as opposed to son or redeemer – extending from the divine. I am especially interested in the idea that a man can be described as an angel and even as Glory. In Justin’s Christian theology as well as in the ancient Jewish

theology he preserved, this entity originates in the divine realm and manifests itself below while maintaining its supernal nature; while both views dealing with theophanies, the Ashkenazi discussions, described in Chapter 2, basically portray apotheoses. This cardinal difference notwithstanding, the attribution of three ranks to the same entity: Divine, angel and man, is shared by the ancient theologies and by the medieval traditions of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, a point that is crucial to my claim regarding the existence of earlier sources for themes found in the Ashkenazi texts. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that an anonymous Ashkenazi text, to be analyzed later in detail in Chapter 2, resorts like Justin to the angelic status of the son, which is absent in most of the ancient Jewish theologies.

Let us turn to the view that an angel or angels that is/are not separated from the transcendental divinity can be returned to it. This continuity of form is reminiscent of the description of Wisdom found above. The rejoining of the divine power and its emanation is predicated upon the organic continuity. Interestingly enough, a vision that deals with the return of a number of central figures to God in lieu of dying is found in the accounts Josephus Flavius gave for the disappearances of Enoch, Elijah and Moses. As James Tabor has pointed out, Josephus utilized a particular kind of language to describe the departure of those special figures in terms of returning to God.<sup>147</sup>

It seems, therefore, that similar views describing an emanation that does not sever the ontic affinity between the emanator and the emanated, and that posits a possible return of the latter within the former, were found in some ancient Jewish sources. Such a concept seems to also underlie the somewhat later theosophical-theurgical understandings of the theological sin of cutting the branches, *qitzutz bi-netiy’ot*, attributed in rabbinic literature either to Elisha ben Abbuya or to Adam.<sup>148</sup> Both the Christian theories of sonship relating to a Great Angel and the Jewish conceptions of angels, including the angels Metatron and Gabriel, as we shall see in the next chapter, place a real emphasis on subordination in order to create what I propose to designate as a non-agonic type of sonship. Christianity emphasizes the atoning role of the ultimate son in relation to men, rather than the agonic feature in relation to the father. Unlike sonship in Gnosticism and, to a great extent, in Freudianism, the agonic situation is avoided at least in terms of explicit references, an issue that will be treated in the Concluding Remarks. Interestingly enough, Christianity rejected, since the fourth century, the angelic status of Jesus, and preferred the integration of the tension between a first and second God within a structure of trinity. A similar tendency is found in the case of Metatron, described as the ‘Lesser YHWH’ in numerous sources in rabbinic Judaism and in Jewish mystical literatures, as we shall see in plenty of cases in the following chapters.

For the sake of the discussion below, it is important to draw attention to the view of an eminent scholar of the history of Jewish philosophy regarding the term 'son'. Harry A. Wolfson assessed that in Jewish philosophy 'son' stands for an ontological entity of a spiritual nature that emerged from God. He describes the concept as follows:

In the history of philosophy an immediate creation of God has been sometimes called a son of God. Thus Philo describes the intelligible world, which was an immediate creation of God and created by Him from eternity, as a son of God.<sup>149</sup>

This is a non-apocalyptic and non-anthropomorphic approach to sonship that bears significant similarity to some of the medieval Hebrew sources, some of which will be discussed at the end of Chapter 3, and some Renaissance sources to be discussed in Chapter 5. A scholar of the history of Western philosophy, Wolfson formulated his view of what I would call the single sonship in order to create a conceptual framework for philosophical thought recalling the synthesis of the great Alexandrian Jewish thinker. He was not interested in mystical literatures and avoided addressing them. It should be added that in addition to the creational dimension of the concept of the son, Wolfson also displays the paradigm or the exemplar for some of the ideals which creatures should follow or at least emulate.

However, it seems that Wolfson's statement is even more significant, insofar as Jewish thought in the broader sense of the word is concerned, especially once we note that Jewish mysticism likewise reflects this form of interest in sonship, as shown below. In fact, many more Jewish mystics than Jewish philosophers addressed issues related to concepts of sonship, and in any case, their discussions are much more elaborate and significant in their respective systems. If indeed Philo had an impact on Jewish thought in the Middle Ages, a point that has not yet been proven in an undeniable manner, it seems that such an impact may be related to the constellation of ideas that constitute sonship.

Some of these hypostatic forms of thought remained alive in what is the first comprehensive body of mystical literature written in Hebrew, the so-called Heikhalot literature, where ascents on high and dramatic transformations of the mystic are much more dominant than in earlier Jewish literatures. Characteristically enough, Enoch becomes a major figure in one of the writings composed as part of the Heikhalot literature as part of an inner development that started earlier in the two books of *Enoch* in Ethiopian and Slavonic, and reached 'its zenith with the identification of Enoch with Metatron'<sup>150</sup> in the Heikhalot discussions, an issue that will preoccupy us at length in the first chapter.

Let me draw attention to a crucial issue for this study here. The special

status of the Son as mediator and sonship in general are masculine concepts by definition. The projection of such concepts as part of the open channels to the divine world, or as mediators, reflects the strongly patriarchic bias of the authors we address. It seems to me that the male thinkers regarded the median powers in their image, and it is only in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah that the situation became more complex, as in many instances a couple is conceived of as the median power, and in principle women could also identify with and have an impact on the feminine power in this couple. It may well be that such a projection has to do with an attempt to ensure the dominant status of the thinkers that produced these views, but we must also remember the possible sources of the special place of the Son in the post-axial theories we are going to discuss below, in theories of sacred royalty and sonship widespread in the ancient Near East, mentioned above.

### 5. Reverberations of the theophanic vector in Jewish mysticism

The mediation by means of an angel or messengers with theophoric names is perhaps the most influential religious strategy in late antiquity Jewish theories of mediation. Yet it is but one of many theories, all part of a non-orthodox-oriented approach characteristic of many forms of Judaism – including the rabbinic one – during its career as an essentially orthopractic religion. Another theory, for example, presupposes the existence of divine attributes. The Rabbis resorted to a theory of two divine attributes (and Philo *mutatis mutandis*, though more rarely) named *Middot*, and envisioned as acting in the created world. Such attributes are envisioned as acting in accordance with a more individualized pattern, with each representing an articulated manner of performing a specific operation.<sup>151</sup> In the Middle Ages, most of the kabbalistic schools retained and elaborated upon this theophanic concern in emphasizing the importance of the structure of the divine realm, known as the ten *sefirot*, and in elaborations upon the meaning of the details and efficacy of rabbinic commandments, conceived of as the revelation of the will of God (as rabbinic texts already argued).

This main line in kabbalistic literature can be described as the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, and the pertinent material relating to sonship in its different schools will be discussed in full detail in Chapter 4. This is indubitably the major form of kabbalistic literature, and its deep affinities to the rabbinic propensity toward attributing a central role to commandments in the overall structure of religious life ensured its easy reception in traditional circles in Judaism, while the existence of tensions is quite obvious when apothotic elements become more conspicuous. The emphasis on the theophanic nature of the main aspects of Kabbalah relegates the apothotic elements mentioned above to the margins of the main

kabbalistic line. It should be emphasized that some apotheotic overtones are still visible even in writings belonging to authors that are conceived of as icons of theophany, like the mid-thirteenth-century Kabbalist and major halakhic figure, Nahmanides. So, for example, we read about the possibility of an apotheotic experience:

those who abandon the affairs of this world and pay no regard to this world at all, as though they were not corporeal beings, but all their intent and purpose is fixed on their creator alone, as in the case of Elijah and Enoch, who lived on forever in body and soul, after having attained union of their souls with the Great Name.<sup>152</sup>

This emphasis on the apotheotic is, in any event, not rare in the main schools of Kabbalah. However, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists elaborated upon increasingly more complex theories of *sefirot* and eventually on anthropomorphic configurations, *partzufim*,<sup>153</sup> as part of a growing process of gradual fragmentation of the vision of God in Jewish thought. The Cordoverian and Lurianic complex theosophical structures testify to the continuation of this fragmentation process, which is particularly evident in the Lurianic theory of the divine sparks and the demonic world that appear in the writings. Polish Hasidism went even further by proposing not only a Lurianic theory of sparks but also a more immanentist theory, as shown in greater detail in Chapter 6.

New types of structures developed in other speculative literatures written in various Jewish circles in the Middle Ages: the Neo-Platonic literature adopted the emanational schemes mediating between the transcendental God and the emanated world, on the one hand, and the created universe, on the other.<sup>154</sup> This is obvious in the writings of the medieval thinkers R. Shlomo ibn Gabirol (Avicbrol), R. Joseph ibn Tzaddiq and R. Abraham ibn Ezra, and later on in the Renaissance in the writings of R. Yohanan Alemanno and Leone Ebreo. The Neo-Aristotelian Jewish philosophers, with Maimonides as the leading star, adopted a hierarchy of separate intellects that reflect the interpretations offered to the Starigite by Muslim thinkers like Al-Farabi, Avicenna, ibn Tufail, or Averroes. Those Muslim thinkers, together with innumerable others, are part of another major process of transition of Greek and Hellenistic themes and systems, which reached Judaism in a more articulated manner, and contributed substantially to much of the Jewish speculative thought in the Middle Ages. This *translatio scientiae* contributed more to the attenuation of the mythical elements related to the concepts of son, as we shall see in Chapter 3. In a sense, the encounter between material stemming from the first centuries of the Common Era and reaching Jews in Europe, and the material translated into Arabic since the eighth century, is reminiscent of the cultural situation of

Alexandria in the first centuries before and after the beginnings of the Common Era. However, in both cases, the speculative materials arriving in Europe from Asia and Africa took more complex forms, and the syntheses are much more eclectic than in the earlier Alexandrian center.

The pietistic groups that were active in the medieval Rhinelands, widely referred to as Hasidei Ashkenaz, offered a wider variety of different syntheses than those forged by their Spanish contemporaries living in Islamicate environments. Their syntheses between preceding angelologies and theories related to the manifestation of the divine as glory or *Kavod*, sometimes articulating complex doxologies and doxophanies.<sup>155</sup> Yet their intricate theologies integrate linguistic speculations, especially extensive speculations about divine names, in a more significant manner than prior theories.

Last but not least: in some parts of medieval Jewish literature the importance of the celestial bodies and their *pneumata*, the spiritual powers that dwell within and even move them, played a crucial role.<sup>156</sup> In several cases, Kabbalists adopted a term denoting the first creature as an entity within which everything is found, from the Muslim school of Ismailiyyah.<sup>157</sup> Needless to say, only rarely did these constitute independent developments that drew from different sources significantly separated from each other. Most of the time, elements from one mediating chain were adopted and modified by another. In some cases, substantial anthropomorphic aspects are involved in such mediating chains. This is the case especially with regard to angelology, doxology and kabbalistic theosophies; Jewish philosophers were not inclined to this mode of portraying the supernal world, and therefore allegorized the elements stemming from the earlier traditions that they felt were important for their systems.

I mentioned above the existence of multiple mediating systems in the history of Judaism. However, there are cases in which the process of mediation was fulfilled by merely one or two entities rather than by whole systems. Such is the case, for example, when Glory appears as an entity that is independent of the Holy Name – Seat of Glory, *Shekhinah* – or a projection of the collective representative of the people of Israel on high – a concept designated by the syntagm *Knesset Israel*. The latter concepts will preoccupy us more in Chapter 4. Only rarely in Jewish literatures is a hypostatic status attributed to the supernal Son, either as Son of Man or Son of God. There can be little doubt however that early Jewish theologoumena related to such a son existed, as the books dealing with Enoch – in particular the Ethiopian one – and Philo's views adduced above concerning the Logos as Son or firstborn convincingly demonstrate, and likewise there can be little doubt that they informed the main developments in a great variety of the nascent Christologies.<sup>158</sup> In the course of time, due to the ascent in

Christianity of both the centrality and cruciality of sonship understood in diverse forms of incarnation, it seems that Jewish authors belonging to rabbinic circles attenuated and in some cases even obliterated the role of sons as cosmic mediators. Nevertheless, some of these earlier traditions apparently survived in traditional Jewish writings that were subsequently transmitted by rabbinic Judaism. Yet there is no reason to assume that only the literary corpora adopted by rabbinic Judaism mediated the late antiquity views of theophoric sonship to the more extensive corpora written in the Middle Ages, or that sonship survived only in the written documents surveyed in the following chapter.

The existence of important angelic mediators in a variety of ancient Jewish traditions and the emergence of early Christianity have recently generated a more complex approach to ancient Jewish thoughts regarding divinity. New terms have been invented by scholars in order to reflect what they perceive as representing much less a strict monotheism, than theologies that can be described as binitarianism,<sup>159</sup> ditheism,<sup>160</sup> or monarchianism.<sup>161</sup> In many cases such characterizations have been made to a certain extent in order to better understand the emergence of Christian views of Jesus. Aware as these proposals are of the complexities of late antiquity Judaism and nascent Christianity, they have been less sensitive to the existence of medieval theologies that sometimes reflect similar complexities. Scholars have created too vast a gap between what is, on the one hand, a stream of traditions stemming from late antiquity Jewish circles, analyzed in many details in numerous studies and in part because this serves as the background for understanding the emergence of some concepts in early Christianity, and what is, on the other hand, later traditions preserved in Hebrew and written in the Middle Ages dealing with the very same issues. There can be no doubt that some of the medieval material reflects substantial developments and sometimes even abrupt departures that are a long way, both historically and conceptually, from late antiquity Jewish traditions. The specificity of each tradition should be analyzed in itself and understood against the background of its unique conceptual system or model, as will be shown in the following chapters. Nevertheless, without making an attempt to compare the later material with the earlier or by assuming an acoustic wall separates them, too simplistic an understanding of each may impede a better overall analysis. It seems to me reasonable to assume that an awareness of later developments may be helpful for creating a better understanding of earlier phenomena, by supplying additional material and increasing sensitivity to valences found in an earlier strata of writings, just as the acquaintance with the existence of earlier traditions enriches an understanding of the genesis of later discussions. Blurring the historical and conceptual differences between different literary strata, however, may turn

out to be as deleterious as the opposite propensity, which is to reify the differences between them.

### 6. *The problem of the transmission of ancient mythologoumena to Middle Ages Europe*

The above discussion presents a limited selection of mainly esoteric themes that are connected specifically with theophorism and sonship. Those themes are known from texts and authors that in their majority flourished in the Near East, or in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea in late antiquity. The present study deals basically with material written in various parts of Europe in the Middle Ages. If we assume that there is a link between these concepts and themes and the late antiquity material, we must address the question of the transition in time and space from one place to another. Moreover since some of those views were part of what have been conceived of as heretical literatures, like the Judeo-Christian and Gnostic ones, the question of preservation and transmission is even more acute. It seems that a broader spectrum of esoterica was known among the Jews in late antiquity, and we may assume that the themes above were only part of more comprehensive views, some of whose structures are perhaps eluding scholars' reconstruction. By no means would I like to be understood as suggesting that the passages adduced above exhaust the material that has been circulated among Jews, Christians and Gnostics, or that the way to identify their reverberations is through direct acquaintance with or citations from the precise passages and books mentioned above. Rather, they serve first and foremost as an indication of the fact that they existed in later antiquity in circles that were Jewish or close in a certain moment of their history to one form or another of Judaism. It would be, in my opinion, appropriate to speak of some form of 'stream of traditions', to resort to a term used by many scholars of Mesopotamian cultures.

My assumption is, following to a great extent the lead of the genial scholar Moses Gaster, that in addition to the Hebrew Bible and the diverse forms of Jewish literature preserved in Hebrew and available to medieval Jews, a variety of additional literatures preserve ancient Jewish esoteric themes, related to what I called above morphonominalism. They are Philo's huge literature, the various pseudepigrapha or apocrypha of the Hebrew Bible, the Qumranic literature, some forms of early Christian and Gnostic literatures and their medieval ramifications, magical traditions in Judaism or those written under its influence, Judeo-Christian literatures, a variety of paraphrases on the Hebrew Bible, and traditions preserved in Christian texts – the example of Origen quoting Jewish esoterica to be adduced immediately below illustrating this point. All these literatures constitute

depositories of a variety of themes, some of which reached both Jews and non-Jews active in medieval Europe, and we shall return to this issue at the beginning of Chapter 2.

That esoteric traditions were known or at least attributed to late antiquity Jews, we learn from many rabbinic traditions, magical recipes and some patristic discussions. Let me provide an example that demonstrates the relationship between traditions connected to divine names and esotericism as attributed to Jews. According to a passage by Origen, who was acquainted with several other pieces of Jewish esotericism, stemming from his contacts with Jewish masters:

[w]e would say that the names Sabaoth and Adonai, and all the other names that have been handed down by the Hebrews with great reverence, are not concerned with ordinary created things, but with a certain mysterious divine science<sup>162</sup> that is related to the creator of the universe.<sup>163</sup>

Two details that are important for the promotion of a better understanding of the history of both Jewish magic and mysticism are included in the foregoing passage: that divine names are not only powerful, which is the gist of the whole context of the passage, but that they are also part of a divine secret science concerning God. Speaking in plural, this citation leaves us with the impression that, if Origen's testimony is reliable, divine names were not only a matter of magic but also of a much more elaborate form of mysterious lore that was found among the Jews. Interestingly enough, Origen emphasizes that the names refer to the creator of the universe, plausibly to God, and not to mediating structures. I would say that the secrecy involved in this tradition has to do with the assumption that the divine names possess special powers rather than an apophatic vision of God. Just before the passage quoted above, Origen mentions that what he goes on to say is not just a truncated piece of information that has reached him from a second-hand source but, rather, a piece of a more elaborate view. He claims that the esoteric tradition, as 'the experts in these things prove, is a consistent system, which has principles known to very few'. So, we have here both details, namely the specific divine names, and the claim of the existence of more general principles that explain those details. Unfortunately, Origen does not indicate what the precise nature of this esoteric system was.

However, as John Dillon has proposed, there may be some affinity between the two Hebrew names in Origen's book and the occurrence of precisely these names in some Gnostic texts, where they point to hypostatic potencies that preside over different heavens and planets.<sup>164</sup> Thus, a phenomenon that will concern us more below regarding the transposition of

divine names from the divine realm to somewhat lower planes and especially to the angelic plane (as is the case in Philo's Logos, or in the designation of Metatron as the Lesser YHWH, or to that of the Son of God in Christianity) seems to be adumbrated by this example, attributed to a Jewish tradition.<sup>165</sup> It should be emphasized that Origen's testimony regarding these two divine names is at least partially corroborated by earlier traditions about divine names related to Moses and extant in the magical papyri.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, this duality of divine name may have something to do with the tradition adduced by Origen in his *The First Principles*, in the name of the anonymous Jewish master, regarding the interpretation of the seraphs as pointing to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. Since Origen was known, at least to a certain extent, in the Latin Middle Ages, we have one possible conduit of ancient Jewish esoterica to thinkers active at least a millennium later in Europe.

Moreover, as has been pointed out by Yehuda Liebes, another early Christian author, Irenaeus, adduced a further tradition found among Jews regarding divine names.<sup>167</sup> Though such traditions did not remain part of Christianity even in its mystical forms, they proliferated in Jewish mystical literatures. Thus, both late antiquity witnesses and early medieval authors, including legalistic figures like R. Hai Gaon, many Ashkenazi masters and early Kabbalists, described Jewish esotericism by referring to the existence of a Jewish tradition gravitating around the topic of divine names.<sup>168</sup>

Indeed, most of the late antiquity sources mentioned above were hardly known to any Jewish figures in the early Middle Ages. Yet it is nonetheless implausible to assume that none of them left an impact on even a few experts, as we have seen above in the case of Origen and Irenaeus. This is the reason why the affinities that will be proposed in the next chapter, and to a certain extent also in Chapter 2, between those earlier concepts and medieval Jewish material, are not necessarily a matter of the direct influence of the specific material analyzed above on the much later Jewish sources to be scrutinized below, but rather such affinities also operated through the existence of what I assume were common sources of Jewish origin used by Jewish and Christian authors on the one hand, and by Gnostic authors on the other hand. Those hypothetical sources informed, so I assume, ancient Christian and Gnostic authors as well as ancient Jews, who transmitted such traditions, inter alia, to medieval Jewish masters. As to the hypothetical Jewish sources of some Christian and Gnostic discussions, there is by now an entire scholarly literature corroborating this hypothesis, and the assumption that Jewish traditions contributed some substantial ideas to Jewish-Christian, early Christian and Gnostic literatures is by now well established by scholarship quoted in many of the preceding notes. I attempt to use the theories of these authors in order to offer another account of the

history of some ideas in Kabbalah, namely to propose that some kabbalistic ideas that are close to Gnostic ones represent Jewish traditions that surfaced in the Middle Ages and do not automatically reflect Gnostic influences.<sup>169</sup> Here I would like to address one more example of this type of affinity, much more related to the esoteric traditions of medieval Ashkenazi authors related to the angel Yaho'el. Though different insofar as the topics are concerned, the claim made below corroborates my hypothesis about the transmission of some older traditions to medieval Kabbalists.

Though many of the concepts discussed above were not easily accessible to later generations, there is good reason to assume that in one way or another at least some of them appeared in medieval circles and sources. This is to be sure a hypothesis, but hypothetical as it may be it seems to constitute the best way to make sense of the rather explicit data adduced above. Without offering another detailed explanation, I see no better reasonable alternative. There is no reason to assume the existence of an acoustic wall that hermetically separated late antiquity literatures from the early Middle Ages. In fact, some traditions related to the late antiquity pseudepigrapha remained available to various degrees until the eleventh century in Europe and especially in Provence, and we shall return to this issue at the beginning of the first chapter. Some of the earlier views are preserved, for example, by the Karaites in their critique of rabbinic Judaism, or quite by accident.<sup>170</sup>

In this context, we should first mention thirteenth-century Catalonia, where some views found in the *Wisdom of Solomon* or at least some quotes from it were known in a Syriac version to a major Kabbalist, Nahmanides, and later perhaps also to other Kabbalists in Castile who in fact either quoted from this book or even invented quotes that they attributed to it.<sup>171</sup> Given the impact of this pseudepigraphic book on the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, and even more so on Origen, as seen above, the kabbalistic acquaintance with this book and with its theory of emanation in particular may explain phenomenologically some of the resemblances between kabbalistic discussions and Christian ones rotating around the emanative concept of the son. Or, in another example that is important to the analyses below, there are various discussions of the name Youel that can be found in Arabic and Iael-Ioil in a Greek and a Slavonic source,<sup>172</sup> and the angel Yaho'el appears in some Jewish medieval sources that are surveyed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. The question, therefore, is what is the uniquely Jewish tradition transmitted in Jewish circles about this angel, and what aspects were mediated by Arabic sources? David Halperin<sup>173</sup> and Shlomo Pines duly emphasized the possibility that Jewish-Christian traditions were available to early founders of Islam and that they reverberated later on in Arabic sources.<sup>174</sup> Indeed in the *Qur'an* 9.30, some Jews were described critically as

believing in a form of sonship relating to the mysterious figure of 'Uzair, who was designated as the Son of God, and Muslim authors even reported that some Jews worshipped him as such.<sup>175</sup> This means that long before the emergence of the Ashkenazi esoteric literatures to be discussed below in Chapter 2, concerning a hypostatic versus a national understanding of sonship, some Jews entertained concepts of or even practiced worship related to a figure described as a Son of God. Do these two references to sonship reflect a broader historical situation? At least in principle, we should be aware of the possible role played by the vast poetic literature written in the land of Israel in the early Middle Ages, and its impact on southern Italian poems since the ninth century, and also of the role played by Ashkenazi religious poetry in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in transmission of mythologoumena from East to West. Since those literatures are quite abstruse, and many of them have not yet been analyzed from the conceptual point of view, they may constitute another potential bridge between continents and historical periods.

Sporadic, obscure and truncated as the above traditions often were, they illustrate a situation that may explain some medieval developments from a most economical perspective, and we shall return to a few of these issues in the following pages. From some points of view we would be better to keep in mind the rather forgotten theory of Moses Gaster, regarding the movement of apocryphal, pseudepigraphic, legendary and magical materials, some of it stemming from early Jewish sources, from the East to West, with an important station in the Byzantine Empire before reaching its destination, Western Europe.<sup>176</sup> This theory was first formulated in Romanian as early as 1883, while Gaster was 27, in a book which remains a classic of scholarship in Romanian popular literature to this day, and then again in a short survey of Jewish mysticism in the same language printed in 1885. After being expelled from Romania, Gaster returned again to this topic in a more comprehensive manner, but now in English, as part of a series of lectures delivered at Oxford University, and printed in London in 1887. This was a very ambitious theory, presented in rather general terms, which became a small book. Presumably because it is a very rare book indeed it escaped the attention of most of the scholars dealing with the transmission of Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha in the Middle Ages. No doubt he made many mistakes, some of them quite grave, especially when he attempted to claim the antiquity of some of the material he dealt with. Such mistakes include the belief that he had found original versions of ancient pseudepigraphy, like the *Testament of Naphtali*, which in fact turned to be a medieval translation. Nevertheless, this is doubtless an unmerited and, intellectually speaking, unforgivable loss for the history of scholarship, especially when taking into consideration the fact that this leading scholar had mastered so many

languages and drew from an innumerable number of rare manuscripts, a variety of information that few scholars today have access to.

Many scholars would be deterred from immersing themselves in such an enterprise as Gaster did, preferring more systemic, transparent and coherent treatments. However, such a choice may be much less historical than theological. Here, and in several instances below, I emphasize the possible importance of detecting the historical evidence for transmission of those themes, as I am skeptical about the concept of unconscious transmission that characterizes the Freudian interpretation of concepts of what may be called 'agonic sonship' in the history of religion, and especially in Judaism and Christianity. Neither am I a great enthusiast of C.G. Jung's theory of archetypes, which attempts to explain significant similarities between unrelated texts and systems using premises that are not always so clear, or of Henry Corbin's assumption of a prophetic wisdom related to the Sufi assumption of the existence of '*Alam al-mithal*, or what he called *mundus imaginis*, a world of forms existing in an imaginal layer of reality, or of theories about universals in religion, as they were proposed by Joachim Wach. I subscribe even less to historicist explanations that are sometimes unaware of the earlier backgrounds and reduce much of the historical complexity to the single immediate context, without being aware of much broader developments. As I emphasized in the example of understanding eighteenth-century Hasidism, a panoramic understanding of the different sources is helpful in analyzing its emergence, similarly I would propose here the adoption of a panoramic approach to understanding other forms of European religious phenomena as well, including Kabbalah.

In my opinion, there are multiple conceptual contexts operating at the same time in many of the literatures discussed below. I can hardly imagine a homogenous context that would inform the Jewish mystics whose views will be surveyed, and one should be careful not to simply subscribe to scholarly findings that are based on the assumption of one single context, before other possibilities have been carefully inspected too. Fragile, fragmented, vague, precarious, and sometimes even biased as the extant testimonies and evidence for various forms of transmission of earlier material may be, they should be given a fair chance by serious historians, who should examine them before resorting to other sorts of explanations.<sup>177</sup> Visions of traditional literatures found in the same language that are overly stratified serve academic compartmentalization nicely, as well as some forms of narrow specialization, rather than providing insight into the complexity of both history and tradition.<sup>178</sup> In reality, insofar as Rabbis and Kabbalists are to be conceived, they read much more variegated writings than some scholars would prefer they would have, and were less dogmatic than they are imagined to be. Demarcation lines between literary genres and historical

periods were never neat, and the development of Jewish mystical literatures consisted also of an increasing complexity of themes, models and syntheses, which often defy the constraints of a single given context. Moreover, it seems that the distinction between antiquity and the medieval ages has reified historical periods and created an unconscious propensity among scholars to emphasize the insurmountable gaps between these periods, rather than try to be attentive to the possible continuities between corpora belonging to the same culture and often written in the same language.

### 7. *Some terminological quandaries: sonship, incarnation, embodiments and mysticism*

We may envision some of the discussions in the following chapters not only from an exegetical and theological point of view, but also as an expression of what I would call 'a desire for sonship', namely the need of persons to feel like descendants of a much greater entity than their human father. I invented this expression as a modification of Michel Meslin's expression '*desir du père et paternité divine*', namely 'a desire for a divine father and fatherhood'.<sup>179</sup> This sort of desire has much to do with the theory of double sonship that I described above, and which will preoccupy me in the following discussions. I am well aware that such a psychological assumption is hard to prove with the tools used below, but we shall nevertheless not underestimate the possible presence of this emotional impulse in some people. The immense success of Christianity may have much to do with this human desire to become sons, or to resort to Meslin's phrase, to find a supernal father. Scholarly awareness of an additional cause instrumental in the success of some forms of religion will prevent too narrow a philological or theological approach to the significant recurrence of the category of sonship in many of the Jewish authors, whose acquaintance with Christianity is sometimes hard to prove.

Let us turn our attention to more terminological quandaries. Any study of categories that recur in different religious cultures encounters such quandaries. Only rarely the concepts used by the scholar are neutral insofar as the religious cargo they bring into the academic discussions. This is particularly true in the case of a concept like sonship, which is so crucial for an important religious way of thought like Christianity, under whose umbrella many of the phenomena discussed below were articulated. Even more so when a huge amount of scholarly analyses has been produced in Christian countries, in many cases by scholars who believe in the objective and spiritual value of the religious concepts they analyze. Caution is also necessary when passionate debates had been held in order to prove or combat the validity of a certain concept, and the issue of the Son of God is

certainly one of the most disputed concepts in the polemics between Judaism and Islam on the one side, and Christianity on the other. Scholarship, as I envision it, should avoid as much as possible adopting religious approaches as the object of its analyses, either by adopting theories from the past, or by reflecting a new situation in the present, so, for example, ecumenism on the one hand, or a negative approach toward Islam on the other hand.

Like any theory dealing with a median concept, sonship is a complex one. We may envision the framework of our discussions of sonship below in terms of the reverberation of themes that were once part of more elaborate concepts and rituals relating to the ancient kings in the Near East and Israel, as mentioned above, but which no longer display a unified scheme, but traveled through history in a more fragmented manner, and assumed with time new meanings and frameworks. Though ancient Judaism was one of the major conduits of some of those themes, we may assume also the existence, at least in principle, of other channels of transmission, as Simo Parpola and his students proposed in a series of recent studies, in particular looking at the case of ancient Mesopotamian cultures. Especially important for the topic of the present study is the fact that ancient kings in Mesopotamian and Egypt, and to a certain extent in ancient Israel, were conceived of as Sons of God, though mortals. Post-biblical forms of Judaism dealt also with those instances of the king as a Son of God, but did not forge elaborated and articulated theological systems around this theme. The disappearance of kingship as a historical phenomenon contributed no doubt to the relegation of sonship to the margin of the rabbinic discourse, and to the scant occurrences of this theme in other forms of Jewish literature.

However, this is not the case in Christianity. There can be no doubt that what is so particular in the Christian visions of sonship is related not only to its uniqueness as an extraordinary event, to its links to immaculate conception, to suffering and atonement, but the strong connection between the concepts of unique son and the emphasis on an incarnate God. Starting with elements related to sonship, regalia and rituals as found in ancient sacred royalty, and with Enochic traditions about the topic of ascent and enthronement, whole theological edifices have been built by Christian thinkers with massive contributions from Hellenistic modes of thinking. The ancient myths of a sacred king as a Son of God were not only explicated in systematic forms but in Christianity the son also assumed a crucial role in new rituals, installing the category of sonship at the very center of a new religion. Thus, two major moves can be discerned: an elevation of the son to a status higher than ever in the ancient religion, as a full-fledged Godhead, and at the same time an emphasis on the son's incarnate status while performing what was conceived of as the most important mission in

the history of mankind. Incarnation, in the way Christian theologians use the term, is a matter related to a small span of time, when the divine pre-existing Son assumed flesh, in order to suffer as part of his kenosis, after which he then returns to his exalted status, leaving the flesh behind him. To these developments, a third crucial one, stemming from late antiquity developments in Judaism, has been added: the eschatological one: the median figure is portrayed also as the redeemer *par excellence*.

Incarnation has been associated with suffering and atoning, and both were combined with the exalted status of the Son. Here is a more general religious 'economy', to speak in the language of the early Patristic authors, sonship and incarnation being central parts of it, and it is difficult to simply disentangle one crucial moment from the others. This does not mean that I assume a totally coherent religious structure in Christianity just as I do not find such a coherent structure in any other religion or even individual philosophy. Moreover, as any median figure, the tendency to bring together different realms of being, and different historical scenarios – Adam's sin, Jesus's suffering and mankind's atonement in the future – creates tensions within Christian concepts, nourishing numerous theological debates.

Historically speaking, even matters related to Jewish theories that can be regarded *prima facie* as similar to Christian discussions of incarnation (in my opinion much better described as cases of embodiment), may stem not only from possible Christian influences but, at least in a number of cases, from a general psychological propensity towards a more concrete way of envisioning God and His messengers in a variety of anthropomorphic ways.<sup>180</sup> From an examination of the literatures written by Jewish mystics it is evident that they avoided, premeditatedly in my opinion, resorting to explicit incarnational terminology, not only because they were afraid to use it from a political-religious point of view, but also because their reasonably loose theological positions did not require such expressions, and they resorted to non-carnal terms which expressed their ideas about embodiment and dwelling of the divine.<sup>181</sup> This difference between the two religious attitudes, namely between an emphasis on incarnation versus an emphasis on embodiment and on the morphic dimension of the mediators, is one interesting instance of the dramatic departure of the Christian religious *imaginaire* from that of the Hebrew Bible, and the greater affinity between Rabbinism and the modalities dominant in the religious universes of the Hebrew Bible, addressed earlier in the Introduction. This is, however, not the case, to be sure, in the literature written by Jewish converts to Christianity, who wrote on kabbalistic issues, as it is the case of Alfonso de Valladolid, for example, whose reading of Judaism as dealing with the

incarnate Jesus, and not with incarnation per se, inspired Elliot R. Wolfson's understanding of important issues in Kabbalah.

This absence of significant examples that can be described as incarnational in the material under scrutiny here prevents serious critical use of this term. When referring to sonship, our discussions rely on a term occurring in either Hebrew or Aramaic. This is not the case insofar as incarnation is concerned. In the specific, sometimes metaphorical way incarnation is used by the scholars enumerated above it is hard to find a precise counterpart in both the Christian and the Jewish discussions. The closest term to the Christian phenomenon of incarnation to which many Jewish mystics resorted is found in the context of the descent of a lower divine power and is quite recurrent: *hitlabbeshut*,<sup>182</sup> which means, basically, taking a garment.<sup>183</sup> However, it seems that neither in the discussions about embodiment nor in those about taking over a garment is the topic of a supernal being taking a human body implied: neither do the authors explicitly insist on 'flesh' as the locus of suffering, as is the case in many Christian types of sonship as incarnation, and as a unique historical and theological event.<sup>184</sup> In the following analyses I prefer therefore to resort to the term 'embodiment' as the result of the divine dwelling within human beings, rather than to the more specific and theologically loaded term 'incarnation', with the exception of one instance related to Sabbatai Tzevi.<sup>185</sup> Since the term incarnation is not only terminologically problematic in the Jewish contexts to be discussed below, in which the term 'flesh' is premeditatedly avoided (and the constellation of ideas which incarnation is so intimately related to, including major stages like the immaculate conception, virgin birth, uniqueness of the event, vicarious suffering and atonement), I consider its use in the following discussions as irrelevant, especially because in the instances to be discussed below, neither the precise conceptual nor the terminological aspects covered in the sense that incarnation is used are present.

I would rather suggest resorting to the larger categories of anthropomorphic representation of God, of which I would say there are three major categories, the first of these being 'informment': a term I have invented in order to describe how one entity gives form to another one, independent of the question of the material that receives that form. In Chapter 3 we shall deal at length with a son-figure, the Agent Intellect, who also gives forms to the human sons. Second, 'embodiment', when the material which represents the higher being is a body of any kind, and last but not least from the point of view of the history of religion, 'incarnation', when the material is flesh or a living person whose flesh is the main locus of the divine presence. I would refer to the embodiment of the divine as a larger category, and subsequently understand incarnation as a specific subcategory of

embodiment – filial or not – alongside other subcategories like theories of the descent of the divine by taking astral bodies, as is the case of Jesus in Gnosticism for example (astral embodiment) and angelic garments (angelic embodiment), icons, haloes, mandylions, and mandorlas (iconic embodiments), or God's embodiment in sacred texts (textual embodiments) – the last two types of embodiment dealing with issues of representation.

Since the varieties of informment and embodiment in religious imagination are not the main topic of the present study, this is not the place to advance such a categorization in more detail, even more so since the majority of informments and embodiments are not related to a filial imagery. What is significant in the following discussions is that even when there is a view of filial informment and embodiment, it is only exceptionally described in carnal terms. As in the case of distinctions in the broader category of sonship, as proposed above, a more complex understanding of the various forms of informment and embodiment will help in understanding the specificity of incarnation and sonship. There is no reason not to create more adequate categories, in order to account for the huge variety of religious phenomena, rather than fall time and again on the same quite conceptually and religiously loaded nomenclatures regarding incarnation, and then have to qualify them by terms like 'poetic' or other similar terms.

It should be mentioned, however, that if the agenda of a scholar is to contribute to a Jewish-Christian dialogue – indeed a salutary enterprise in itself – use of the term incarnation in an ecumenical dialogue, in quite a strong manner, may perhaps sometimes be helpful, and the complexity of those suggested categories of informment and embodiment may only complicate an inter-religious dialogue. Totally different, however, is the potential explanatory contribution of such a loaded term when introduced in such a manner into an academic discourse, which should – at least ideally – pay attention not only to similarities, convenient for an ecumenical approach, but even more so to differences between religious phenomena, which is characteristic of a scholarly interest in specificity. Even more so in our case, when the concept adopted by modern scholars has been implicitly resisted and sometimes even explicitly criticized by many Jewish traditional thinkers, but has been nevertheless imposed by those scholars on their own views. At least two of the authors who sharply criticized the Christian concepts of incarnation, Nahmanides<sup>186</sup> and Abraham Abulafia<sup>187</sup> were Kabbalists, and they explicitly rejected this Christian tenet. Since the self-perception of the Kabbalists is as important for understanding their views as the content of their writings, ignoring their fierce and explicit opposition to certain specific ideas is hardly helpful for a more nuanced understanding of their writings as implicitly subscribing to religious categories they explicitly and emphatically deny. It would, therefore, be better to first analyze what

exactly incarnation may be in kabbalistic systems that opposed incarnation explicitly, before resorting to this term, at least in their specific cases. If indeed some sustained arguments in this direction can be proposed, such a term may become helpful, but for the time being such a systematic description of incarnation has not been undertaken.

Given this situation, and the scant Jewish kabbalistic sources on the topic of incarnation in the strong sense of the word, I shall not devote a special discussion to the possible affinity between sonship and incarnation in the literatures under scrutiny here, as I shall only rarely deal with sonship in terms of related concepts like immaculate conception and virgin birth.<sup>188</sup> The most representative constellation of ideas related to sonship, characteristic of most forms of Christian theology, which combines it with incarnation, immaculate conception, suffering and atonement, seems to be absent when taken together throughout Jewish literature, mystical or not, though the association between two of these features is nevertheless discernible in some discussions.

Between the total negation of the possibility of Jews accepting a theory of sonship related to God, as formulated by such an eminent scholar of early Christianity and Judaism as Geza Vermes<sup>189</sup> on the one hand, and the increasingly incarnationalist understanding of Judaism in recent scholarship on Jewish mysticism on the other, let me suggest a more moderate and less sensational approach. My working hypothesis presupposes that understanding of a religious phenomenon cannot be complete by analyzing isolated themes. Sonship, embodiment, or incarnation in religion receive their specific meaning from larger contexts, be they conceptual, sociological or psychological. If these crucial contexts, which define the meaning of incarnation in Christianity, are not found in another religious structure, and the reference to a theme found in a non-Christian context is made nevertheless by a technical term taken from the Christian tradition, the situation that emerges may become, in my opinion, quite problematic from an academic point of view. Since the following discussions treat a concept that is expressed in Jewish mysticism, without resorting to any accompanying technical term that can be reasonably understood as incarnation in any of the ways this term is understood in Christianity, the theory of an incarnate son seems to me to be almost totally absent in the texts belonging to the mystical literatures of those authors who defined themselves as Jews. With the important exception of some discussions about the famous Sabbatai Tzevi, and his follower Abraham M. Cardozo, the types of sonship we are going to analyze below are not incarnational, as they do not revolve around the specific fate of a son who descended in flesh, suffered for the sake of humanity and then returned to his pristine status in the spiritual world.

In the following discussion I shall therefore try to pay special attention

to the place of each significant interpretation of sonship, whenever the term *Ben* or *Bekhor* or their Aramaic counterparts occur, in their more general contexts in the mystical systems in Jewish literatures which inform them, though the other elements, like uniqueness of the incarnate son, may not occur. From this point of view the vast majority of the theories of sonship to be discussed below are not Christological. Or, to put it in different terms: we may imagine a variety of theories of sonship, whose sources differ from each other, or may have some common denominators, and even are sometimes in historical contact, but whose phenomenological structures display strong divergences. Since my main purpose here is a survey of the kinds of sonship found in Jewish mysticism, it is discerning between these different forms of religious *imaginaire* that concerns me more than anything else. It seems to me that from the point of view of the history of religion what is needed is less the historicist analyses of the impact of one culture on another, legitimate and fruitful as such an enterprise may sometimes be, but more an attempt to identify the guiding categories or models that are shared or that distinguish between them. Understanding them as specific phenomena is conditioned, however, by the general structures of the religious systems in which they are embedded, and those systems as they emerged in Judaism differ from the variety of Christologically oriented systems found in Christian theologies.

To be sure: the difference between the various categories of sonship to be analyzed below and the Christological ones is not just a matter of a formal or a positive mentioning of the name of Jesus or Christ as the Son of God by kabbalistic texts. It consists more in the stark divergences between the major values that shape the specific structures of those systems within which sonship is found, beyond the terminological differences between them.<sup>190</sup> In a way, some of the medieval theories to be discussed below, philosophical or mystical, reflect a cultural situation reminiscent of early Christianity, in which a Jewish concept of a son as a person playing a cardinal role on the public scene, be he a king or the servant of God, has been interpreted via Hellenistic concepts, some of them emerging from Jewish circles, integrating that person and his function within a broader, speculative framework. This strategy has been described above in Philo and in other sources. Paulinian and Alexandrian forms of Christianity, as well as a variety of Gnostic ones, are to a great extent outshoots of the synthesis forged in Hellenistic Alexandria, and one more major example of a similar, though independent synthesis, will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 3.

While the more personal understandings of sonship (characteristic of the historical Jesus to the extent we know something about him) are to be compared with charismatics (some of them active in Galilee) like R. Hanina ben Dosa, Hōny and Hanan – to be discussed in some detail in Chapter 1 –

the systemic and theological understandings of Christ within the frameworks of Mid- and Neo-Platonism in late antiquity are more reminiscent of the medieval constructs of sonship in the speculative branches of Judaism, more indebted to Neo-Aristotelianism, as we are going to see in more detail in Chapter 3. From this point of view, the earliest Christian syntheses differ substantially from most of the Patristic interpretations influenced by a variety of Platonisms as well as from medieval Jewish syntheses, though, as we shall see in Chapter 1, R. Hanina was often compared to the other famous Galilean figure, Jesus. We shall attempt to show, especially in two sections of Chapter 4, the similar reception of this figure within the complex metaphysical structures of Hellenistic extraction that emerged in medieval Judaism. The existence of a Mid-Platonic interpretation of a Hellenistically oriented vision of the Logos in the *Revelation of John*, by a pagan thinker and preserved in a Christian Patristic source, presents an interesting issue for the intellectual history of the perception of the Logos.<sup>191</sup> Such a situation does not occur however in the context of the medieval Jewish interpretations of the Son, since pagan philosophers were not active in Europe in the Middle Ages.

In a simplistic way, it may be said that the following discussions deal with the complex dialogue between the images of more personalist charismatic Jewish figures, like Moses or Jesus, and the more systematic and synthetic thought of thinkers that were active in Alexandria, Jews and Christians. In a more general manner, however, it deals with the transformations undergone by the former when their cultural images had been interpreted by the latter, though more cardinal factors are the major elements stemming from Greek thinkers that nourished the thought of these thinkers (Philo, Clemens or Origen for example, as seen above). It should be mentioned that the more Neo-Platonic elements are adopted in a certain system, the less important the personalist features of Jesus become. In a way, the marginalization of the human Jesus in the pseudo-Dionysian books is a strong example for such an intellectual dynamic, in which mysticism is centered on an unknowable deity. Luther was, phenomenologically speaking, quite correct, when he complained that this famous mystic 'Platonizes more than he Christianizes'.<sup>192</sup> Different as the Alexandrian and Galilean types of sons are, and representative, in a rather general manner of diverging modes of thought, as it has been pointed out by some scholars, they are rarely pure ideal types.<sup>193</sup> Here I am more concerned with the variegated encounters between them, when the main subject of these encounters is not the meaning of the Sacred Scriptures, theological or other, but the nature of concepts of sonship in the mystical forms of post-biblical Judaism.

The present book began – to a certain extent – as a continuation of my previous studies, more conspicuously as deepening the analyses of material

found in Chapter 4 of *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, in a chapter on Abulafia and Jesus in my *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, and the more eschatological aspects of sonship in Chapter 2 of *Messianic Mystics*. As it reached the present formulation it continues these studies for two different reasons: first because I delve here into some of the discussions which began there, especially those related to Abraham Abulafia (as analyzed already in my dissertation thesis *R. Abraham Abulafia* in 1976), though I do not adduce here all the texts discussed there, but elaborate on many issues that have not yet been addressed; and a second one, which is more methodological: due to the specific point of view adopted in both books, which assumes the existence of different models that inform many of the various meanings of the term *Ben*, just as earlier I looked at the context of the term *Mashiya*. In both cases, I attempt to point out the variety of meanings of some seminal religious terms as they are determined by larger systems within which they occur. In order to make myself more explicit: in these two studies I do not subscribe to a deconstructive approach, but instead rather assume that variegated as the different discussions of the terms *Ben* or Messiah indeed are, nevertheless there are significant affinities between some of them, and those affinities reflect either common conceptual sources or influences of one theory on another. Thus, I propose here also to distinguish in the case of the Son between several different models, similar to those I have already suggested in the case of the term Messiah. I find the theory of models an economic way to find resemblances between and trace developments in bodies of literatures that were in contact, and adopted and adapted earlier concepts, though sometimes in new ways.

From another point of view, most of the following discussions found in Jewish mysticism rotate around the centrality of the divine names in Hebrew, of the proper names of the authors who speculate about the special meanings of names, like Abraham Abulafia, or the followers and opponents of Sabbatai Tzevi, and of Hebrew language in general, two intertwined topics which I have addressed often in my earlier research.<sup>194</sup> It seems that the specificity of the concepts of sonship depends sometimes on their formulations in Hebrew, and this is why a great accent on the original formulation in this language is strictly necessary. From this point of view, I propose below a different phenomenological perspective that is, to the best of my knowledge, quite marginal in the scholarship of sonship, which is grounded either in historical-philological research about the sources of sonship in Christianity, or in the more conceptual comparisons between the variety of sonship concepts in late antiquity in the Near East. To be sure I do not assume that such scholarly approaches are not important, but in the main sources to be examined below, the linguistic games based on Hebrew are much more prominent than in any of the Christian discussions on the topic

that I am acquainted with. The first formulators of sonship, Philo and some of the early Christians, are acquainted, at least to a certain extent, and in any case more than some of the other Christian and Gnostic authors, with Hebrew, which means that their associative reservoir was different from a pure Greek or Hellenistic one, and even more so were the medieval and pre-modern authors to be discussed below. This is why the emphasis on the importance of a linguistic approach is necessary. Philo is found somewhere in between, which means that in addition to relying heavily on allegoresis, an exegetical strategy stemming from the Greek and Hellenistic circles and based on Greek intellectual values, essentially intellectual and contemplative, he resorts sometimes also to etymologies of Hebrew words, displaying some interest in the linguist dimension of proper names of biblical figures as indicative of some more abstract values.

Since I assume that all these theological theories are constructs formulated in a certain language, or some forms of religious *imaginaire*, the linguistic formulation contributes much to the understanding of the message. However, it should be pointed out that even in the case of some Gnostic discussions, a Hebrew background is surmised by many scholars,<sup>195</sup> as the various recurrent attempts to identify the underlying Hebrew etymologies for terms like *Barbelo*, *Yaldabaoth*, or *Norrea*, demonstrate, as well as the discussions of the meaning of the name *Elkasai*. From this point of view this book continues the line of research I proposed in my *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, to see the affinities between the Gnostic themes and some topics in kabbalistic literatures as the result of the existence of common ancient sources, used in many cases independently by the two literatures, rather than of the direct impact of the former on the latter.<sup>196</sup>

In other words, one way to see the question of sonship in Judaism, in late antiquity and especially in the medieval period is as follows: in some circles of Diaspora Jewry, especially in Alexandria, new intellectual and religious encounters with different religious worldviews forged novel religious syntheses that evolved into religious phenomena that became both independent of those initial groups and phenomenologically speaking different from its basic questions and premises. However, those new phenomena, like Christianity, late antiquity Judeo-Christianity, the variety of schools belonging to Gnosticism or pseudepigraphic literatures – which all preserved concepts of sonship – did not disappear from the cultural horizon of the various Jewish communities, and interacted in the Middle Ages with the older religious elements that were preserved in the Hebrew Bible, and then in rabbinic literatures. The amplitude of these later encounters is a matter to be investigated by further scholarship. However, in order not to miss the possibility to discern them, working hypotheses have to be formulated, and I have attempted to delineate these hypotheses above.

As I have explained, my proposed method of understanding the different forms of sonship in quite a detailed matter, so let me address now the other part of the title of this study, 'Jewish Mysticism'. There are many ways in which such a general term may be understood, and I prefer to return to more detailed analyses as the discussions in the book advance. However, let me briefly explain here in what sense I make use of the term 'mysticism' and 'mystical' in the context of the more specific phrase 'Jewish mysticism'. As is well known, there are many ways to understand the term mysticism in scholarship, a problem that occurs with any generic term in humanities, like poetry, philosophy, magic or religion, but despite this problem I do not adopt in its entirety the deconstructivist approach that argues there is no meaning to such a generic term like 'mysticism' as a significant unifying concept.<sup>197</sup> Though there is some truth in such a claim in principle, in practice it will take us to the absurd since the problems involved in this term do not surpass those related to magic, poetry, philosophy, literature etc. Rather I adopt the position that emphasizes the importance of the contact with the divine world as a result of the intensification of religious life.<sup>198</sup> Sonship should, therefore, be understood as the attainment of closeness to the divine realm (as represented sometimes by a hypostatic son, or even sometimes as someone who brings the divine upon him/herself, establishing a contact), through either righteousness, or intellection, or by performance of rituals (understood as magical or as theurgical). Sonship also stands for forms of intimacy, of what Peter Brown felicitously called 'mystical solidarity',<sup>199</sup> or even for the union of a dimension of human personality to the supernal realm. In some cases, especially those studied in Chapter 4, the contact with the divine realm is even more intimate, since the high soul that is understood as descending upon the meritorious person, namely mostly on the Jews, is conceived of as stemming from the divinity.

A question that is worth asking here is whether the experiences rotate around a representative of God, theophoric as this median figure may be. Should 'contact' with this figure be construed as 'mystical'? My answer is positive for two main reasons. In my opinion, it is not so much the object of union or contact that may count but the kind of union.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, in most of the systems to be discussed below, the son, who is the center of the experience of union, and eventually also of a cult, is conceived of as divine, or at least a continuous extension of the divine.<sup>201</sup> Though in general I am less concerned with the centrality of fine theological distinctions for understanding experiences, it should be assumed that a more impersonal vision of the Godhead, as distinguished from a more personal one – or the theocentric versus the Christocentric forms of mysticism in Christianity, as suggested in a distinction by Evelyn Underhill<sup>202</sup> – is nevertheless significant for shaping the different types of experience. In any case, just as in the case

of Christianity, in which the union with the son of God is conceived of as a matter that may be described as mystical union, this is also the case in some instances in Kabbalah, especially the ecstatic ones. Because there are great differences between the Christian theories of divine sonship and the kabbalistic ones, I see no reason not to conceive the kabbalistic claims of the mystics' adherence to the intellectual or theosophical sons, as essentially different from the phenomenological point of view. The Christian approach to Christ as both a son and as a divine being is paralleled in Jewish mysticism by Abraham Abulafia's understanding of the Agent Intellect as son and similar in its nature to God, actually as divine, as we shall see in Chapter 3, and in both cases at least from the structural, and less from the conceptual point of view, we may speak about extensions of the divine, which serve as the aim of a contact or union. *Mutatis mutandis*, this is also the case with the Zoharic concept of the Lesser Face, *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, translated in Christian kabbalistic texts written in Latin by a Greek latinized word: *Microprosopus*, conceived of as the son of the Higher Face or Countenance, *'Arikh 'Anppin*, translated as *Macroprosopus*, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5. Though union of the mystic with the Lesser Face, which is certainly conceived of as being a divine power, is less important in the Zoharic literature and other theosophies influenced by it than Abulafia's understanding of the aim of life as union with the Agent Intellect, there is nevertheless a strong connection between this divine manifestation and the people of Israel or the Jewish mystics, who conceived themselves as Sons of God, especially insofar as their souls are concerned. Though it is certainly a reductionist statement, we may see in the various conceptualizations of divine sonship a projection of systems of values into a supernal realm. This is the case not only in religious systems, but also in secular understandings of Jesus as a son in Jewish thinkers like Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch, who, following Sigmund Freud, emphasized the importance of rebellious sonship.<sup>203</sup> Here, however, I cannot address such fascinating developments in the theory of sonship, as they fall outside the scope of the present study.

I would, however, warn against a simple methodological assumption that theologies automatically preceded the forms of mysticism which flourished in their framework, just as I would not simply subscribe to the assumption that the mystical experiences are automatically the source of theologies. In my opinion, the relationship between theology and experience is more flexible and complex, and should be analyzed in each case or school in itself, as we shall try to do in the next chapters. This means that it is not so simple to isolate from the theological literature what a certain author indeed knew, accepted, and, even more complicated, how he understood what he deemed to be the interpretation of a certain theology, before someone's experience. Moreover, experience is a bridge between the

old, traditional and accepted material as understood in a certain moment by the mystic, and the idiosyncratic components of someone's personality. In this nebulous and dynamic area the desire to become a son may shape some forms of experience.

### 8. Open channels once again: On the transmission of information

Last but not least: though dealing with a religious category in Judaism, (which, to be sure, was even more important in the general structure of Christianity), I shall attempt to situate the treatments of sonship in time and place as much as possible, and take into consideration both the general cultural contexts and the systemic structure within which the specific discussions were embedded. However, I shall pay special attention to questions related to the transmission of the late antiquity materials under scrutiny, which moved over considerable geographical areas, an issue that seems to me important for an understanding of Jewish esotericism in general. As I shall claim in more detail in the last paragraph of this book, at least insofar as Jewish thought is concerned, there was significant movement of material from the late antiquity Near East, to medieval European Jewish sources, and these transitions and subsequent developments triggered cultural changes in many Jewish circles: the role and conditions of this movement of knowledge requires some explanation. Thus, though speaking about one specific topic in its various developments and ramifications in Judaism, I hope that the more historical and methodological reflections will help in illuminating some aspects of the history of Jewish mysticism in general. To understand the surfacing of the sonship concepts in the medieval, traditional forms of Judaism, inclined to mysticism, we must be aware that some forms of earlier mythologoumena were involved. They did not have to deal with sonship in the strict sense of the word, but sometimes with the morphonominal theories that were connected to sonship and contributed later to the medieval elaborations on such a concept. They could eventually regroup around a concept of sonship, even if they were not transmitted together.

As I have done in some of my earlier studies, I assume that there is more than one plausible explanation for the revival of ancient themes in medieval Jewish mysticism. One of them is no doubt the acquaintance of some medieval Jewish authors with late antiquity material, either from books that survived marginalization in rabbinic literature, and surfaced again especially in Kabbalah, as is obviously the case of the book of magic known as *Sefer ha-Razim*, and even more important from my point of view, of the *Wisdom of Solomon*.<sup>204</sup> On the other hand, however, I also assume the role played by oral traditions. The two explanations should not, by any means,

be seen as exclusive: The mid-thirteenth-century Nahmanides, for example, was acquainted with this ancient pseudepigraphical book, but at the same time he also claimed to have inherited oral esoteric traditions. I see no reason to deny the possibilities that the two avenues indeed are historical facts.

However, in my opinion, no less plausible are the influences of a variety of other types of sources, including the transmission of Jewish texts and mythologoumena by a variety of groups, among them Christians and Bogomils, to Jewish authors, as suggested briefly by Moses Gaster<sup>205</sup> (and as I point out in the case of Abraham Abulafia).<sup>206</sup> In fact I have described the two avenues: that of inner Jewish transmission, be it oral or written, and acceptance from non-Jewish sources of older material, both in my opinion equally plausible, though their contribution to the formation of the corpora (to be analyzed below) may not be the same. As I formulated it many years ago in the context of a discussion of the perception of Enoch as found in the *Book of the Zohar* in comparison to an apocryphal book preserved in Armenian:

In the Jewish source, as in the Armenian text, it is Enoch, and not the natural heir 'sons,' [of Adam] who receives the splendor [of Adam], or, the holy soul. It is possible, however, that the author of the *Zohar* was familiar with *Sefer Adam*, which is similar to the Armenian version, [of the book of the Sayings of Adam to Seth] and in this manner a possibly Christian conception of the atonement by Enoch for the sin of Adam entered the Jewish source. No less plausible, however, is the possibility of the survival of an apparently pre-Christian conception which was preserved and expressed separately in the above-cited sources.<sup>207</sup>

As we shall see in the discussions in Chapter 4, I assume that Enochic material had been integrated in the seminal book, in fact an entire literature known as the book of the *Zohar*, a observation made in general terms already by Moses Gaster, without entering into detail in this case.<sup>208</sup>

However, in another case, Gaster compared the loss of the Samaritan literature in Christianity with the more open channels in medieval Judaism toward this literature.<sup>209</sup> Thus, there is no reason to adopt one single explanation for the similarities we shall speak about in the next chapters, between older Jewish material and the medieval treatments of topics pertinent for our discussion. To make this point clearer let me point out that the same Nahmanides we have mentioned above, as the inheritor of oral and written traditions that probably stem from late antiquity, has also been influenced by Christian theology. It seems that he was also acquainted with the Samaritan alphabet.<sup>210</sup> Though there are few examples for such an

accomplished scholar as Nahmanides in the Middle Ages, his knowledge nevertheless testifies to what was available in practice to the Jewish elite who could make the effort to read exotic material beyond what was available in the Christian transmission of the pseudepigrapha.

However, what is of paramount importance for the possibility that ancient Enochic material reverberated in the Middle Ages are three footnotes by Gershom Scholem in which he has pointed out the recurrence of precise formulations found in the Aramaic *1 Enoch*, in Qumran and in the *Book of the Zohar*.<sup>211</sup> These groundbreaking observations were for the time being ignored, found only in an article written in Hebrew, though they should be seriously taken into account in any scholarly discussions on the impact of Enochic literature on medieval Jewish mysticism. I shall try to emulate this openness toward the possibility of textual transmission of ancient texts in some of my discussions below, while at the same time keeping in mind the important remarks made by Moses Gaster. I propose to call this concept 'the European stream of traditions' and even eventually to broaden them.<sup>212</sup> Therefore, as I stated in the passage quoted above, it is scholarly much more plausible to be aware of, and open to, different explanatory alternatives, since any approach that adopts a unilateral explanation of the transmission of earlier Jewish mythologoumena or texts to the Middle Ages is capable of explaining some affinities, but is doomed to fail in others.

In any case, I am confident that a broader reading of the Hebrew material found in manuscripts, and in neglected corpora like Hebrew poetry in the Middle Ages, especially those written by Italian and Ashkenazi authors, will yield new pertinent material that will alter the widespread issue of transmission in scholarship, that currently depends too much on texts that have already been analyzed by other scholars, and does not attempt to explore neglected manuscripts or Hebrew literatures, like poetry, written in the centuries that preceded the emergence of the Jewish forms of medieval mysticism.<sup>213</sup> Without a sustained effort to become acquainted with these potential channels of transmission, found in traditional forms of Judaism, any wider speculation about how older material and themes were transmitted remains no more than tentative guesses. The larger picture of the transition of apocryphical material as proposed by Gaster should be fleshed out, whenever it is possible and adequate, by detailed philological investigation, which for the time being has not supplied more than few convincing examples for the transition of pseudepigraphical material from non-Jews to Jews.<sup>214</sup> Though it is an open alternative, it is less operative when dealing with details than with the decisive textual parallels that can be adduced by Ashkenazi material paralleling the so-called 'Book of Watches' from *1 Enoch*, the strong parallels pointed out by Scholem in his footnotes mentioned

above, or the existence of the book of the *Wisdom of Solomon* in Syriac in the hands of medieval Jews in the West. In Chapter 4 I shall try to make the point that it is plausible that in some cases Enochic literature indeed impacted on discussions in the book of *Zohar*, in one way or another.<sup>215</sup> In any case, let me emphasize that in some cases the literary transmission of older texts and motifs to Jewish circles in the Middle Ages can be demonstrated in a plausible manner, and is by no means less influential than the 'back-borrowing' phenomena, to resort to Reed's term, which are to a certain extent, in many cases, a matter of conjecture.

To return from more general considerations to the topic of sonship. I shall attempt here to treat divine sonship not just as a matter of transmitted themes, and books which include such themes, but as a general religious category that has been interpreted in various ways, for example, mythically, mystically, philosophically or theurgically, without assuming anything like one original or authentic view from which others were derived by neutralization or misinterpretation. By attempting to allow each version its proper status, it is to be hoped that the following analyses will contribute to an understanding of this religious category in a non-triumphalist or apologetic manner. However, it should be pointed out that studying divine sonship in certain literature amounts also to a study of the concepts of divine sonship themselves. If not determined by a certain vision of this concept as original, authentic, or important, the scholar should assume that any text recreates the more general and vague notion again and again. This is in my opinion the main potential contribution of the analyses below: to enrich this religious category by introducing new material that has escaped the attention of historians of religion. The other stages involved in understanding certain texts are from my point of view preparatory. Identification of texts, of their authors, of their sources and their transmissions, as well as their systemic contexts, are all strictly necessary phases in scholarship, especially in the scholarship of Jewish mysticism. However, necessary as they are, and we shall have to address them below, the texts dealing with the topic under scrutiny strove to convey a certain religious message, and serious scholars of religion should engage it.

Though striving to give to the topic of divine sonship its shifting place in many of the layers of Judaism, I hope that no theological overtones will be attributed by the readers, as the main audience to which the following chapters are addressed is the scholarly understanding of religion in general and of Judaism in particular. Any attempt to consider the present study as an attempt at validating or invalidating any comprehensive vision of religion, either of Judaism or of Christianity, is beyond the scope of this study as understood by me. Reading the following discussions as an attempt to thrust the pendulum in an opposite direction as to the understanding of Judaism

from the outside, or its understanding by Jews through generations, is a misreading. What I strive to do here is to illumine some aspects that have been relatively neglected in the study of Jewish mysticism, without claiming the centrality of this topic for Jewish mysticism. Unlike authors who assume that the topic they concentrate upon in their studies is also very important in general, I do not indulge in such a view, at least not in this case. I deal below with a modest number of texts, whose weight in the general economy of Judaism is relatively small, but in Jewish mysticism is more considerable, though it should not be overemphasized. In any case I hope that by bringing them together and analyzing them in the framework of what I see as their proper systemic context, they will no more be overlooked in the general picture of Jewish mysticism.

In this context it should be mentioned that the following analyses differ substantially from what a reader may find in discussions of sonship in the Christian context, where the divine sonship of the founder of Christianity is understood as self-evident by the vast majority of the texts under the scholars' scrutiny. Unlike this self-evident assumption discussed so openly in those primary texts and indubitably playing a major role in the various Christian theologies, in many of the passages to be adduced below, the theories of sonship are quite succinct, sometimes even veiled to a certain extent, and only rarely would they stand at the centre of the mystical theologies we shall investigate. This situation demands an elaborate scholarly effort: first to detect the discussions about divine sonship scattered in quite disparate and vast Jewish literary corpora, then – after identifying them – to clarify the intricacies of the systems within which they appear, which define the son in specific terms to that system, and also explain the linguistic details that are characteristic of the discourses to be engaged below, and only then to turn to reflect on the main religious categories that informed the concepts of sonship. As we shall see below, even in the writings of a single Kabbalist, not to speak about a school, multiple understandings of divine sonship can be discerned, as is the case for example in Abraham Abulafia. These are different burdens that require complex and quite detailed discussions, which load the following chapters with philological and historical details, as well as many methodological proposals, some of which are clarified here for the first time. The patience of the reader will sometimes be required in order to follow the various arguments to their end. Moreover, as has already been seen above, the questions related to the transmission of late antiquity mythologoumena are very pertinent to our discussion, and the existing gaps in the understanding of the emergence of some of the main systems under investigation here invite speculation to try to find out how those gaps have been filled.

## Notes

- 1 For the importance of the category of *axis mundi*, a view that assumes that the worlds are interconnected, see Mircea Eliade's numerous publications in which he also emphasizes the importance of the practices or techniques related to the various sorts of axes. On parallels in Jewish mystical texts to the concept of the cosmic pillar see Idel, *Ascensions on High*. See also below, Chapter 4, Section 2.
- 2 See e.g. Idel, *Hasidism*, passim; Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'; Idel, 'Hermeticism and Kabbalah', pp. 389–408.
- 3 I have presented this more general picture in shorter descriptions on several occasions. See Moshe Idel, 'The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism', in eds, P. Schaefer & J. Dan, *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1993), pp. 117–9; Idel, 'Metatron', 'Enoch – The Mystical Cobbler', 'Enoch is Metatron', 'Adam and Enoch', *R. Menahem Recanati, The Kabbalist*, vol. 1, p. 156, or *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 88–9. See also in more general terms my *Ascensions on High*. This approach is an expansion of the distinction between the forms of Kabbalah known in Spain on the one hand, and his own Kabbalah, on the other, as proposed by Abraham Abulafia in the late thirteenth century, which I developed further in my *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*. See also more recently Alexander, 'From Son of Adam to Second God', p. 110.
- 4 I hope to use another occasion for a broader and detailed treatment of some issues related to the relationship between Enoch, Metatron and Adam in early and medieval Jewish sources, and take issue with Kaplan's 'Adam'. See, meanwhile, Idel, 'Adam and Enoch' in several footnotes below, especially in Chapter 1 and in the Appendix.
- 5 The recent literature on the ancient Enochic literature is vast, and received a special impetus with the discovery of the Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* in Qumran. On the dissonance between the Enochic traditions and the Mosaic and rabbinic ones see the views of George W.E. Nickelsburg, 'Enochic Wisdom: An Alternative to the Mosaic Torah?', in eds, Jodi Magness & Seymour Gittin, *Hesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Ga., 1998), pp. 123–32; Nickelsburg, 'Enochic Wisdom: An Alternative to the Mosaic Torah?', in eds, Jodi Magness & Seymour Gittin, *Hesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Ga., 1998), pp. 123–32; John Collins, 'Theology and Identity in Early Enochic Literature', in ed., Gabriele Boccacini, *Enoch, The Origins of Enochic Judaism* (Zamorani, Torino, 2002), pp. 60–2; Helge S. Kvanvig, 'Origin and Identity of the Enoch Group', *ibid.*, pp. 207–12; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, passim, especially pp. 21–3, 612–13; Ithamar Gruenwald, 'The Cultural Setting of Enoch-Apocalypticism: New Reflections', *ibid.*, pp. 213–23; Alexander, 'From the Son of Adam to a Second God' and 'The Enochic Literature and the Bible: Intertextuality and its Implications', in eds, Edward D. Herbert & Emanuel Tov, *The Bible as Book, The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries* (The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 2002), pp. 57–68; Alexander, 'From Son of Adam to a Second God', p. 108–11; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, p. 24, and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 261–2. For the *Slavonic Enoch* see Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', pp. 99–100. For trends found in the book of *Jubilee* downplaying the unique authority of the Mosaic revelation see Hajman, 'Angels at Sinai' and her book *Second Sinai and Pistis Sophia*, vol. 4, ch. 134, adduced in Chapter 4 below. See also more recently Reed, *Fallen Angels*, passim, and Jackson, *Enochic Judaism*. The problem with many of these sophisticated scholarly analyses, which address many details and clarify some aspects of the texts, is their narrow focus on a series of a few texts, while the numerous reverberations of, and the parallels to, this literature preserved in the Middle Ages, are overlooked.
- 6 The scholarly literature on this central topic in both Christianity and in some forms of Judaism is growing fast. See e.g. George Foot Moore, 'Intermediaries in Jewish Theology, Memra, Shekhinah, Metatron', *HTR* 15 (1922), pp. 41–85; Robert M. Grant, 'Les etres intermediaires dans le Judaisme tardif', in ed., Ugo Bianchi, *Studi e materiali di storia della religione*, vol. 38 (Brill, Leiden, 1967), pp. 245–59; R.D. Middelton, 'Logos and Shekinah in the Fourth Gospel', *JQR* (NS) 29 (1938/9), pp. 101–33; Segal, 'Ruler of This World'; Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques*, pp. 65–175; Robert Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* (Osmun Publishers, Allanheld, 1981); Hayward, 'The Risen Christ and the Angelic Mediator Figures in Light of Qumran', in ed., James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Doubleday, New York, 1992), pp. 302–22; Trygve N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth, Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CWK, Gleerup, 1982); Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*; Fossum, *The Name of God*, passim; Fossum, 'Magharians'; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, passim; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*; and more recently Vanderkam, 'The Angel of the Presence'; Meir Bar-Ilan, 'Prayers of Jews to angels and other mediators in the first centuries CE', in eds, Poorthuis & Schwartz, *Saints and Role Models*, pp. 79–95; Najman, 'Angels at Sinai'; Loren Stuckenbruck, 'Angels' and 'God': Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism', in eds, Loren Stuckenbruck & Wendy North, *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (T&T Clark, London, 2005), pp. 45–70; Davila, 'Of Methodology'; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 199–204; and Susan Niditch, 'The Cosmic Adam: Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature', *JJS* 34 (1983), pp. 137–46. For the view that angels delivered the Torah and that consequently the Torah depends on them, see Gal. 4.3, 8–10, and Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man*, pp. 107–8. See also Andrew Chester, 'Jewish Messianic Expectation and Mediatorial Figures and Pauline Christology', in eds, M. Hengel & U. Heckel, *Paulus und das antike Judentum* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1992), pp. 17–89; M.P. Nilsson, 'The High God and the Mediator', *HTR* 6 (1963), pp. 101–20; and Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1995), p. 374 note 37.
- 7 See Idel, 'Il mondo degli angeli', pp. 2–17; Farber-Ginat, 'Inquiries in *Shi'ur Qomah*', pp. 382–6; Groezinger, 'The Names of God'; Fossum, *The Name of God*; and Giessen, *Angelomorphic Christology*. For angels as sons of God in the Hebrew

- Bible see e.g. Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien*, pp. 29, 77–81, 122 note 22, and Giessen, *ibid.*
- 8 See Stroumsa, *Another Seed*; Birger A. Pearson, 'Jewish Elements in Corpus Hermeticum I [Poimandres]', in eds, R. van den Broek & M.J. Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel* (Brill, Leiden, 1981), pp. 336–48; Pearson, 'Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of the Gnostic Self-Definition', in ed., E.P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 151–60; Pearson, 'Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature', in ed., Michael E. Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 443–81; Pearson, 'Biblical Exegesis in Gnostic Literature', in ed., Michael E. Stone, *Armenian and Biblical Studies* (St James Press, Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 70–80; Pearson, 'Gnostic Interpretation of the Old Testament in the Testimony of Truth (NHC IX, 3)', *HTR* 73 (1980), pp. 311–19, most of them reprinted in his *Gnosticism, Judaism*; George MacRae, 'The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth', *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970), pp. 86–101; Edwin M. Yamauchi, 'The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia, and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism', *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978), pp. 143–75; Mark Philonenko, 'Une Allusion de l'Asclepius au livre d'Henoch', in ed., J. Neusner, *Christianity, Judaism and Other Graeco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (Brill, Leiden, 1975), pp. 161–3; Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism', pp. 59–62; R. McL Wilson, 'Jewish Gnosis' and 'The Gnostic Origins: A Survey', *HUCA* 45 (1974), pp. 177–89; and Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabbaot: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* (Brill, Leiden, 1978).
- 9 See e.g. the important studies of Fossum and Deutsch, respectively, as mentioned in the bibliography.
- 10 For up-to-date surveys of this field see Becker & Reed (eds), *The Ways that Never Parted*. See also another even more recent collection of articles on this topic edited by P.J. Thomson & D. Lambers-Petry, *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (Mohr, Tübingen, 2003). Additional scholars pointed out the possible impact of Jewish-Christian themes on medieval material: see e.g. Corbin, 'Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth'; Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar'; and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 63–88.
- 11 See Marius de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature* (Brill, Leiden, 2003). For questions related to the groups that transmitted the Heikhalot literature, see the final paragraph of Chapter 2.
- 12 See more on this issue see par. 1 of Chapter 1 below.
- 13 See Moritz Steinschneider's unparalleled *chef d'oeuvre*, *Die Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher: Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen Quellen* (Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1956).
- 14 See, especially, Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, pp. 235–52; De Andia, *Mystiques d'Orient et d'Occident*, pp. 295–8; Giles Quispel, 'The Jung Codex and Its Significance', in eds, H. Ch. Puech, G. Quispel & W.C. van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, tr. and ed. F.L. Cross (London, 1955), pp. 68–78, reprinted now in his *Gnostic Studies*, pp. 3–26; Longenecker, *The Christology*, pp. 41–6; Charles A. Gieschen, 'The Divine Name in the Ante-Nicene Christology', *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003), pp. 115–58; Fossum, *The Name of God*, especially pp. 310, 333; Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism'; Barker, *The Great Angel*, pp. 97–113; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, *passim*. See also some Muslim texts which mention the divine name in the context of the revelation of Gabriel as part of the impregnation of Jesus, cf. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, p. 91.
- 15 See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 36–42; Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, especially pp. 109–31.
- 16 See Pines, 'God, the Divine Glory', pp. 1–14.
- 17 See Shlomo Pines, 'Points of Similarity between the Doctrine of the Sefirot in the *Sefer Yezirah* and a text from the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, The Implications of this Resemblance', *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 7 (3) (1989), pp. 63–142. I hope to show elsewhere the importance of the early dating of the theory dealing with two decads found in these treatises for a similar medieval kabbalistic theory, as well as the importance of the priority of evil over good in the cosmological contexts for theories about the emergence of evil in Kabbalah. See, meanwhile, Moshe Idel, 'On the Theosophy at the Beginning of Kabbalah', in eds, Zeev Gries, Chaim Kreisel & Boaz Huss, *Shefa Tal: Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture presented to Bracha Sack* (Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2004), pp. 131–47 (Hebrew).
- 18 See especially the very important article of Nicolas Sed, 'Les hymnes sur le paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives', *Le Museon* 81 (1968), pp. 455–501; *Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns*, tr. Kathleen E. McVey (Paulist Press, New York, Mahwah, 1989), pp. 211, 262 note 6; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 193 note 17; 195–6 note 23; and Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 183–90.
- 19 See *The Name of God* and his *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 109–33, as well as Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism' and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, *passim*.
- 20 Abraham Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (Oxford University Press, London, 1927), pp. 41–107; Gager, *Moses*; Samuel S. Cohon, 'The Name of God, A Study in Rabbinic Theology', *HUCA* 23 (1) (1950–1), pp. 579–604; Groezinger, 'The Names of God'; Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*. For various medieval understandings of divine names see, especially, Scholem, 'The Name of God'; Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 73–102; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 234–69; Idel, 'Defining Kabbalah'; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 319–40; Dan, *On Sanctity* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1997) pp. 123–30 (Hebrew); Emanuel Levinas's reflections in *L'Analyse du langage théologique: Le Nom de Dieu* (Editions Mouton, Aubier, 1969), pp. 135–44; and Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*. For some of the topics to be discussed below see especially Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', pp. 26–30.
- 21 On these verses in the context of the development of the angelic mediator see e.g. the discussions of Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 35–6; Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 104–5; Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien*, p. 43; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 21–4, 51–2; Alan Segal, 'Paul and the Beginning of Jewish

Mysticism', in eds, John J. Collins & Michael Fishbane, *Death, Ecstasy and Other Wordly Journeys* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), pp. 99–100; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 169–70; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 307, 385–6 note 80, and especially for the angelic understanding of Jesus, p. 573; as well as Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 86 and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 66–7, 151, 296–7. See also the plausible impact of an expression found in one of these verses on a Qumran text, describing the 'house of David' by means of an expression taken from v. 20, cf. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 9–10, 421. Of special importance for our discussions below is the fact that v. 20 has been interpreted by Philo as the 'true, firstborn Son'. See *De Agricultura*, pars 51–2: 'as their immediate superintendent, his own right reason, his first-born son, who is<sup>1</sup> to receive the charge of this sacred company, as the lieutenant of the great king; for it is said somewhere, 'Behold, I am he! I will send my messenger before thy face, who shall keep thee in the Road.' See also Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 82 note. It should be mentioned here that these verses have been addressed several times by Maimonides in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1.64; Pines, p. 156, 2.7; Pines, p. 266 and 2.34; Pines, p. 366, in all those cases attempting to mitigate the importance of both the angel and the divine name, and interpreting them as dealing with the revelation that a prophet reveals the words he received from above. In other words, Maimonides wanted to reduce as much as possible the morphonominal content of the verses. See also Chapter 3 note 21. In a way, the morphonominal elements obliterated by Maimonides' interpretation will turn to the center of several important developments in the Middle Ages, including in commentaries written on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, as we shall see below in Chapter 3, in the passage from Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer Sitrei Torah*.

22 On this verse see VanderKam, 'The Angel of the Presence', pp. 382–3. For more on face and Metatron see Idel, 'Metatron' and in more general terms in Idel, 'Parim'; Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 99–105. Compare also to the more recent discussion of Abusch, 'Rabbi Ishmael', p. 333 and in Chapter 1 below.

23 See Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, 'The Name and the Glory: The Zion-Sabbat Theology and its Exilic Successors', *Journal of Northwestern Semitic Languages* 24 (1998), pp. 1–24.

24 See his 'Enoch', p. 309 note 81. For more on this issue, see Section 4 of Chapter 1 below.

25 We shall return to this verse in some detail in Chapter 1, Section 4.

26 Chapter 13. See D. Steenburg, 'The Worship of Adam and Jesus as the Image of God', *JSNT* 39 (1990), pp. 96–7; Anderson, 'Exaltation of Adam', p. 84 and an interesting later parallel in the Armenian poem of Yovhanner T'ulkuranc'i, cf. Michael E. Stone's translation, 'Selection from On the Creation of the World by Yovhanner T'ulkuranc'i,' in *Literature on Adam and Eve*, p. 185, par. 55, p. 210, par. 139.

27 8.442, adduced by Steenburg, *ibid.*, p. 97 in the context of his discussion of the image of God, without however, paying attention to the occurrence of the breath. On this treatise and its reverberations in the Middle Ages see Bernard McGinn, 'Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sybilline Tradition in

the Middle Ages', reprinted in his *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition* (Variorum, Aldershot, 1994), Chapter 4. On the description of the creation of Jesus in terms identical to that of Adam, emphasizing the role of the breath, see Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, pp. 86–7, 90, 92.

28 PGM 8.37–8, ed., Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1986), vol. 1, p. 146, adduced and succinctly discussed also by Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 148 note 56 and Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, p. 126. The god addressed by the conjurer is Hermes. See also another important text about the magician as a son belonging to the *Greek Magical Papyri*, adduced and discussed by Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 102–3. See also below, Chapter 1 note 80 and the Hermetic treatise 8.7–10, Copenhagen, *Hermetica*, pp. 50–1, where there is a clear mention of sonship attained through the invasion of the human by the divine. Cf. Dodds, *Pagan & Christian*, p. 76 and Festugiere, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3, p. 171 and vol. 4, p. 249. See also Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 35–6 and note 8 above. For a late fifteenth-century nexus between a theory of sonship and extraordinary powers attributed to Moses see R. Joseph Ya'avetz, *Commentary on the Treatise 'Avot 4.1* (J. Goldmann, Warsaw, 1880), fol. 44b. See also the magical text deeply influenced by Christian Kabbalah, printed in 1686 as the book of the Divine Name of Solomon:

If a man knows how to appropriate the particular place, time, order, bulk, proportion, and mental organization of any one, he can attract and draw them, just as a magnet attracts iron: but he must first be prepared, just as the magnet must be fashioned by the file and charged with electricity. To this end the soul must first be purified, and dedicated to God through faith; a pure heart and constant joy in the spirit are requisites. He must possess love to God and his fellow-man, and then he may arrive at a perfect state and become like unto the Son of God. He will become united with God, and will once more be like him. It is not given to angels nor to any creature to unite with God, but only to man, and he may become his son; and when this takes place, so that he overcomes himself, he overcomes and can draw to him all other creatures and command their obedience.

See Andrew Luppilus, *Semiphoras and Schemhamphoras of King Solomon* (Wesel, Duisburg, Frankfurt, 1686).

29 For the semantic field of this Aramaic phrase see Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, pp. 147–65.

30 The bibliography on this issue is extensive; see e.g. Arthur J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1979); Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 85–6; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, pp. 443, 602; William O. Walker, 'The Origin of the Son of Man Concept as Applied to Jesus', *JBL* 91 (1972), pp. 482–90; Collins, 'The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as "Son of Man" and "The Apocalyptic Son of Man Sayings"', reprinted in her *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 139–96; especially pp. 163–5; Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 129–39; Stone, *IV Ezra*, pp. 207–8, 211. The transcendence of the Son of Man as a messianic figure at times implies its hiddenness. For the hypothesis, which I do not find so convincing, that the hiddenness of the transcendent Messiah

- represents a Gnostic influence on Jewish Messianism, see Alexander Altmann, *The Meaning of Jewish Existence, Theological Essays 1930–1939*, ed. Alfred L. Ivry, trs E. Ehrlich & L.H. Ehrlich (Brandeis University Press, Hanover, London, 1991), pp. 129–30. See Stone, *ibid.*, pp. 213–14, 405. For the impact of the book of Daniel on some late antiquity Jewish sources see Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, p. 38. On Glory and sonship in rabbinic sources see Bassar, 'Notions of Glory and Sonship'.
- 31 Greek 36.11, Hebrew 36.17, cf. ed. Moshe Tz. Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira' ha-Shalem* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1972), p. 225. See also *ibid.*, 47.27, p. 327. In both cases the impact of Deut. 28.10 is conspicuous. On the questions related to the sonship of Israel and also addressing this verse, see Levenson, *The Death and the Resurrection*, pp. 36–42. See also Chapter 1 note 19 below. See also Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 21–2.
- 32 Namely by God's name, or by the name of the dead Julius Caesar, who underwent an apotheosis and was adopted by Octavianus, which according to Knohl reverberates in this passage. Let me point out that I do not attempt to take sides in the debate about the origins of sonship in this specific text, or in the wider questions related to the emergence of Christian forms of sonship, again as a continuation of earlier Jewish elements, or as impacted by Greek theories of *theios aner*. However, it seems to me that in the more recent decades, the balance in scholarship tips in the former direction. See Moule, *The Origins of Christology*, pp. 11–46 or the survey found in Bryne, *Sons of God*, pp. 197–8. However, even if the two major examples of Qumran and the religion of Jesus adopted some elements of sonship from outside Judaism, as some earlier scholars emphasized, they were integrated in Jewish circles in late antiquity, and together with the biblical proof-text, they entered what can be called the *semantique reservoir* before the beginning of the Common Era in some Jewish circles.
- 33 According to the translation of Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet*, pp. 83, 88, the original Aramaic is found *ibid.*, p. 83. For more on this passage see J.C. O'Neil, 'Who is Comparable to Me in My Glory?' 4Q491 Fragment 11 (4Q491C), and the 'New Testament', *Novum Testamentum* 52 (2000), pp. 24–38; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, p. 261; Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 45; Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus*; Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham', pp. 61–2, Geza Vermes, 'Qumran Forum Miscellanea I', *JJS* 43 (2) (1992), pp. 301–3 and more recently Garcia Martinez, 'Divine Sonship at Qumran', especially pp. 130–1 and the additional bibliography he adduces there.
- 34 See e.g. David Fusser, 'The Hubris of the Antichrist', in *Judaism and the Origin of Christianity*, pp. 207–13; Xeravits, *ibid.*, pp. 88–9; and more recently No'am Mizrahi's MA thesis, 'The Scroll 'Ben ha-'El' from Qumran (4Q246): Exegetical Questions from a Linguistic Perspective' (Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2001) (Hebrew).
- 35 See Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet*, p. 85.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 86. It should be mentioned that another mortal who is described as having an exalted status and designated as the son of God is Abel, according to a variant of the *Testament of Abraham*, found in the Long Greek version 12.4–5. There the singular person is used. Though the interpretation offered for this passage surmises that this is an angelic entity, it is interesting to note that the enthronement there is reminiscent of the description of 1 Enoch's Son of Man. See E.P. Sanders, *The Testament of Abraham, OTP*, vol. 1, p. 889 and Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, pp. 77–8.
- 37 Xeravits, *ibid.*, p. 83.
- 38 See Hengel, 'Setze dich zu meiner Rechten', pp. 175–7; Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus*, pp. 11–26, 51–101; and the updated bibliography adduced by Kenneth Atkinson, *I Cried to the Lord* (Brill, Leiden, 2004), p. 51 note 106.
- 39 On this verse see especially the discussion of Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 101–19.
- 40 48.2–6, tr. Black, p. 49, commentary p. 210. See also Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien*, pp. 288–9; Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, p. 114; Davila, 'Of Methodology', p. 11 note 15; James C. VanderKam, 'Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71', in ed., James Charlesworth, *The Messiah*, pp. 169–91; Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 88–90; and Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, 'The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image', in eds, Carrey C. Newman, James R. Davila & Gladys S. Lewis, *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, p. 114. For the view that one of the Synoptic resorts to the Son of Man points to an Enochic figure, see Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man* (SPCK, London, 1983), pp. 50–6.
- 41 See Caragounis, *ibid.*, pp. 112–13; Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 179–84.
- 42 See *Genesis Rabba' 1.4; Tanhuma'*, periscope Naso' 11, *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 3.
- 43 Ps. 72.17. *Yinon* has been adopted as a name of the Messiah in rabbinic and some later forms of Judaism.
- 44 BT *Pesahim* fol. 54a, *Nedarim*, fol. 39b, *Yalqut Shime'on*, Gen. ch. 2, par. 20; *idem*, Jer. 17, no. 298; *idem*, Ps., ch. 72, no. 806; and Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, p. 283 note 5.
- 45 See, especially, Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 152 and Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, p. 81. A similar solution was earlier proposed by Carl H. Kraeling, *Anthropos and Son of Man* (1927, rpr. AMS Press, New York, 1966), p. 163. For more on this type of solution see Chapter 1 below on the discussion of 3 Enoch and Abu Ma'shar's remark on Hermes, and implicitly also on Enoch.
- 46 69.26, tr. Black, p. 66. See also Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 80–1.
- 47 Tr. Rubinkiewicz, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 693–4, and Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 17, 55, 83–4, 91 note 1. See also Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 199–206 and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 296–7. As to the possibility that this name is an early example of a reference to an angel, before the emergence of the name of Metatron, see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 41 note 20 and *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 102. See also a recently published Aramaic text where the name of this angel occurs and is described as an angel or prince, and as holy. Cf. Peter Schaefer & Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (Mohr Siebeck, Tuebingen, 1999), vol. 3, p. 71, and see

- also vol. 2 (1997), pp. 34, 81, 89, 97. For the occurrence of Yaho'el in a magical context in the Middle Ages see Chapter 2 note 96 below.
- 48 In Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 693–4, and Kulik, *ibid.*, pp. 17, 19 which reflects the morphic aspect.
- 49 On this issue see Christopher Rowland, 'The Vision of the Risen Christ in Rev. 1 13ff: The Debt of an Early Christology to an Aspect of Jewish Angelology', *Journal of Theological Studies* (NS) 31 (1980), pp. 6–8. See also Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 143–4.
- 50 See especially the hymn to God in ch. 17.18,19, ed. p. 697, as well as a short reference in 22.1, p. 700.
- 51 Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 51–7; and Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 61.
- 52 Cf. Steven M. Wasserstrom, 'Shahrastani on the Maghariyya', *Israel Oriental Studies* 17 (1997), p. 153; Shahrastani, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, p. 607; Pétremont, *A Separate God*, pp. 41–2; and Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p. 30. For more on Magharians, see notes 53, 169 below and Chapter 1 notes 54, 302. See also S. Poznanski, 'Philon dans l'ancienne littérature Judéo-Arabe', *REJ* 50 (1905), pp. 10–31, who assumes an impact of Philo on the Magharyah's concept of the archangel. See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, p. 150. Angelomorphism is a concept that recurs more frequently in the recent scholarship of late antiquity Judaism and early Christianity. See e.g. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, *passim*.
- 53 'The Magharians', especially p. 328. See also Henne, *La Christologie*, pp. 234–8, and *Shahrastani, ibid.*, pp. 607–8 note 75.
- 54 See *The Confusion of Tongues*, par. 41, *On Dreams*, l.157 and *De Agricultura*, par. 51. See also the discussions on those topics by Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques*, pp. 104, 117, 170, 234–6, Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, pp. 90–6; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 44–8, 85; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 87–8; Winston, *Logos*, p. 16; Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 80; Boyarin, *Border Lines*, p. 103; Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 2, pp. 84–5; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 159–81; Lilianna Rosso Ubigli, 'The Image of Israel in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria', in ed., Calabi, *Italian Studies on Philo*, pp. 53–73; and Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity*, vol. 2, pp. 84–5, discuss issues related to the nature of Israel, that we shall address below. For the High Priest as Logos see Jean Laporte, 'The High Priest in Philo of Alexandria', *Studia Philonica Annual* 3 (1991), pp. 71–82. See also Wolfson, 'Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah', p. 80. For an early view according to which the supernal Adam is identical to the divine name see Fossum, 'The Adorable Adam', p. 536.
- 55 *The Confusion of Tongues*, pars 62–3, p. 45. For another important passage from this book see below our discussion of the double sonship. It should be mentioned that according to Philo, there is also another type of sonship, that of the sage, who alone is described as the Son of God. See Philo's *Questions on Genesis* 4.188, translated and discussed in David Winston, 'Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature', in ed., Lenn E. Goodman, *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), pp. 26–7; and Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques*, p. 234. It should also be mentioned that Enoch was conceived of as a sage. See Philo, *De mutatione nominum*, pars 34–6 and Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 1, pp. 403–4. Therefore we may

- speak already with Philo about an implicit double form of sonship, the cosmic one, the Logos as Son of God, and the human one, the sage as the Son of the Logos. It is probable that the Logos is also conceived of as being the father of the sage. In this case sonship is a matter of adoption, which in the case of the Logos is a matter of emanation. In a way, this double sonship reflects a possible conclusion to the transcendental-immanentist vision that Philo inherited from the Stoa. See e.g. Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 70 note 125. See also below notes 123, 146.
- 56 *Michael and Christ*, pp. 142–7; and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, and his study mentioned above in note 14.
- 57 Col. 1.15. See also Phil. 2.6, *en morphé theou*. This formulation is almost identical to that found in Philo, *The Confusion of Tongues*, pars 145–8, to be adduced below in this Introduction. For the various developments of the theology of the image as Logos, and man as image of image in Patristic literature and in some medieval Orthodox thinkers, see Panayiotis Nellis, *Deification in Christ, The Nature of the Human Person*, tr. Norman Russell (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1997), pp. 23–42. See also Alexander Altmann, 'Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli', *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 10–11.
- 58 Phil. 2.9. On the interpretation of this passage as dealing with Jesus's possession of the divine name see Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 143–4; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 210; Segal, *The Other Judaism of Late Antiquity* (Brown Judaic Studies, 1987), pp. 14–15; and Barker, 'The High Priest', pp. 104–5. On the emphasis on Jesus's theophoric name in the original Hebrew see the important observation of De Andia, *Mystiques d'Orient et d'Occident*, p. 295 note 1.
- 59 'The Divine Name', p. 116 and his *Angelomorphic Christology*, p. 339; and Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 197–206.
- 60 On the resort to 'All' in early Christian texts and their possible Jewish and Greek sources, see Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 315–16 note 126, 408.
- 61 Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 86, hints at the impact of the *Wisdom of Solomon* 7.25. We shall discuss this text below.
- 62 On the concept of the stamp that leaves an imprint, see Bruce, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 5–6; and Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, *passim*. For later reverberations see Hanson, *The Search*, p. 182.
- 63 Ps. 2.7.
- 64 2 Sam. 7.14.
- 65 1.2–5. On this seminal passage see, among other, the following studies: Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 499–504; Bruce, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 1–17; Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 85–8; Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp. 21–2; and Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism', p. 11. For the background of the passage see also A. Yarbro Collins, 'Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews', *HTR* 92 (1999), pp. 393–408; and Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 296–7.
- 66 See Bruce, *ibid.*, pp. 5–6; Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse*, pp. 377, 386, 387 note 3; and Hurtado, *ibid.*, p. 499. See also below, note 129.
- 67 See Steenburg, 'Adam and Christ', p. 99; and Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*.

- 68 Michael Fishbane, 'Some Forms of Divine Appearance in Ancient Jewish Thought', in eds, J. Neusner, E.S. Frierichs & N. Sarna, *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism, Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1990), vol. 2, pp. 261–70; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983), pp. 329–34.
- 69 Phil. 2.6. See Markus Bockmuehl, 'The Form of God' (Phil. 2.6). Variations on a Theme of Jewish Mysticism', *JTS* 48 (1) (1997), p. 6.
- 70 See Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam'. See also Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*.
- 71 See, among others, the articles of Yigael Yadin, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle of the Hebrews', *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 4 (1958), pp. 36–55; Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 23–74; or Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. xxviii–xxix.
- 72 Presumably a name that is inscribed on the diadem. Compare to the name 'Eheyeh 'asher 'eheyeh, inscribed on the crown of Moses, according to a Samaritan tradition. See Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mystic', p. 18.
- 73 This is a theme that appears also in Jewish martyrology. See Yuval, 'Two Nations in Your Womb', pp. 110–14.
- 74 On this passage see e.g. Barker, 'The High Priest', pp. 102–3; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 212–13 and on the reverberations of similar themes in medieval Judaism see the important article by Yehuda Liebes, 'The Purple-Garment of Hellen of Troy and Martyrdom', *Daat* 57–9 (2006), pp. 83–119 (Hebrew).
- 75 Probably a reference to Exod. 4.22. This is one of the most important early proof-texts for the theory of sonship of Israel as a nation. See the view of Philo in his *Confession of the Tongues*, to be quoted and discussed below.
- 76 Tr. J.Z. Smith, *OTP*, vol. 2, p. 713. On this short treatise see Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, pp. 64–5; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 27–8, 67–8; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 188–9, 314; Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 121–2, 148; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 184–5; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 199–200; Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 47–8; Kister, 'Observations', pp. 15–16; Jean Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Desclée/Cerf, Paris, 1991), pp. 218–20; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 297–8; and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 4–5. For the angelic status of Israel, described as the Logos and angel, see below the passage from Philo's *The Confusion of Tongues*, pars 145–7, and Jonathan Z. Smith, 'The Prayer of Joseph' in *Religion in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E.R. Goodenough* (Brill, Leiden, 1968), pp. 262–5.
- 77 Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 28–9. On the structure of eight angels in Heikhalot literature, its parallels and echoes in Kabbalah, see Idel, 'Il Mondo degli angeli', pp. 29–30 note 89.
- 78 See above note 76. On name sharing in the context of a discussion of the Son of God in Midrashic sources, see also Basser, 'Notions of Glory and Sonship', pp. 1–2.
- 79 See H.C. Youtie, 'A Gnostic Amulet with an Aramaic Inscription', *JAOS* 50 (1930), pp. 214–220; and Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 144 note 34.
- 80 See Fossum, *The Name of God*, passim; C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979), pp. 26–8; and Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God'.
- 81 See *Marqah* 17.30. For the special status of Moses in late antiquity as a sort of God see Philo's treatment of Moses, in Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of God*, pp. 136–9, and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 273–4, a related form of response to the sublime status of Enoch in antiquity. These and other examples show that the apothotic vector is seen quite early in some forms of Judaism.
- 82 See Chapter 2, Section 2, the quotation from the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms's *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*. Son and name represent here the morphic and the nominal aspects of the theophoric mediator. See also *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 1, ch. 56, p. 108: 'May his sons be blotted out; and may his name be blotted out in one generation.'
- 83 Here there is a strong nexus between the existence of a thing and its name.
- 84 Cf. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, pp. 262–3. This text also attracted a lot of attention from scholars. See especially Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, pp. 246–8; Jean-Daniel Dubois, 'Le contexte judaïque du <Nom> dans l'Évangile de Verité', *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 3 (1974), pp. 198–216; Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 23–5; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 249–50; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 155; Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God', pp. 239–40; and note 86 below.
- 85 For the bestowing of both form and name by Abathur to his son Ptahil-Uthra, see the texts adduced by Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 84.
- 86 See, especially, Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, p. 236. See also the treatment of this passage by Pasquier, 'Theologie du nom', and the important analysis by Mortley, 'The Name of the Father is the Son', p. 244, where it is proposed, correctly in my opinion, that a Philonic impact on the theory of the name is found in the *Gospel of Truth*. See also *ibid.*, p. 242, where the son is described as the 'shape of the aeons'. For the Philonic source see below, note 123. See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 276–7.
- 87 Cf. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, p. 237. See also *ibid.*, p. 235. Compare, however, to the Christian assumption that the Son represents a faithful, and natural, expression of the Father. See below, Chapter 6. On the face in late antiquity sources see also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 116 note 34.
- 88 See Pasquier, 'Theologie du nom', pp. 206–7.
- 89 Of the highest God. Here the name and the image are identified, a rare case of morphonominalism. For a similar view see the passages quoted from R. Eleazar of Worms in Chapter 2 below.
- 90 Presumably this word reflects the Hebrew term *Maqom*, place, which also served as a way to designate divinity. See Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 304–5 note 4. On this issue see Chapter 6 note 46 below.
- 91 *Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*. See Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, p. 219; Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 305; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 155. For a design that is probably a representation of the God of Israel found on a gem, surrounded by names, see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 130 and Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 75 note 58.

- 92 See Quispel, *ibid.*
- 93 *Ibid.*, pp. 236–7.
- 94 22.6–7; Clement d'Alexandrie, *Extraits de Theodote*, ed. S. Sagnard (Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1948), pp. 102–3. See also *ibid.*, 26.1. For affinities between these writings and Jewish material, see J. Bergmann, 'Les elements juifs dans les Pseudo-Clementines', *REJ* 46 (1903), pp. 89–98; Pines's studies referred to above, notes 11 and 12; and Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 96–9.
- 95 86.2, ed. Sagnard, pp. 210–11. On the affinity between the seal and name see Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, pp. 284–96. See also the *First Book of Jeu*, p. 48, *The Untitled Text*, p. 266, and the pseudo-epigraphic *Apocalypse of Elijah*, 1.5, tr. O.S. Wintermute, in *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 737. For more on the different aspects of the concepts found in the above passage see Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1986), pp. 65–7.
- 96 See BT *Sabbath*, fol. 55a; *Genesis Rabba* 8.5, p. 60. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 245–53; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 229 note 7, 236–7; Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 185; and Idel, *Golem*, pp. 4–5.
- 97 For the affinity between seal and image in relation to the shape of man in the Bible, see Dexter E. Callender, Jr, 'The Primal Man in Ezekiel and the Image of God', *Society for Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers*, pp. 606–25. See also Pasquier, 'Theologie du nom', p. 210. On seal in Philo's thought see Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity*, pp. 203–5. See also below Chapter 3 note 211.
- 98 See Winston, *Logos*, p. 25. On language as seal see also Mareen R. Niehoff, 'What is a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language', *Jewish Quarterly Studies* 2 (1995), pp. 243–50. On divine names and sealing see Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, pp. 47–54 as well as Chapter 1 below regarding the discussion of the Ophites, and Chapter 2, Section 2 regarding the discussions of the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms. For a comprehensive discussion of the affinities between the seal and the divine image see Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, pp. 247–60.
- 99 See 4.8; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 133. See also the view found in the *Odes of Solomon* 41.15, according to which souls are saved by 'the truth of his name'. In fact, the entire context from 41.12–15 implies some forms of morphonominalism, as both sonship and name are mentioned, together with righteousness. See Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 197 and Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, p. 49.
- 100 See Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 177–89.
- 101 See Meir bar Ilan, 'Magical Seals on the Body Among Jews in the first Centuries of the Common Era', *Tarbiz* 57 (1987), pp. 37–50 (Hebrew); and Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 79–80.
- 102 See in more detail Idel, 'Il mondo degli angeli', pp. 3–5.
- 103 *The Manual of the Discipline*, 3.25. For ancient and medieval angelic hypostases called 'Emmet' see Idel, *Golem*, pp. 306–13. See also the phrase 'the aeon of truth' in *On the Origin of the World*, in Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 162. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 156–7.
- 104 See *Pesher Habaquq* 8.9. Cf. eds, Florentino Garcia Martinez & E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Brill, Leiden, 1998), vol. 1, p.

16. Though my reading of the Hebrew phrase *Niqra'* 'al shem ha-'Emmet as 'who was called in the name of Truth' is not attested to in the translations or commentaries I am acquainted with, I hope to be able to elaborate on this proposal elsewhere. I assume that the translation of the phrase *Shem ha-'Emmet* as 'the name of truth' is literal but to a certain extent misleading. For the expression 'ki 'atah 'av le-kol benei 'Amitteka' – 'Because you are father to all sons of your truth' in *Serekh ha-Hodayyot*, see 1QH 17.29–31, discussed in Garcia Martinez, 'Divine Sonship at Qumran', pp. 109–10. For a more extensive discussion of 'the sons of truth' in Qumran see Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 30–7, who emphasizes the aspects of loyalty and faithfulness related to the term 'Emmet in this literature.
- 105 See Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 177–89; and Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 156.
- 106 See Jn 8.37; Dodd, *Understanding of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 170–8; and Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 529–30.
- 107 On the term 'emmet in the Qumranic literature, see Eisenman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 34 note 64, note 153 and note 18; Condra, *Salvation for the Righteous Revealed*, p. 151; and Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham*, pp. 106–7. I wonder whether the description of the group led by R. Hanina ben Dosa', as 'Anshei 'emmet, 'men of truth', should not be understood as 'men of God'. See Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, pp. 199–200.
- 108 See Idel, 'Golems and God'. For other forms of magic which resort to the divine name in order to revive images, see Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, p. 105.
- 109 See Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 208–9; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 87–106; and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 242.
- 110 Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, p. 66.
- 111 See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 245–53, 332; Pasquier, 'Theologie du nom', pp. 210–11; and see Dexter Callender's interesting article, referred to above in note 97. See also Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity*, pp. 203–5; Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, p. 466, where the son is described as the 'sphragis of the Father'. For sealing in early Christianity see also Janet Rutherford, 'Sealed with the Likeness of God: Christ as Logos in Diadochos of Photike', *Studies in Patristic Christology*, eds Thomas Finan & Vincent Twomey (Four Court Press, Portland, 1998), pp. 67–83.
- 112 See Idel, *Golem*, p. 313 note 24. See also *ibid.*, pp. 154–5 note 9, as well as the Ashkenazi treatise dealing with a *Commentary on the Name of Seventy-Two Letters*, found in MS. Mussaiof 69, fol. 55a and probably belonging to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, as I shall try to show in a separate study. In this passage, the term 'the seal of God' occurs, and the assumption is that it is shown to the soul before its birth. See more on this point in Chapter 1 below.
- 113 The phrase 'tittle of iota' when dealing with so many issues included in it, seems to reflect the Jewish expression, 'tittle of yod'; see BT *Menahot*, fol. 34a.
- 114 The description of supernal beings, such as angels, possessing innumerable eyes is known in Jewish sources; see BT *'Avodah Zarah*, fol. 2b.
- 115 Irenaeus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 8.7, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1968), vol. 6, p. 320. Compare to the view of Philo, *The Confusion*

- of *Tongues*, pars 145–8, to be quoted immediately below. On this passage see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (JPS, Philadelphia, 1968), vol. 5, p. 63 note 1; Borsch, *Christian and Gnostic Son of God*, pp. 67–75; Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 202; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 239–43; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 193. Compare this view to Origen's resort to *epinoiai* for Jesus. See Schmelowszky, 'A la recherche', pp. 38–9. On the material belonging to this figure and some summary remarks on him see Foerster, *Gnosis*, vol. 1, pp. 246–50. It should also be pointed out that in the early Judeo-Christian composition entitled *The Shepherd of Hermas* 9.6.1, there is a description of a huge figure, referred to as the Son of God, whose name is very important. See Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 602–5; Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, pp. 205–8; Ketterer, *The Alphabet of R. Aqiba*, vol. 1, p. 295; and Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, pp. 124–5. For the theme of innumerable names in late antiquity see Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 101–2. See also Schmelowszky, *ibid.*, p. 15, again a case in which form, a huge size and a certain special name are found together.
- 116 See e.g. the outstanding contribution of Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods, A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1965); Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*; more recently Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (SPCK, London, 1987); and Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, pp. 43, 179 note 2; and Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, pp. xxxvii–xl. For medieval visions of the king as adopted by divine grace see Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p. 500.
- 117 See Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus*.
- 118 Cf. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalypticism*; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, pp. 68–72; and see John Collin's summary of this recent trend and some criticism in eds, Collins & Charlesworth, *Mysteries and Revelations*, pp. 25–32, as well as his 'Apocalypticism in the Religion of Israel', pp. 542–4, 549; and Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish & Christian Apocalypse* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1993), pp. 123–4 note 76. See also Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 18–20. For a categorization of sonship in Qumran see Garcia Martinez, 'Divine Sonship at Qumran', especially p. 111, which distinguishes between angelic sonship, Israel as the Son of God, the king as Son of God and Messiah as Son of God.
- 119 On this issue see Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*, *passim*.
- 120 Origen, *Commentary on Jn 20.24*; Cf. Foerster, *Gnosis*, vol. 1, p. 180. For more on the issue see *ibid.*, pp. 180–1. The sons of the devil are probably the Jews, according to the phrase in John 8.38ff. See Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 93–4, 301–2. For more on Heracleon's thought see Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Abingdon Press, Nashville & New York, 1973), especially pp. 100–9. The sonship by imitation as different from that by nature is reminiscent of the distinction made later on by Pelagius, 'we are by imitation, not by nature, the sons of God'. It should be mentioned that, unlike this type of more systematic reflection on sonship, I did find in Jewish sources only one single instance of an attempt to differentiate between the different types of sonship. See Abulafia's discussion in *Sitrei Torah* mentioned below in Chapter 3 note 66.
- 121 See the reconstruction of the Nicæan Creed in Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 163 and 159. On a variety of discussions on the emanation of the Son, together with concepts of generation by God as a Supreme and ineffable Father in some Neo-Platonic texts see Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, pp. 461–74.
- 122 See Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 176–7; Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, p. 11; and Fantino, *L'homme l'image de Dieu*, p. 148. See also the Arabic material analyzed by Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 118–20. On adoption in the Hebrew Bible and in early Christian documents see Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 15–17, 70–1, 83–8.
- 123 *The Confusion of Tongues*, pars 145–8, pp. 89–91. For an excellent analysis of parallels to these paragraphs see *De Confusione Linguarum*, tr. J.G. Kahn (Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1963), pp. 176–82, who also point out important aspects of these Philonic discussions and possible parallels. For issues related to assimilation to God in Philo see Helleman, 'Philo on Deification'. See also J.Z. Smith's important introduction to the *Prayer of Joseph, OTP*, vol. 2, pp. 701–4 and note 11; Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 1, pp. 234, 238–9; Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 84–5; Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 226; Mortley, 'The Name of the Father is the Son', pp. 243–4, 246; Lampe, *God as Spirit*, pp. 38–40, 121–2; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 107–112; and Lorberbaum, 'Imago Dei – Imitation Dei'. For Philo's position on issues related to this quotation see especially the important passage from his *Legum Allegoriae*, 3.96, translated in Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, p. 101; Winston, *The Ancestral Philosophy*, p. 157; and McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, p. 38, and above, note 55, and below note 146. See also below, Chapter 3 note 50, and in more general terms, the discussion of some other Philonic passages in Barker, *The Great Angel*, pp. 114–33, 146–8, 202, and her 'Temple Imagery in Philo: An Indication of the Origin of the Logos?', in ed., William Horbury, *Templum Amicitiae, Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (Continuum, Sheffield, 1991), pp. 70–102; Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 165–81; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 4–5, 116 note 34, and above, note 86. For the possible affinity between the Logos of Philo and the angel of Magharyah see also Pétrement, *A Separate God*, p. 42. An analysis of Philo's theory of sonship is found in Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 50–2; and Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham', pp. 57–9. For the impact of Philo's theory of sonship see as late as the seventeenth-century learned lady who converted to Quakerism, Anne Conway, *The Principles*, pp. 38, 167. Though there are Synoptic sources for the sonship of all men, Mt. 5.9, 45, 7.11, and the parallels in Lk. 6.35, 11.3, double sonship is not so explicit there. For the more explicit Pauline views on the topic see Rom. 8.14, or Phil. 2.15. For an interesting and explicit formulation of double sonship see Irenaeus in the following passage *Adversus Haereses*, 3.16.3: 'The son of God had become the son of man, so that we shall receive the adoptive sonship.' See also Fantino, *L'homme l'image de Dieu*, pp. 152–3 and for Augustin see McGinn, *The*

- Foundations of Mysticism*, p. 251. For a more explicit reference to double sonship see also the pseudo-epigraphic *Apoc. Elij.* 1.5, tr. O.S. Wintermute, in *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 736, where it is written about the Incarnate Son: 'Therefore become sons to him since he is a father to you.' For an implicit assumption that Christians are children or sons of the Christ see Daniélou, *Platonisme & Théologie Mystique*, pp. 119–20; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption, Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (Zone Books, New York, 1992), p. 93, and in more general terms the views about Jesus as mother, and Christians as sons, in her *Jesus the Mother, Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (California University Press, Berkeley, 1984). The spiritual sonship of someone who is or becomes a Christian is a widespread view. See also the mid-fourteenth century Byzantine view discussed by Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, p. 70; and Cusanus in McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 479–81. It should be pointed out that in his book on filiation, Cusanus is distinguishing between two different filiations of Christ, as the Son of God and the Son of Man, and it is the second kind of sonship that facilitates the human sonship.
- 124 This is especially evident in the question of sonship, namely the theory of the Son of Man. However, there are also other topics relevant for this affinity. See C. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1997); John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, New York, 1984); and Barker, *The Great Angel*. See also Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 526–34, and Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet, The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1989).
- 125 See Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 110–12.
- 126 Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1979), p. 167. On Messianism in this book see Michael Stone, 'The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra', in eds, Jacob Neusner et al., *Judaisms and their Messiahs* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), pp. 209–24, as well as his many discussions in his *Fourth Ezra*; J.H. Charlesworth, 'From Messianology to Christology', *ibid.*, pp. 241–5; Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* p. 114; and Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 253.
- 127 See Stone, *IV Ezra*, p. 209 note 26.
- 128 Wis. 7.24–30; Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 178–84. See also the commentary by Ernest G. Clarke (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973), pp. 53–4; Lampe, *God as Spirit*, pp. 120–1; John J. Collins, 'Apocalyptic Eschatology in Philosophical Dress in the *Wisdom of Solomon*', in ed., Kugel, *Shem in the Tents of Japhet*, pp. 93–107; and Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien*, pp. 179–80 note 172. Let me note that the possible impact of this book on Jewish mysticism did not receive its due attention. As pointed out by Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse*, in the first part of his book, pp. 12–84, this book had a strong impact on Christianity in both East and West. See also G. Théry, 'Le commentaire de Maître Eckhart sur le Livre de la Sagesse', *AHDMLA* 3 (1928), pp. 321–443, 4 (1929), pp. 233–394. The possible impact is not only a matter of the two quotes found in Nahmanides, but also of the possible transmission of ideas by the mediation of Christian texts. For medieval and Renaissance Jewish interest in this text see Winston, *ibid.*, p. 17 note 16. As we are going to see in Chapter 4, theosophical sons are sometimes related to the concept of an inner emanation within the divinity. For Jesus as mirror see Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp. 157–67.
- 129 See James Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and its Consequences* (Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1970), pp. 6, 45; Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse*, pp. 207, 245, 377, 378; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, p. 44; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses, Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003), p. 192; and Schaefer, *The Mirror of His Beauty*, pp. 35–6.
- 130 See E.R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1992), p. 214.
- 131 Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ*, p. 91.
- 132 See Shannon Burkert, 'Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the *Wisdom of Solomon*', *HTR* 95 (1) (2001), pp. 36–7.
- 133 Hengel, 'Setze dich zu meiner Rechten', pp. 185–6. See also 1 *En.* ch. 84.
- 134 Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.2.5, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 247 and Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, p. 127. It should be mentioned that in this book 1.3.4, *ibid.*, p. 253, that Origen attributed to a Hebrew master, he had an interpretation of the two serafim in the verse from Isa. 6.3, as dealing with the 'only begotten son of God and the Holy Spirit'. See Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 205. This piece of evidence as to a Jewish interpretation that acknowledged the cosmic sonship may reflect some form of reverberation of the Philonic type of thought. In any case, discussions based on the assumption of the existence of a supernal couple are found in late antiquity in the context of Judaism. See in general Stroumsa, *Savoit et Salut*, pp. 23–42, and especially p. 27; for the tradition discussed in the name of the Marcionites by an Arabic author in Guy Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions Iraniennes, 'Abd al-Jabbar et ses devanciers* (J. Vrin, Paris, 1974), pp. 167–8; and Idel, 'Il mondo degli angeli', pp. 3–5. The scholarly literature on this topic that deals with the male angel as the Son of God and a female angel as the Holy Spirit is multiplying. The first modern scholar to draw attention to the interesting affinity between the details of the two Patristic reports on the Gnostic descriptions of the angels and the ancient Jewish material was a 1893 study by Moses Gaster, 'Das Shiur Komah', reprinted in his *Studies and Texts*, vol. 2 (London 1925–8), pp. 1330–53. See also the detailed and rather critical analysis of Gaster's view in Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 20–2. See also Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 37; Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1985), pp. 44–5, 100–1, 123; or Howard M. Jackson, 'The Origins and Development of *Shi'ur Qomah* Revelation in Jewish Mysticism', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 31 (4) (2000), pp. 373–415. There is potential importance in the pair of angels, one of them described explicitly as Son of God, for understanding the development of Jewish mysticism, especially since central trends in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah as it developed in the Middle Ages dealt with the imperative to unify a male and female divine powers, the male one being described as the son, as we shall see in Chapter 4

- below. For the possibility that the early sixteenth-century figure H. Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim and some of his followers had already made a connection between the early Gnostic texts and Kabbalah see Idel, *ibid.*, p. 3 note 5, and the material adduced by Francois Secret, 'Un texte mal connu de Simon Luzzatto sur la Kabbale', *REJ* 118 (1959–60), p. 125 note 1. It should be pointed out that huge sizes have been attributed in an early medieval source both to angels and the divine throne, in a manner reminiscent of the *Shi'ur Qomah*. See Tzvi Malakhi, 'The *Shi'ur Qomah* of the Holy Beasts and the Seat of Glory in the Poem of Yehoshu'a bar Khalfah', *Mahut* 2 (7) (1990), pp. 129–32 (Hebrew).
- 135 Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.2.10, cf. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4 (Hendrickson, Cleveland, 1994), pp. 249–50. See also in *Contra Celsum* 6.47 for Celsus's proposal to speak about an emanational sonship as more reasonable than an organic one. On the impact of the *Wisdom of Solomon* on Christianity see Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse*, pp. 11–84 and on Origen, *ibid.*, pp. 43–6.
- 136 *Ibid.*, 1.2.9, p. 249.
- 137 *Ibid.* The image of breath may also imply a recurring process, some form of rhythm, and it may be connected to Origen's view of eternal emanation of the Son from the Father. For the repercussions of this view in Latin Christianity, see Bernard McGinn, 'The Spiritual Heritage of Origen in the West, Aspects of the History of Origen's Influence in the Middle Ages', *Origene maestro di vita spirituale, a cura di Luigi F. Pizzolato e Marco Rizzi* (Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 2001), pp. 263–89, especially pp. 282–9, and in more general terms de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 1, pp. 207–304. As we have hinted at several times in this Introduction, it is possible that Nahmanides was acquainted with some of Origen's ideas.
- 138 *Ibid.* 1.2.10, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, p. 249. On Origen and Jewish contemporary exegesis see Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius, Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, tr. Batya Stein (SUNY Press, Albany, 1996).
- 139 See Plato's seemingly pseudepigraphic *Sixth Letter*, 323d, or an interpretation of Plato's *Timaios*, 36bc; in the direction of Demiurgos as a Son of God see the passage from Justin Martyr's *Apologies*, 1.60, discussed in Pierre Nautin, 'Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène', in *In Principio: Interprétations des premières versets de la Genèse* (Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1973), p. 65. For this view in Plotinus and Ficino, see *Marsilio Ficino, Platonic Theology*, tr. Michael J.B. Allen, text ed. James Hankins (Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., London, 2003), vol. 3, pp. 250–1, 353 notes 21, 22.
- 140 *De principiis* 1.2.10, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, p. 249.
- 141 1.2.12, *ibid.*, p. 251. In general on the concepts of wisdom in late antiquity see Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 1–23, 245–7.
- 142 Pines, 'God, the Divine Glory'; Idel, 'In the Light of Life', p. 208; and Abrams, 'The Boundaries', p. 297.
- 143 This point is of great importance and we shall return to it below.
- 144 *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 128, cf. *Anti-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. 2 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1867), pp. 261–2. This seminal passage attracted the attention of many scholars. See e.g. Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, p. 338; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 181–2 and especially note 324, as well as his remarks in 'The Magharians'; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 221–5; Segal, 'Dualism', in his *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (Brown University, 1987), pp. 14–19; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 296, 310–11, 581–3; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 640–8; Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 125–6; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 298–9 and Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 28–9, 37–73, 275 note 15. For an echo of the angelic status of Jesus in the Middle Ages see Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 276–7, and for an echo of the angelic status of the Son, in the general context of the description of Jesus as the angel of the face in Ashkenazi texts, see Chapter 2.
- 145 'God, the Divine Glory', pp. 3–4. For the angelic status of Jesus in Muslim sources see Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, p. 88.
- 146 *The Confusion of Tongues*, par. 62, p. 45, cf. Zech. 6.12; Winston, 'Philo and the Contemplative Life', in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green (Crossroad, New York, 1986), vol. 1, p. 209; Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 287; Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, pp. 121–4; McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 37–8; and Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 430–1 note 354, p. 536 note 330. It stands to reason that Philo's views on the spiritual-cosmic sonship were not known to Jewish thinkers until late in the sixteenth century in Italy, when they appeared for the first time in Hebrew in a discussion by R. Azariah de Rossi and, following him, in a discussion by R. Yehudah Arie'el of Modena and in R. Abraham Kohen Herrera. See Chapter 5 note 44 below. De Rossi also emphasizes Philo's theory of two sons: the Logos on the one hand, and the sensible world as the material son on the other. See also above, notes 55 and 123. See also Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques*, p. 110.
- 147 Tabor, 'The Return to the Divinity'. See also Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 274–6. It should be pointed out that in *3 Enoch*, the return of the souls of the righteous to the entourage of the divinity is described. See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 56 (Hebrew). This return surmises some form of pre-existence. For the pre-existence of the souls of the righteous, see *Genesis Rabba* 8.7. This assumption of the pre-existence of the souls of the righteous is very important for understanding the vital role played by these figures in the religious *imaginaire* of many of the Jewish mystics. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 209–10 and F.C. Porter, 'The Preexistence of Soul in the *Book of Wisdom* and in the Rabbinical Writings', *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of W.R. Harper*, eds Robert Francis Harper, Francis Brown & George Foot Moore (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 207–69.
- 148 For the similarity between Adam and Elisha in this context see Idel, 'Enoch and Metatron'. For the possible meaning of the cutting see Liebes, *Het'o shel 'Elisha*', pp. 29–50; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hébreu d'Enoch*, pp. 30–7, 247–8; Abrams, 'The Boundaries', pp. 297–8; and Chapter 1 note 67 below.
- 149 *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*

- (Schocken Books, New York, 1969), vol. 1, p. 243. On this issue see more in this Introduction below and at the end of the Concluding Remarks. Whether in late antiquity there was also a pagan occultism known as the *Chaldean Oracles*, where the relationship between the transcendental intellect described as a father on the one hand, and the second intellect, the demiurge, regarded as a son and as representing the strength of the father, on the other hand is a matter of debate between scholars. See the positive view of Festugiere, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3, p. 54 note 2 and vol. 4, p. 132, and Édouard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques* (Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1971), pp. 67, 124. This interpretation was not shared, however, by the most recent editor and translator of the fragments of the *Chaldean Oracles*. See Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brill, Leiden, 1989), pp. 5–8, 49, 141–2. See, however, the parallel to the *Chaldean Oracles* discussed by Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, pp. 461–74, where a son, parallel to the second Intellect, is mentioned in several texts. See also *ibid.*, p. 472, for the Augustinian interpretation of the *Chaldean Oracles* in the direction of a Son of God, and below, Chapter 3 note 70 and Chapter 5 note 35. For a survey of the imagery of Father and Son in order to refer to the highest ontological realms, the First Cause and the world of the cosmic Intellect, and the process of emanation in Plotin, see Paul Aubin, *Plotin et le Christianisme, triade plotinienne et trinité Chrétienne* (Beauchesne, Paris, 1992), pp. 84–98. See also the discussions of Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1978), pp. 340–1.
- 150 See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 53, 55–6; Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 46; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 65; and Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', p. 107. Claims made by Joseph Dan that this identification is a later addition to the Heikhalot literature are not accompanied by any analysis, and in my opinion are hardly plausible. See also Daphna V. Arbel, 'Understanding of the Heart, Spiritual Transformation and Divine Revelations in the Heikhalot and Merkavah Literature', *JSQ* 6 (1999), pp. 320–44, who sees in Enoch's elevation and experience the paradigm for mystical experiences in this literature. For the ascent of Enoch to heaven see also the rather ignored discussion of Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 347–50.
- 151 Michael Fishbane, 'The Measure and Glory of God in Ancient Midrash', in his *The Exegetical Imagination, On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., London, 1998), pp. 56–71; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 241–9; Liebes, 'Midotav shel ha-'Elohim'; Liebes, 'De Natura Dei', pp. 266–78; and the passage about R. Ishmael from BT *Berakhot*, fol. 7b, to be discussed in Chapter 1 below.
- 152 See his commentary on Lev. 18.4. On Nahmanides' influential view about the divinity of the soul and its affinity to the divine source and the possibility to cleave to it, see Moshe Idel, 'Nishmat 'Eloah: On the Divinity of the Soul in Nahmanides and His School', in eds, S. Arzi, M. Fachler & B. Kahana, *Life as a Midrash, Perspectives in Jewish Psychology* (Yediy'ot 'Aharonot, Tel Aviv, 2004), pp. 338–80 (Hebrew). Compare also to the view of R. Jacob ben Sheshet, mentioned below in the Appendix. It should be mentioned that some elements of Nahmanides' theory of union with God left an indelible imprint on some kabbalistic authorities, like R. Joseph Karo and R. Moses Cordovero, their contemporary R. Yehiel Nissim of Pisa, as well as on eighteenth-century Hasidism. This development, based upon an interchange between God and man, the former dwelling within the body while the soul adheres to the supernal world, deserves a separate investigation.
- 153 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 136–46 and Chapter 4 below.
- 154 For an analysis of the different types of mediation in Middle Platonism, see Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ*, pp. 90–7; on the cosmic Christ see Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp. 57–70.
- 155 See e.g. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 104–68. For more on such views see Chapter 2 below.
- 156 Shlomo Pines, 'Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), pp. 165–251; Pines, 'Le *Sefer ha-Tamar* et les *Maggidim* des Kabbalists', *Hommage a Georges Vajda*, eds G. Nahon & Ch. Touati (Peeters, Louvain, 1980), pp. 333–63, reprinted in his *Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 219–305, 595–625 respectively; and Pines, 'On the Term *Ruhaniyyut* and its Sources and on Judah Halevi's Doctrine', *Tarbiz* 57 (1988), pp. 511–540 (Hebrew).
- 157 See Sara O. Heller Willensky, 'The 'First Created Being' in Early Kabbalah and its Philosophical Sources', in eds, S.O. Heller Willensky & M. Idel, *Studies in Jewish Thought* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 261–75 (Hebrew).
- 158 The scholarly literature on this issue is vast and I shall adduce only some basic references. See Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 526–34; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 346–450; J.A. Emerton, 'The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery', *JTS* 9 (1958), pp. 225–42; T.W. Manson, 'The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels', *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library* 32 (1950), pp. 171–93; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 241–9; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, pp. 68–9, 225; Ulrich B. Mueller, *Messias und Menschensohn, in juedischen Apocalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (Guetersloher Verlagshaus, Gerd Mohn, 1972); Mueller; Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ, The Origin of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1988), pp. 50–2, 84–5, 138–9; Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 64–5, 190–1; Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1993), pp. 172–3; Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*; and more recently the thesis of Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, about the sonship of the Assyrian kings and the later reverberations of this concept in late antiquity and beyond.
- 159 Hurtado, *One God, One God*; Barker, *The Great Angel*; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, pp. 123–4, and for a different resort to binitarianism – emphasizing its Jewish origins – see the important contribution of Boyarin, *Border Lines*, *passim*.
- 160 See Couliano, *Experiences de l'extase*, pp. 70–1.
- 161 See Peter Hayman, 'Monotheism – A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?', *JJS* 42

- (1991), pp. 1–15. For a survey of issues related to these scholarly proposals see Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 15–21; Michael Mach, 'Concepts of Jewish Monotheism in the Hellenistic Period', in eds, Newman, Davila & Lewis, *The Jewish Roots*, pp. 21–42; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, and now Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 29–53.
- 162 *Theologia aporrhotos*.
- 163 *Contra Celsum* 1.24. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, p. 406. For a short discussion of this passage, see John Dillon, 'The Magical Power of the Names in Origen and Later Platonism', *Origeniana Tertia*, eds R. Hanson & H. Crousel (Rome, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), pp. 207–8. See also Naomi Janowitz, 'Theories of the Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius', *History of Religions* 30 (1991), pp. 360–5 and now her *Icons of Power: The Pragmatics of Ritual in Late Antiquity* (Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 2001); and Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, p. 124. For the resort of the Ophites to divine names found in the Bible in order to describe some of the seven archonts, see *Contra Celsum*, 6.31, *ibid.*, p. 587.
- 164 Dillon, *ibid.*, p. 208. See also Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 48–53.
- 165 For the phenomenon of attributing divine names to lower entities see also Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God'. For another piece of evidence adduced by Origen and related to a Jewish master, see note 134 above.
- 166 See John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (SBL Monograph Series, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1972), pp. 142–3, 150, 152.
- 167 See Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 194.
- 168 See Idel, 'Defining Kabbalah'.
- 169 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 30–2; see also Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 221–49 and more recently my views on the affinities between late thirteenth-century Kabbalah and Manicheism in *Ascensions on High*, pp. 123–6 and 'The Interpretations of the Secret of Incest', pp. 149–54.
- 170 See e.g. Yoram Erder's important article, 'The Prince 'Mastemah' in a Karaite Work', *Meggilot* 1 (2002), pp. 243–6 (Hebrew). In this article and elsewhere in his studies Erder proposes to see in the Qumran community the Magharias mentioned in the Karaite literature. On the prince *Mastemah* and the Dead Sea scrolls, see also Shlomo Pines, 'The Oath of the Physician', *Completed Works*, vol. 4, pp. 170–1. In more general terms, the possibility that Karaite materials preserved some views found in Jewish texts, for the time being, solely in the Qumran literature, has already been addressed in detail by Naftali Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (East and West Library, London, 1962). For the quite plausible possibility that Karaite literature was the tradent of other ancient traditions – the most outstanding being the theories of the Great Angel to be mentioned in Chapter 1, especially note 54 – including Philonic ones, see Bernard Revel, 'The Karaite Halakhah and Its Relation to Sadducean, Samaritan and Philonian Halakhah', in ed., Philip Birnbaum, *Karaite Studies* (Hermon Press, New York, 1971), pp. 1–88, and Wilhelm Bacher, 'Qirqisani, the Karaite, and His Work on Jewish Sects', reprinted *ibid.*, p. 275.
- 171 See Alexander Marx, 'An Aramaic Fragment of the *Wisdom of Solomon*', *JBL* 40 (1921), pp. 57–69, and Gershom Scholem, 'On *The Major Wisdom of Solomon* and R. Abraham ha-Levi the Older', *QS* 1 (1924/5), pp. 163–4 (Hebrew). Nahmanides' specific theory of intra-divine emanation and his emphasis on the theory of Glory, as well as his description of emanation as breathing may have something to do with his acquaintance with this ancient book in its fullest form and not only with quotes from it. This is an issue that needs a separate treatment. See also above the remarks about breathing in both Origen and Nahmanides. See also below note 186.
- 172 Steven M. Wasserstrom, 'Jewish Pseudepigrapha and *Qisas al-Anbiya*', in eds, Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes & Fred Astren, *Judaism and Islam, Boundaries, Communication and Interaction, Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner* (Brill, Leiden, 2000), pp. 240–1, and Leigh N.B. Chipman, 'Adam and the Angels, An Examination of Mythic Elements in Islamic Sources', *Arabica* 49 (4) (2002), pp. 429–55. For the Slavonic apocryphal source *The Apocalypse of Moses*, where the archangel Ioil occurs, see Gaster, *Ilchester Lectures*, p. 32. As Gaster explained in his *Literatura populara romana*, p. 187, the source of the Slavonic form is the Greek one which has Iael, which stems from *Yah El*. See also the interesting identification of the so-called 'virgin of light' in a Manichean text, to the angel Yoil, cf. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 187 note 215. For important reverberations of Enochic motifs in Islamic literature, which may testify to the existence of some Enochic themes in the period of the 'by-pass' of rabbinic literature that could also influence the kabbalistic and Hasidic literatures, see Schneider's most important article, 'Enoch', as well as the scholarly literature mentioned by Alexander, 'From the Son of Adam to Second God', pp. 117–18; Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 192–3 note 79; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 158–63. See also the discussions in Chapter 4 below about the Enochic traditions and the *Zohar*, and the ascent of the impact of Hermeticism on some schools of Kabbalah in the second half of the thirteenth century. In this context it should be mentioned that it is possible that Hebrew versions underlie some of the pseudepigrapha. See e.g. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*. See also Reimund Leicht, 'Qedushah and Prayer to Helios: A New Hebrew Version of an Apocryphal Prayer of Jacob', *JSQ* 6 (1999), pp. 140–76.
- 173 *The Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 467–90.
- 174 *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 389–478. On the controversy related to Shlomo Pines's view of the reverberations of Jewish-Christian views in medieval Arabic material, see John G. Gager's survey, 'Did Jewish-Christian See the Rise of Islam?', in eds, Becker & Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*, pp. 361–72.
- 175 On Muslims' critique of views concerning sonship that they attributed to both Christians and Jews see Moshe Sharon, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Johannesburg, Thorold's Africana Books, 1989), pp. 146–51; Sharon, 'The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land', in ed., M. Sharon, *Pillars of Smoke and Fire* (Southern Book Publisher, Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 225–9; John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978), pp. 20–1, 43; and Eisenman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 34 note 64. See also Pines, *ibid.*, pp. 116–27; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds, Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*

(Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992), pp. 52–60; and Liebes, 'Mididotav shel ha-'Elohim', pp. 72–4.

- 176 This is the gist of Gaster's approach to the history of religions and literature in medieval Europe as expressed in his lectures delivered in 1886, the *Ilchester Lectures*, which echo some of the findings he published in his earlier Romanian book *Literatura Populara Romana* and even earlier in a study on comparative folklore printed in German. See below Chapter 2 note 87. See also in some of Robert Eisler's studies, which draw upon the wealth of apocryphic materials unearthed by Gaster in his studies and in his collections of manuscripts. However, little attention has been paid in scholarship to some of the insights of these two scholars, despite the sometimes speculative and conjectural nature of their theories. For a massive survey of many issues that are pertinent to Gaster's general scheme see the recent analyses of the arrival of dualistic theories from the East in the West in Stoyanov, *The Other God*. See especially the beginning of Chapter 2. For a recent re-evaluation of Eisler's suggestion that a connection exists between ancient material and Zoharic theosophy see Yehuda Liebes, 'The Kabbalistic Myth as Told by Orpheus', in eds, M. Idel, W. Z. Harvey & E. Schweid, *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1988) vol. 1, pp. 425–59 (Hebrew), and the abridged English translation in Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 65–92. On the other hand, see the Introduction of Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (É. De Boccard, Paris, 1983), who claims that the Middle Ages is a direct continuation of late antiquity, which also mediated the classical culture. Our discussions above dealt mainly with late antiquity texts and themes, some of which will return in the medieval material that will be the thrust of our discussions below. See e.g. Chapter 3 note 32. For more on the diffusion of apocryphal literature in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages see the important updated lists of Slavonic and Romanian manuscripts found in the various articles in the collection of studies by Émile Turdeanu, *Apocryphe Slave et Roumaine de l'Ancient Testament* (Brill, Leiden, 1981).

More recently, and presumably totally independently of Gaster's thesis mentioned above, a salutary plea for some form of continuity between the early Jewish material, related to the Enochic literature, and Manichean, Mandaean and pseudepigraphic texts has been advanced again by Reed, *Fallen Angels*, pp. 254–5, 274–7. In fact, I totally agree with her views on the 'back-borrowing' of earlier Jewish material from Christian sources. Her discussion however on pp. 269–70, where she thinks that I oppose it, is misleading. See the very same article of mine where she quotes 'Enoch is Metatron', p. 223, a passage to be quoted below, where I adduced a quotation from the pseudepigraphic *Book of Words of Adam to Seth* in order to account for a discussion found in the *Book of the Zohar*, and I refer explicitly to Yehuda Liebes's article on the influence of Christianity on the book of the *Zohar*. See there note 37. As to the existence of additional material about the fallen angels that she was not aware of, found in Ashkenazi manuscripts, see for the time being my 'The Evil Thought of the Deity', *Tarbiz* 49 (1980), pp. 356–64 (Hebrew), where I assume the impact of Zurvanic material on pre-kabbalistic material and then on Kabbalah. See also

- the first paragraph of my 'Adam and Enoch'. While the first article is written in Hebrew and I can understand why it escaped her attention, and thus also the material on the fallen angels mentioned there, the second article was written in English. A perusal of the Ashkenazi material, most of it in manuscripts, on the topic of fallen angels and an analysis of its formulations, makes it highly unlikely that the Ashkenazi authors copied it from Christian sources or received it orally. However, this is a topic that should be dealt with elsewhere in detail, on the basis of the analysis of much more material than is known in scholarship. See, for the time being, another article of mine on fallen angels, which also escaped, quite curiously, her attention: 'The Origins of Alchemy according to Zosimos and a Hebrew Parallel', *REJ* 145 (1986), pp. 117–24. See also below, note 207.
- 177 For the recommendation of a multiple, eclectic methodology, where I emphasize the importance of perspectivism, see my *Ascensions on High*, pp. 4–13, as well as my study 'On the Problem of the Study of the Source of the Book of Bahir', in ed., J. Dan, *The Beginning of Jewish Mysticism* (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 55–72 (Hebrew).
- 178 See also the end of Chapter 2 below.
- 179 *L'expérience humaine du divin* (Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1988), pp. 297ff. On Father as symbol see Talcott Parsons, 'The Father Symbol: An Appraisal in the Light of Psychoanalytic and Sociological Theory', in eds, Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, R. M. Maciver & Richard McKeon, *Symbols and Values: An Initial Study* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1954), pp. 523–44.
- 180 The secondary literature that claims the existence of what has been described as 'incarnation' in rabbinic Judaism and a few later phenomena in medieval Judaism is growing rapidly, as the studies of Jacob Neusner, Elliot R. Wolfson, Michael Wishogrod and to a certain extent also David Stern, and more recently the remarks of Magid, who adduced also the earlier bibliography in his 'Ethics Disentangled', pp. 31–42, especially the studies enumerated on p. 36 note 15 and the general tendency of Boyarin in his *Border Lines*. To Magid's bibliographical list one should add Alon Goshen-Gottstein's more comprehensive survey of the use of this term in his 'Judaisms and Incarnational Theologies: Mapping out the Parameters of Dialogue', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 39 (3–4) (2002), pp. 219–47. See the way in which Erwin Goodenough presented Philo's view of the animated law, as 'incarnated law'. Cf., *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1940), pp. 39, 45 and Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 13–14, who describes the Torah as the incarnation of the Wisdom of God. Compare the Pythagorean view adduced by Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 499–500. For another instance of the use of the term incarnation in order to describe Philo's view of the relation between Moses and Logos see Lampe, *God as Spirit*, pp. 40, 127. For the king as the living law see Kantorowitz, *ibid.*, pp. 127ff. See also below, Chapter 4, Section 2, where another recent understanding of a Jewish phenomenon in Christian terms has been presented by scholars active in the USA. It is fascinating to trace the penetration of a strongly theological term from a certain religion to scholars that belong to it, and from there to scholars of Judaism. In any case, I am not

acquainted with the positive usage of the verb or noun related to the root *BSR*, like *hibbasserut*, by Jewish mystics, in the way in which the Christian tenet of incarnation has been referred to in Jewish polemic texts. For numerous polemical discussions of Christian incarnation by Jewish philosophers see Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, passim. It may be said that despite the recurrent resort to the term incarnation, in the Jewish texts that concern me here there is very little usage, certainly not enough to consider this term substantially used. See also E.R. Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 116 note 34, 117 note 36, and his review of Jacob Neusner's *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988), printed in *JQR* 81 (1990), pp. 219–22 and especially in his 'Judaism and Incarnation: The Imaginal Body of God', in eds, Tikvah Frymer-Kensky et al., *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2000), pp. 239–54 and more recently in his *Venturing Beyond*, pp. 39–40. See also the recurrent resort to the term 'incarnation' – though sometime used in a metaphorical manner under the impact of modern philosophers – in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, where, for example, p. 255, the divine name is described as being incarnated in the Torah. See also the reticence of Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 293–4 note 75 and Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 69, toward acknowledging the use of incarnation in material related to ancient Jewish mysticism. Here the term 'embodiment' would do much greater justice to the Hebrew sources. For a more careful approach when dealing with these issues see Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, who speaks about the extension of the divine realm within the human image conceived of as iconic, according to early forms of Jewish literature. See the references to these discussions below in Chapter 1 notes 251, 253. To what extent the surge in the scholarly discussions dealing with concepts of incarnation in Judaism is related to or even triggered by the debate around the publication of the book edited by John Hick, entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1977), is not so clear. See also more recently his *The Metaphor of God Incarnate, Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (John Knox Press, Westminster, 2006), a reprint of his 1993 book. In Chapter 10, he indeed deals with the divine incarnation as a metaphor. This is a fascinating piece of creative theology, and a situation in which some Christian thinkers feel they should respond. For some of the knock-on effects of this debate see the discussions printed in ed., Michael Goulder, *Incarnation and Myth, The Debate Continued* (Eerdsman, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979). The Hindu-like and more universalistic vision of incarnation as proposed by Hick – as demonstrated in his later *An Interpretation of Religion, Human Responses to the Transcendent* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989) – is, theologically speaking, a novelty in the ways in which theology has been understood in Christianity, and the various reactions to the publication of his former edited book show this. For a more sustained resort to the term 'embodiment' in the context of Kabbalah, though still related to incarnation, sometimes understood as poetic, see Wolfson, 'The Body in the Text'. For the methodological problems related to importing terminology from one religion to describe another one see the interesting

remarks of S.R.F. Price, 'Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984), pp. 79–95.

- 181 See below Chapter 4 note 206, and to a certain extent Concluding Remarks note 60. It should be pointed out that terms related to indwelling are not always related to embodiment, as is the case in many of the understandings of *Shekhinah* in Kabbalah or in the expression: 'He – the King namely God, or one of his male manifestations – put His dwelling [*medoreih*]', according to several discussions in the book of the *Zohar*. On embodiment see e.g. the very title of one of the books that is part of the new wave of interest in the body in Judaism, a collection of articles edited by H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992).
- 182 For an explicit incarnationalist use of this term see Alfonso da Valladolid – the former Rabbi Abner of Burgos who converted to Christianity – discussed by Scholem, 'The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalah', pp. 27, 45 note 35; Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, p. 378; and Gershenzon, *A Study*, pp. 137–67. For the more standard use of the secret of garment in the context of transformations related to the angelic world see the kabbalistic view analyzed by Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanides', *Da'at* 24 (1980), pp. xxxiv–xli. This term also occurs e.g. in R. Joseph Gikatilla's later kabbalistic writings as the garment of a divine name in other divine names or in the Torah. See Wolfson, 'The Body in the Text', p. 487. Wolfson calls this linguistic embodiment within letters by the term 'poetic incarnation', *ibid.*, p. 491 and in his *Language, Eros, Being*, passim, and especially pp. 430–1 notes 353 and 354. See also above, note 180 and below, Concluding Remarks, note 60. I would say, on the basis of the texts adduced by Wolfson, (in fact already collected and analyzed in my 'The Concept of the Torah' in the very same and, scholarly speaking, new order, sometimes from manuscript material printed for the first time), that we have here the concept of informant: the form, painting or picture of God mentioned in the context of the divine presence within the Torah. For the assumption that the Christian theory of incarnation represents a misunderstanding of the kabbalistic 'secret of the garment' see the view of Profiat Duran, in his *Kelimat Goyim*, discussed by Scholem, 'The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalah', p. 47 note 47. See also another important passage by this author translated and discussed below (Concluding Remarks, Section 3). For the use of this verb in order to describe the embodiment of the demonic powers in a certain entity see the anonymous kabbalistic text preserved in MS. Moscow-Ginsburg 96, fol. 18a.
- 183 On the different concepts of garment in other contexts as articulated in Jewish magical and mystical texts see e.g. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 155; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 251–73; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 57–74, especially p. 60 note 13; Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 206–34; Dorit Cohen-Alloro, *The Secret of the Garment in the Book of the Zohar* (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1987) (Hebrew); Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 30–2; and Idel, *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 245–50. In general, it seems that in the formulations found in many of the kabbalistic texts this concept has Neo-

- Platonic overtones. Many of the kabbalistic concepts of garment should be understood in the context of the concept of divestment, *hitpashshetut*, which is also of explicit Neo-Platonic origin. See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 167–8. On the other hand, the widespread Aristotelian description of matter receiving forms and then losing them in order to attain new ones has made use of the concept of clothing, and the verb *LBSH* is explicitly used in thousands of philosophical discussions. Thus, use of the verb *LBSH* does not necessarily imply a form of incarnation. Indeed a detailed typology of the various uses of this verb in Jewish speculative literatures may allow a better understanding of the sources of those discussions in which flesh, even body, is not mentioned, as stemming from non-Christian intellectual systems.
- 184 The special emphasis on flesh as the main feature of the body of the divine Son is found in both Christian sources, and in Jewish polemical discussions about the Christian tenet of incarnation, see Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, pp. 366–9; Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 105–34. Incarnation as it is widely known has much to do with the myth of the birth of Jesus, and is articulated, for example, by the formula ‘non factus, nec creatus, sed genitus’, which stems from the *Symbolum Athanasianum* (see Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, p. 315) and Alfonso da Valladolid’s use of this formula in Hebrew, cf. Baer, *Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 372–3 and note 18. For an example of insistence on the carnal aspect of the incarnation in Christian sources see e.g. Tertullian’s *De Carne Christi*. Proof-texts are evident in the Greek Bible: see e.g. Jn 1.14, Gal. 3.3 and 1 Tim. 3.16. Though there are instances in which the body of Jesus is mentioned in the Greek Bible, and in some cases *sarx* actually means body rather than flesh, the choice of the term ‘incarnation’ in order to designate the special form of embodiment of the Logos or of the pre-existent Christ is revealing. On the question as a whole see Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 364ff and Daniel Lys, ‘L’arrière-plan et les connotations vétérotestamentaires de *sarx* et de *soma*’, in *Le corps et le corps du Christ dans la première Épître aux Corinthiens* (Le Cerf, Paris, 1983), pp. 47–70. It should be pointed out that incarnation is based upon a form of strong opposition between body and soul, allowing the unique Christian paradox of the divinity within flesh, which is unlike the rabbinic approach. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, pp. 34–5, quoting also Alon Goshen-Gottstein’s article printed subsequently as ‘The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature’, *HTR* 87 (2) (1994), pp. 171–95. For use of the language of incarnation in his description of the Zoharic Kabbalah see Waite’s *The Holy Kabbalah*, pp. 585–6.
- 185 It should be mentioned that Tzevi is the only figure who was described as a Son of God. We also have a drawing that may represent him, but which does not refer to his sonship in this context. In general, despite the numerous discussions of sons and sonship, I am not aware of any iconic or graphical representation of this religious category in Jewish texts before the late sixteenth century. For two interesting designs that presumably reflect the two countenances in the book of the *Zohar* – though the texts themselves seem to be related to Lurianic Kabbalah – see the reproduction found in David Sperber, *These are Your God, O Israel* (Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2006), p. 11 (Hebrew).
- 186 See his debate with Pablo Christiani, printed in *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. Ch. D. Chavel (Merkaz ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1963), vol. 1, p. 311, and Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, pp. 350 note 3, p. 352. This does not mean, to be sure, as we have insisted above several times, that Nahmanides has not been influenced by Christian theology in other instances, as has been pointed out by scholars. See, especially, Pines, ‘Nahmanides on Adam in the Garden of Eden’ and also above, note 171.
- 187 See below, Chapter 3 note 201. Abulafia’s view of the concept of *Malbush* – the garment – is in my opinion quite different from incarnation. It deals with the imaginary representation of the mystic’s self as part of a revelation or a mystical experience. See Idel, *Natan ben Sa’adyah, Sha’arei Tzedeq*, pp. 245–9.
- 188 See, however, e.g. below, Chapter 4, Section 12. On early Jewish reactions to this Christian tenet see now David Malkiel, ‘Manipulating Virginity: Digital Defloration in Midrash and History’, *JSQ* 13 (2006), pp. 105–27.
- 189 See Vermes’s total negation of the possibility that post-biblical Jews could adopt what he conceives to be the Hellenistic theory of the Son of God. Cf. his *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, p. 37. For a summary of the contribution of Vermes to the study of Jesus see William Klassen, ‘The Contribution of Jewish Scholars to the Quest of the Historical Jesus’, in eds, Edward Kessler & Melanie J. Wright, *Themes in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Orchard Academic, Cambridge, 2005), pp. 16–20. Philo’s vision of Logos as the Son of God, as well as examples discussed below in this book point in another direction. See also the surprise of Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 303–4 note 64 at a reading of one of Abulafia’s texts to be discussed in Chapter 3. These two recent scholarly statements formulated by two famous experts in both matters of Judaism and Christianity demonstrate that the following pages are not written in vain. For a total denial of the existence of a theory of Son of God in Judaism see the opinion of a more orthodox thinker Isaiah Wolfsberg (Aviad), ‘*Iunim be-Yahadut* (Mosad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1955), p. 33.
- 190 For sharp differences between the historical Jesus and later Christologies elaborated by resorting to the huge impact of Hellenistic elements, see Harold Bloom, *Jesus and Yahwe, the Names Divine* (Riverhead Books, New York, 2005). For an exposition of various types of sonship in early Christianity see Couliano’s lucid Introduction to his *The Tree of Gnosis*.
- 191 See Heinrich Doerrie, ‘Une exégèse Néoplatonicienne du prologue de l’Évangile de Saint Jean, [Amélius chez Eusébe, Pre. Év. 11, 19, 1–4]’, in eds, Jacques Fontaine & Charles Kannengiesser, *Epektasis, Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Beauchesne, Paris, 1972), pp. 75–87.
- 192 Cf. McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, p. 158. See also Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, p. 123. A similar statement is available in the case of R. Yehudah Arie of Modena, writing two generations after Luther, when referring to Philo of Alexandria. When asked by a Christian Hebraist why Jews did not quote Philo, he answered that Philo was too Platonic for the Jews.

- See Cecil Roth, 'Leone da Modena and the Christian Hebraists of His Age', in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams* (Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1927), p. 400. Both figures may be described as counter-Renaissance thinkers, attempting as they do to remove the Platonic and Neo-Platonic layers of their respective traditions. This does not prevent this Rabbi from relying on a quotation that ultimately stems from a book of pseudo-Dionysius, in order to criticize Kabbalah. See Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 194–5. The contribution of the Hellenistic background to the success of Christianity is well known and has been discussed by many scholars, such as Rudolf Bultmann, Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 17 and the bibliography mentioned there, and more recently Pétrement, *A Separate God*, pp. 247–94; and Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 206–14. For Platonism and Christian mysticism in more general terms see e.g. McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 198–200; Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 77–164; and Daniélou, *Platonisme & Théologie Mystique*. See also Pelikan, *Jesus*, p. 123, where he overemphasizes the contribution of Neo-Platonism, but at the same time ignores the role played by elements stemming from Philo of Alexandria in Christian mysticism.
- 193 For the differences between the Hebraic and the Greek modes of thinking see the diverse proposals found in e.g. Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, tr. Jules Moreau (Norton & Company, New York, London, 1970); Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (James MacLehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1904), vol. 2, pp. 188–9; Caird, *The Evolution of Religion* (MacLehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1893), vol. 2, pp. 14–15; Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 29; Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1965), pp. 69–74; Albert I. Baumgarten, 'Were the Greek Different? If so, How and Why?', in ed., Kugel, *Shem in the Tents of Japhet*, pp. 1–11, and more recently in Andrei Cornea, *Sciere si oralitate in cultura antica*, second edn (Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005). For additional discussions related to the expressions 'JewGreek' and 'GreekJews', see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 414–16 and the bibliography adduced there. See also Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity*, pp. 1–13. For a more comprehensive survey of the problems related to the assumptions as to the existence of these different modes of thinking see Vassilis Lambropoulos's impressive study, *The Rise of Eurocentrism, Anatomy of Interpretation* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993).
- 194 See e.g. Idel, 'Defining Kabbalah'; Idel, *Absorbing Perfection*; Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, or 'The Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo'. See also below, Concluding Remarks, Section 4. For language in Kabbalah see also Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*.
- 195 See above note 8, and Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, and his 'The Problems of the "Jewish Gnostic" Literature', in eds, Charles W. Hedrick & Robert Hodgson, *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass., 1986), pp. 15–35.
- 196 Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 30–2. See, however, my discussions on the possible impact of Manichaeism on mid- and late thirteenth-century Kabbalah, referred to in note 169. To be clear: unlike Scholem, I do not assume that the early strata of Kabbalah, the Provençal and the Catalan ones, or the book of *Bahir*, drew from Gnostic material, though later on, in the 1360s, some traditions from Manichean sources did enter Kabbalah in Castile.
- 197 For problems related to a unified understanding of mysticism see Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, passim.
- 198 See Plotin, *Enneads*, 6.9.11; Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church*, pp. 11–12; J.M. Rist, *The Road to Reality* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967), p. 178; Phillip C. Almond, *Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine* (Mouton Publisher, Berlin, 1982), pp. 158–9. Insofar as Jewish mysticism is concerned, the term 'contact' as reflecting the relationship between the mystic and God has been used; see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 5, 8 and his *Major Trends*, p. 4; and Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. xviii; Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 3–4. For an excellent survey of the different understandings of mysticism in scholarship see McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 265–343.
- 199 For the more general resort to the term 'solidarity' in order to convey various functions of the son in early Christianity see Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion: Toward a Christian Empire* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1992), p. 154–6, his *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002), pp. 12, 38, and also the title mentioned below in Chapter 3 note 211. See also Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, p. 49 and Koschorke, *The Holy Family*, pp. 49–50.
- 200 See my *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 124–6, 179–80.
- 201 His is evident in the philosophical Neo-Aristotelian framework of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah, as discussed in Chapter 3, and to a certain extent in most of the intra-divine emanative visions of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah to be discussed in Chapter 4.
- 202 Cf. Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church*, pp. 23–6. On Christ-mysticism see also Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp. 122–3.
- 203 See the verse of the Canadian-Jewish poet Irving Layton, who had Communist propensities in his youth, and puts in the mouth of Jesus the following verses which, while denying his sonship, praise the rebellious nature of Jesus:  
 'My name was Jeshua, not Jesus;  
 Not God's Son but a Hebrew revolutionary  
 I stirred up rebellion till the Romans crucified me.'  
*Fortunate Exile* (McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1987), p. 55.
- 204 See above, notes 128 and 171.
- 205 See above, note 176.
- 206 See e.g. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 90, for an argument for the possible impact of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* on Abraham Abulafia, and on pp. 72–3, 89 where I draw a comparison between the description this Kabbalist offered of his experience, or of the ideal experience, and the description found in *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch* (these issues will be discussed again below in Chapter 3). See especially *ibid.*, p. 358 note 110 where I prefer the explanation of the impact of a

Byzantine hypothetical version of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to the possibility that he was influenced by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.

- 207 See my 'Enoch and Metatron', p. 231, where I refer positively to Yehuda Liebes's article on the Christian Influences on the *Zohar*. Compare, however, the incomplete – and in my opinion also unfortunately inadequate – description of my position in Reed, *Fallen Angels*, pp. 269–70, which claims I reject the plausibility of the influence of motifs stemming from non-Jewish transmitters, and that I 'promptly foreclosed this line of inquiry'. However, my writing there (p. 223) was related to the specific tradition of Enoch and Adam, and championed in this specific case the solution of inner transmission, as more 'convenient than the alternative to the argument that Gnostic traditions concerning the concept of the Supernal Man penetrated into Judaism during the period of the Amoraim, or afterwards, and became, for whatever reason, a part of Jewish mysticism and were transmitted as the esoteric teachings of the Torah, until they were committed to writing in the works of the Kabbalists'. This passage has been cited by Reed from its beginning but, surprisingly enough, only up to the word 'alternative', so the reader's assumption would be that the 'alternative' is her theory, which resembles in fact very much that of Gaster's. It is hard to understand why she cuts the quotation at this specific and crucial point and does not give the reader a hint that the alternative is conceived of as less plausible in this specific instance. Moreover, let me emphasize, after making this point, that I wrote the passage quoted above in the text, leaving the two other alternatives equally open, at least in principle. See also my work mentioned above on the impact of Manichean themes on Castilian Kabbalah, in note 169. This misrepresentation nonetheless does not belittle the merits of Reed's book, which remains a very erudite and balanced presentation of the pertinent material related to the book of the Watches, viewed from new angles, and treated in a sensitive manner. Reed's conclusions about the Middle Ages, however, are another story. See also below, note 211.
- 208 See below, Chapter 4 note 154 and my article on Gaster, where I also make important points on a variety of issues related to Gaster's views on transmission. See 'Moses Gaster on Jewish Mysticism and the Zohar', in ed., Ronit Meroz, *New Developments in Zohar Studies, Te'uda 21–2* (2007), pp. 111–27 (Hebrew).
- 209 See, e.g. his 'Jewish Knowledge of the Samaritan Alphabet in the Middle Ages', reprinted in his *Studies and Texts*, vol. 1, pp. 600–13.
- 210 See Gaster, *ibid.*, p. 611.
- 211 Scholem, *Devils*, pp. 175–6 notes 123, 124, 125. See also *ibid.*, p. 172, note 103, where he points out another striking parallel, this time between 1 *Enoch* and the medieval book of magic entitled *Havdalah de-R. Aqivah*, known mostly in the Ashkenazi regions, to judge from the manuscripts in which it has been preserved. Thus, in the same century, both Ashkenazi and Spanish Jewish sources had access to formulations found in the ancient Enochic literature. Such a development precludes, in this specific instance, an explanation based on a theory of 'back-borrowing' as formulated by Reed, *Fallen Angels*.
- 212 See e.g. my studies on Hermeticism and Jewish speculative literatures in the

Middle Ages where, in some cases, Enoch is mentioned explicitly, or appears as Hermes. See, for example, my 'Hermeticism and Judaism', 'Enoch the Mystical Cobbler' and 'Hermeticism and Kabbalah', as well as below in the Appendix. In these instances, the role of the transmission of Hermetic traditions from Islam to Judaism, especially in Abraham ibn Ezra and his many followers, has been put in relief.

- 213 See e.g. my 'From Italy to Germany and Back' where I attempt to show how mid-ninth-century poetry written in southern Italy can contribute to the understanding of discussions related to Metatron which cannot be explained by the Heikhalot literature as preserved in the extant manuscripts of this literature. I also show the impact of this poetry on the Ashkenazi manuscripts of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, a figure that will be the topic of discussions in the first part of Chapter 2. It should be pointed out that the Ashkenazi material, especially poems and their commentaries written since the early twelfth century that may be relevant for tracing the trajectory of various theologoumena, is vast, largely unknown and under-analyzed. Without analyzing this material, the views of scholars on the transmission of earlier esoteric and magical material to the Middle Ages in Europe are no more than tentative. See e.g. the pioneering work of Elisabeth Hollender, *Clavis Commentariorum of Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in Manuscript* (Brill, Leiden, 2005).
- 214 For a bibliography of these scholarly analyses see below, Chapter 2 note 2.
- 215 Fascinatingly enough, when approaching this literature, replete as it is with references to Enoch and Metatron, Reed, *Fallen Angels*, p. 233 note 2, subscribes to Scholem's theory that references to the Enochic literature in this book are mere inventions, without attempting to apply her own theory of 'back-borrowing'. Scholem's other approach, mentioned above in note 211, written later and found solely in a Hebrew study, is not been mentioned. As I noted above, the ways part when new Hebrew sources, or studies written in this language, are involved. See also the Hebrew bibliography mentioned in Chapter 2 note 2.

## CHAPTER 1 Righteousness, Theophorism and Sonship in Rabbinic and Heikhalot Literatures

### 1. Introduction

Cultures, like individuals, fulfill during their development over time only a small part of their potential. No culture can bring to fruition the full variety of options inherent in its potential spiritual reservoir. Growth and development imply rejection – or at least marginalization – of some aspects of this spiritual reservoir, as other directions come to the fore, sometimes through the adoption and adaptation of new external forms. Thus major developments in the history of any religion constitute moments where new directions are taken, where the old and the new split, both between and within religions. The suppressed spiritual aspects may disappear, linger or be fulfilled only by participants of a small group, which may become a sect or eventually even form another religion. Becoming ‘narrow’ first is part of any future growth, and the repression and marginalization of indigenous elements is an indispensable aspect of the process of the evolution of such structures.

From this point of view, rabbinic Judaism fulfilled only some of the potential found in pre-rabbinic forms of Judaism. Hellenistic forms of Judaism, apocalyptic ideas, Qumran literature, ancient mythologoumena, and many forms of magic, were all reduced to pale vestiges in a religious economy that gravitated around topics that were less central to those phenomena and increasingly based on religious performance and immersion within canonical texts in their original languages.

On the other hand, pseudepigraphic and apocryphal literatures, early Christianity and some Gnostic elements managed to fulfill a proportion of rabbinic Judaism’s rejected spiritual potential, and the remains of their influence sometimes lingered in subsequent Jewish structures. This process of selection and rejection created with time more compact structures with strong cultic and exegetical foci, but Rabbinism never became a monolithic literature.

Seen from this perspective, later developments in Judaism may be better understood against much broader backgrounds which, though relegated to the margins – and this includes medieval Arabic and Latin<sup>1</sup> – only rarely disappeared from the horizons of Jewish culture in a total

manner. Thus, trends concerned with redemption via faith as developed later in Christianity, or via knowledge, which had some repercussions in the variegated Gnostic groups, or via submission, which is evident in Islam, remained on the margin of an emerging religion that was based more upon nomian covenantal diffuse monotheism and a performative approach to religion than anything in Jewish groups preceding it.

Most of the material discussed in the Introduction above indeed represents views found in a variety of communities that could be described as Jewish. As some scholars have pointed out, like Moritz Friedlander in the nineteenth century, and Alan F. Segal, Guy Stroumsa, Ioan P. Culiano or Birger A. Pearson, in the twentieth century, Gnosticism might emerge from a crisis in Judaism, perhaps related to the special status of the Great Angel, whose importance is evidenced already in Philo. I would emphasize the role played by interpretations of the meaning of the verses from Exod. 23.20–23, as discussed above. However, the tradents of those views and writings: the Qumran community, the Jewish-Christians, the Christians, the Gnostics, and those less identifiable groups that preserved and transmitted the pseudepigrapha, parted ways with the groups that eventually constituted rabbinic Judaism. It is not only a matter of theology or social structure that divided them, but rather also the former’s resort to languages other than Hebrew that became ever more visible over the centuries. Qumran, the single exception, disappeared long before the other groups although its impact did not dissipate totally, as study of Karaite literature increasingly reveals.<sup>2</sup> The fact that most of the material above is extant only in Greek, Ethiopian, Coptic, or Slavonic, but not in Hebrew or Aramaic, demonstrates the difference in the conceptual structures dominating the worldviews that shaped rabbinic Judaism and rabbinic Judaism’s unwillingness to preserve those treatises as well as many of their ideas. It is quite evident that the relevance of Philo’s extensive writings and Josephus Flavius’s was suppressed in the religious worldviews of the emerging rabbinic literatures.

Other Jewish literatures, much more extensively written since the second century in both Hebrew and Aramaic, established themselves as the authoritative representatives of a new ethos that was more interested in a modus of religious operandi gravitating around the original Hebrew Pentateuch, and much less with antediluvian figures and the modest bodies of literature attributed to them. Retaining the importance of the Hebrew/Aramaic languages is not only a matter of being able to peruse the canonical texts in their original, but much more of developing what I propose to designate a ‘reservoir of associations’ that created a more unified type of later literature, based upon the possibility of drawing from common sources, studied by many members of Jewish communities, read in an inter-textual manner, and taking into account aspects of the canonic texts that are beyond

the semantic platform of the Bible. While this reservoir of associations created a common ground for discourse, it did not create a homogenous approach; rather associations are free and unexpected, moving in different directions, as the various Jewish literatures written in Hebrew evince. The centrifugal aspect of literary *imaginaire* notwithstanding, the literary/religious reservoir contributed to a more flexible mode of communication and creativity, and could keep together communities spread over different continents in a way not seen in Hellenistic Judaism or Judeo-Christianity. Though one should not overemphasize the linguistic factor, its possible contribution has not been duly recognized. The ascent and decline of the Greek, Latin, or Arabic languages that served as the main forms of communication between Jews during certain centuries, did neither unify all their Diasporas nor leave classics that functioned in those languages in the subsequent Jewish cultures.

The fact that the vast majority of literature written by Jews over two millennia is in Hebrew or Aramaic demonstrates that expertise in these languages played a central role in developing different ways of thought through the preservation of the languages in which the canonic writings were inscribed. Or to state it differently: no Jewish classic writing cultivated by substantial numbers of Jews over the centuries was accepted in any language other than Hebrew or Aramaic. Even Maimonides' famous *Guide of the Perplexed*, written originally in Arabic, would not have become a significant success had it not been translated into Hebrew. It is almost only in Hebrew that this classic of Judaism was studied, disseminated and commented upon by many other Jews. The scant number of Arabic manuscripts of the original illustrates this point. In this context, the paths of rabbinic and Karaite Jews diverged dramatically from most of the other religions that derived from Judaism, such as Christianity and Gnosticism, due to the latter's renouncing of a common linguistic reservoir and their development in other directions as far as the Hebrew Bible was concerned, namely in a more theological and less literary direction. Thus, as the cases of Philo and Josephus Flavius evince, Christian exegesis of the Bible was neglected, beyond where the Christological and the Hellenistic aspects of the theology are concerned, because of the language in which it was written.

The two main literary corpora that informed the medieval development and that will be the focus of our attention in the following chapters are the rabbinic literature and the Heikhalot treatises. Though I assume that other forms of literature also had an impact on medieval material,<sup>3</sup> I have little doubt that medieval elites pondered these two literatures more than any others and interpreted in new ways elements that are salient for understanding the concept of sonship. Each of these bodies of literature is rather heterogeneous, both from the conceptual and the literary point of

view. This heterogeneity is not only a matter of differences within each body of literature, which are evident, but also a matter of the coexistence of different views within the same treatises. This diversity is more evident in rabbinic literature where disputes became part and parcel of the development of the body of knowledge and various schools, each having its own agenda, became distinguishable for their heated debates. While these divergences are less evident within the Heikhalot literature, there can be no doubt that it is better to speak about a stream of traditions than a single tradition, such a stream being committed to writing no later than the eighth century, though probably earlier and in some cases as early as the second century.<sup>4</sup>

The precise nature of the relationship between the more voluminous and authoritative rabbinic literatures – which consist of canonical writings like the Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash – and the much shorter, more fragmentary, truncated, and nebulous Heikhalot literature is still a matter of dispute between scholars. Some insist on the need to differentiate between them due to the pronounced conceptual differences they reflect. Surmising the existence of a monolithic 'classical' Rabbinism that does not allow for some of the mystical patterns found in the Heikhalot literature, these scholars have created a chasm between the concepts that nourish those literatures.<sup>5</sup> Other scholars are less reticent, and assume that even if the latter literature is conceptually different from the former, there is no reason not to compare the two bodies of knowledge which were indubitably in contact, written in the same languages and read by people belonging to the same two communities. By encouraging a combined use of the two bodies of knowledge in order to elucidate issues that are not clear in one or the other, I do not suggest creating a homogenous conceptualization that narrows the intellectual horizons of each of the two literatures. While they indeed consist of important differences, it is possible to better understand some subjects by looking to both, without collapsing the two bodies of literature into each other. In any case, strict separations between the two do not advance, in my opinion, the understanding of either one of them. I assume that no acoustic wall separated the theories found in the two bodies of literature. Thus, for example, a perusal of discussions found in Talmudic treatises like *Berakhot* and *Hagigah* will easily evince the existence of material that can be best understood on the basis of themes found in the Heikhalot literature.

Just as indiscriminate conflation of the two literatures harms the understanding of at least one of them, ignorance of one literature when attempting to understand the other is also problematic and impedes the very understanding being sought. Separating the two literatures is hardly conducive to serious study of the New Testament, just as ignorance of

material from the Greek Bible is not helpful when attempting to understand aspects of rabbinic Judaism or Heikhalot literature.<sup>6</sup> Can a serious scholar of the Heikhalot literature ignore the Qumran texts, fragmented, truncated, and sometimes quite obscure as they may be? Or can a serious scholar of the Greek Bible ignore the Jewish material found in both the Heikhalot literature and the rabbinic one? At least insofar as the main direction of scholarship in the last generation is concerned, a more integrative approach is dominant, and in the following we shall adopt a similar integrative approach.

One of the many common denominators shared by the two literatures is the emphasis on the possibility that man, in both his bodily and spiritual aspects, can transcend his existence by behaving in a righteous manner and thereby attain a different ontological status. This means that the fundamental defining matters found in the two literatures are not the theological, but rather the anthropological structures. Overly invested in theologies, scholars judged the many foci of one or another type of Jewish mystical literature in theological terms, and this also holds regarding Jewish literature in late antiquity.<sup>7</sup> In more specific terms, attempts to mitigate the anthropomorphic aspects of both the rabbinic and Heikhalot literature are quite obvious in the surveys of E.E. Urbach,<sup>8</sup> Gershom Scholem, Joseph Dan, Peter Schaefer, and Rachel Elior.<sup>9</sup> In earlier studies, I attempted to delineate another understanding of this issue by attributing a much more important role to anthropomorphism in passages found in both literatures. Yet, it seems that the existing theological resistance is so great that writers on the topics have hardly even referred to such an alternative understanding, though it is well represented in plenty of serious scholarship as the studies of G.G. Stroumsa, N. Deutsch, Y. Lorberbaum, or Ch. Mopsik, to bring only some examples, testify.<sup>10</sup> In any event, it is only more recently that a less theologically oriented view on this issue has become evident.<sup>11</sup>

My assumption is that it is difficult given the present situation in scholarship to describe a temporal sequel between the two literary corpora, and I propose to see the affinities between them as some form of truncate dialogue, which means that some elements in rabbinic literature arose in response to the Heikhalot literature and vice-versa. Let me start with a survey of theophoricism in those two literatures, and address later on questions related to sonship. And let me point out that the focus of my discussions below is not on topics like Jesus in the Talmud or in rabbinic literature, in the way it has been treated by authors like Lauterbach in his 'Jesus in the Talmud' or in Avigdor Shinan's Hebrew book, *'Oto ha-'Ish*, a book devoted to views of Jesus in the rabbinic traditions, for example.

## 2. The theophoric mode of thinking in rabbinic literature

Theophoric names are more evident in rabbinic literature than in the earlier forms of Jewish writings. Rabbinic literature capitalized on the biblical verse from Exod. 23.21 and claimed that the name of the angel is Metatron, and that 'his name is like the name of his master'.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, according to other ancient traditions, there was an undefined entity called *YHWH Qatan*, the lesser Tetragrammaton<sup>13</sup> (an issue that will concern us later in this chapter as well as in the next two chapters). In some cases, as we shall see below, the translation of Enoch and his transformation into Metatron is accompanied by conferring upon him the Tetragrammaton. The bodily transformation, what I called above the morphic element, on the one hand, and the divine name that is the nominal aspect, on the other hand, are therefore well represented in the metamorphoses that generated, according to some traditions, the figure of Metatron. We may assume that the bodily transformation prepares the figure to be as similar to God as possible, either from the point of view of size, or from the point of view of its matter, fire, so that the divine name will be applied to something as similar to the divine as possible. The morphic adjustment of the human to the characteristics of the divine body is therefore the condition of his reception of the divine name.

However before addressing this specific issue of receiving the divine name, let me turn to a tradition in which the divine name was given to the righteous persons according to rabbinic literature; this tradition is much more democratic than that in the Heikhalot literature in which just one individual was deemed to have reached this status: Enoch, the very individual that was ignored by early rabbinic literatures. I see in the formula 'his name is like the name of his master' a remnant of a theory of two main supernal powers, or of the Logos or Great Angel in Philo and in Magharyah, that though not competing, create a certain tension and as we shall see below, a misunderstanding as to the nature of the relationship between them. An explanation of a verse from Exod. 23.21, and its adoption in the Talmudic passage that will be discussed below in detail, served as one of the anchors for the return of older material dealing with the Great Angel as son of God, into the Judaism of the Middle Ages.

According to other rabbinic traditions the name of God is found within the names of angels, like Michael and Gabriel, so referring to their theophoric nature.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in this literature, the view that the name of God is engraved upon tablets found on the breast of the angels is documented.<sup>15</sup> When compared to the ambiguities in the Bible, in post-biblical literatures we may speak about a certain type of hypostatis achieved by a process of reification, illustrated by the ascription of a fixed name to a

specific angel that is also ascribed, over a longer period of time, to a specific form of activity.

In rabbinic literature, angelic theophorism is basically limited to the suffix *-'el*, unlike the Heikhalot literature where the Tetragrammaton plays a much more important role in the way the angels are designated. In the former literature however we have another phenomenon, according to which the Tetragrammaton is attributed to human beings in order to indicate a transformation conferring a status higher than that of the angels and connected, albeit loosely, to sonship, as pointed out by Morray-Jones.<sup>16</sup> It seems that the first explicit trace of this development is found in a Messianic document from the Dead Sea scrolls, where it is written: 'The Lord will visit the pious ones, and the righteous ones he will call by name.'<sup>17</sup> Short as this sentence is, it is difficult to extrapolate a specific meaning from it, even though the nexus between name and righteousness is quite evident, and we shall return to this issue below. Is the name referred to the proper name of the righteous that God knows, or is it rather the name of God? Or is there a third possibility, which is actualized much later, namely that the proper names of the righteous are conceived of as divine names?<sup>18</sup> In any case, it is helpful to mention now the view that the righteous is the Son of God, according to the much earlier book of the *Wisdom of Solomon*.<sup>19</sup> According to another early Jewish treatise, *Sefer Ben Sira*, if someone gives alms, *Tzedakah*, he becomes 'like a son to the Most High'.<sup>20</sup>

The affinity between righteousness and the divine name is reminiscent of another vision of righteousness in *1 Enoch*, where righteousness is central to the conferring of the divine name on the Son of Man. It is worthwhile to cite the pertinent passage here:

This is the Son of Man to whom belongs righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells<sup>21</sup> and later in the same book, it is written about the righteous men that their dwelling places become with the holy, righteous, elect ones. At that hour, that Son of Man was given a name in the presence of the Lord of Spirits . . . He will become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on him and not fall.<sup>22</sup>

Is there already a significant connection between the name and righteousness in this early document? If such a nexus indeed existed, it seems that the Rabbis were intent on democratizing it by surmising that every righteous person and not only the Son of Man may receive the divine name. This interpretation may have something to do with the divine status of *Tzedeq* in a long variety of ancient sources, and the assimilation of the perfect man to higher beings called by this name.<sup>23</sup> In any case, the bestowal of the divine name on righteous humans in general and on the Messiah in particular is

reminiscent of the bestowal of this name on Jesus according to some passages in the Greek Bible.<sup>24</sup> A seminal Talmudic passage attributes the Tetragrammaton to two types of humans:

R. Samuel ben Nahmani said in the name of R. Yohanan: Three were called by the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and they are the righteous men, the Messiah and Jerusalem. [This may be inferred as regards] the righteous [from] what has just been said [above]. [As regards] the Messiah it is written: 'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord<sup>25</sup> is our righteousness.'<sup>26</sup> [As regards] Jerusalem it is written: 'It [Jerusalem] shall be eighteen thousand reeds round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be "the Lord is there".'<sup>27</sup> Do not read, 'there'<sup>28</sup> but 'its name'.<sup>29</sup>

Let me start by noting a common denominator between the three entities mentioned above. In the case of the Messiah, there is no appropriate verse that sustains the general statement. In lieu, the verse about the righteous that is designated by the Tetragrammaton is adduced, assuming as evident that the righteous is the Messiah. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the future Jerusalem is also described in Isa. 1.26 as the city of righteousness. Thus, the common denominator of the Tetragrammaton is called upon in relation to the three entities, but they are also connected to each other through righteousness.

The tense of this passage is also of importance: 'There were called' in the past tense: *nigre'u*. Since I am interested here only in the issue of the righteous men, let me adduce the passage found beforehand to which the quoted text refers:

Rabbah in the name of R. Yohanan further stated: 'The righteous will in time to come be called by the name of the Holy One, blessed be He; for it is said: 'Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory.<sup>30</sup> I have formed him, yea, I have made him.'<sup>31, 32</sup>

Here the tense is future, but what is interesting is the fact that the biblical proof-text to which the former passage refers is a verse that is clearly in the past tense. Thus, both the form 'they were called' and the verse that is invoked as a proof-text speak about the past, though this does not preclude the bestowal of the divine name on the righteous only in the present or in the future. While the Messiah is an important but distant figure, its theophoric understanding is hardly capable of creating uneasiness, like the attribution of the Tetragrammaton to a unique city. However the first category, the righteous persons – in plural in the texts – allows for the

possibility that a person in the present will be called by the divine name. For some scholars, such an attribution of a divine name to a person living in the past may be annoying,<sup>33</sup> but it should nevertheless be mentioned that in another rabbinic statement it is assumed that the *Tzaddiqim* may in principle be able to create a world without any reference to the future.<sup>34</sup> The oscillation between the past and the future reception of the divine name, evident in the above texts, is significant as it reflects a complex situation rather than a homogenous rabbinic position.<sup>35</sup> The affinity between this discussion and the short passage we adduced from the Dead Sea scrolls is impressive and the rabbinic claim of the nexus between the righteous and the Tetragrammaton has no salient biblical proof-text. Moreover, the fact that the Messiah is mentioned in these two contexts points to a common matrix inspiring these discussions. In this context, it should be mentioned that the view that the righteous will become the Son of God during the resurrection, as Jesus did, is found in early Christian literature.<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly enough, elsewhere in rabbinic literature another human figure is also described as having been given the Tetragrammaton. It is Shem, the son of Noah, who is described, again, as righteous and one who was born circumcised.<sup>37</sup> Indubitably we have here a Midrash on the name *Shem*, which means in Hebrew also 'name'. However, for our purposes it is important to point out the association between righteousness and the possibility of acquiring the divine name as a proper name in two traditional and widespread rabbinic texts. The recurrence of the theme of the Tetragrammaton in the cases above may also have something to do with the rabbinic assumption that the righteous are superior to angels. Such superiority has been explained in different ways, and I would like to mention one more possible implication: while angels have the theophoric suffix *-el*, the righteous are called by the higher divine name, the Tetragrammaton. Last but not least in this context: in *Genesis Rabba*' R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai's assumption is quoted to the effect that everywhere the righteous go the divine presence goes with them.<sup>38</sup> The Tetragrammaton is found in some of the biblical proof-texts for this view. Let me also mention in this context that in a late Midrash, God describes the righteous as similar to, or according to another interpretation, as superior to the superior holy ones – namely the angels – and called them 'the sons of the supernal ones' [*benei 'elyonim*], quoting the verse: 'I said: You are *'Elohim*, and all of you are sons of *'Elyon*.'<sup>39, 40</sup> The emphasis on the righteous' sonship is quite evident.

In this context, the rabbinic description of the Israelites as immune because they wear the divine name is also salient. So, for example, in *Numbers Rabba*' 16.24, it is said:

He girded them with cuirasses; while R. Simai said: He clothed

them with royal cloaks. The Ineffable Name was engraved on them and as long as they possessed it no evil thing could touch them, neither the Angel of Death nor anything else.<sup>41</sup>

The inscription of the divine name presumably ensures immortality, as it is an apotropaic form of amulet that stops even the angel of death.

An apotheosis of the status of the righteous is evident in a Talmudic statement according to which:

The righteous are greater than the ministering angels, for it is said<sup>42</sup>: 'He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.'<sup>43</sup>

The assumption here is that the righteous mentioned in the book of Daniel are immune in the manner the Israelites were in the moment they received the divine name in the context of the Sinaitic revelation. However, what seems to me of equal importance is the assumption that an angel is called Son of God, and that the righteous are conceived of as superior to a being that is described as a Son of God. In a late Midrashic text entitled the *Alphabet of R. 'Aqivah*, we find a description of God receiving the righteous in the world-to-come as a father who welcomes his firstborn son every day.<sup>44</sup> In other Midrashic writings, the righteous men are described as confident in their father in heaven.<sup>45</sup>

Let me turn to another type of theophorism, a tradition in the name of R. Samuel ben Nahmani:

And He said, 'Thou canst not see My face.'<sup>46</sup> A Tanna' taught in the name of R. Joshua ben Korḥah: 'The Holy One, Blessed be He, spoke thus to Moses: When I wanted, you did not want [to see My face]<sup>47</sup> now that you want, I do not want.' This is in opposition to [the interpretation of this verse by] R. Samuel ben Nahmani in the name of R. Yonathan. For R. Samuel ben Nahmani said in the name of R. Yonathan: 'As a reward of three [pious acts]<sup>48</sup> Moses was privileged to obtain three [favours]. In reward of "And Moses hid his face", he obtained the brightness of his face.<sup>49</sup> In reward of "For he was afraid", he obtained the privilege that "They were afraid to come nigh him."<sup>50</sup> In reward of "To look upon God", he obtained "The Image [*Temunat*] of the Lord doth he behold."<sup>51, 52</sup>

This is a 'luminous' sort of theophorism rather than a nominal one, focusing as it does on the face as defining the element that represents man. Different as the two traditions are, they complement each other by assuming that as a

response to performing acts of reverence the divine presence will descend onto the person, just as the divine name is added to the righteous. As it is presented here, the divine name effects a bodily transformation – luminosity – that is perceived as a numinous and manifest presence.

Both rabbinic literature and the Heikhalot literature inherited therefore a biblical propensity toward theophorism. As we shall see in some detail below, in various later parts of the Hebrew Bible the same root – *ZBD* – is used in numerous theophoric ways.

The Heikhalot literature, however, is replete with instances in which the Tetragrammaton follows the occurrence of the names of angels, presumably in order to point out the deep connection between the two. Thus, although the proportion of examples in which the Heikhalot literature refers to the divine name being added to angelic names is incomparably higher than that in the much larger body of rabbinic literature, the difference on this point is not absolute, but rather more a matter of emphasis. Therefore some forms of God's presence in the world, either the angelic or the mundane one, were imagined to take place by means of attribution of divine names, and these were also adopted in classical rabbinic writings and even reached the esoteric traditions of the Middle Ages, where they were commented and elaborated on, sometimes by means of other additional traditions which are well attested to in late antiquity texts. In this context, the famous dictum that the 'patriarchs are chariot'<sup>53</sup> namely, the place of the divine dwelling, points to the same situation: God is present in a direct manner to select individuals. In a way, these are also theophoric mediators that are similar to angels, yet they lack the permanency of some other forms of theophanic mediators.

### 3. From Enoch to Metatron: The apotheotic mode and theophorism

The theophanic vector is much better represented in major forms of Jewish literature since late antiquity. This is first and foremost the case in rabbinic Judaism, which preserved the main proclivity of the Hebrew Bible. The most important passage that demonstrates the existence of a theophoric mediator playing a paramount theophanic role is found in a famous and oft-quoted passage in the Babylonian Talmud. The angel became the chief instance of theophoric mediator in late antiquity and medieval Jewish sources, as Odeberg, Scholem, Quispel, Fossum, A. Segal, E.R. Wolfson, Deutsch, and Davila, among many others, have already duly recognized.<sup>54</sup> In several earlier studies, I attempted to refer to a variety of late antiquity sources in order to better understand the earlier and even later forms of Jewish mysticism, especially insofar as discussions regarding names and

anthropomorphic structures are concerned, including discussions of Metatron.<sup>55</sup>

Now I would like to touch on the elements closest to the constellation of ideas I referred to above as the theophoric mediator and as morphonominalism, as found in a widespread discussion recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, which echoed broadly in Jewish literatures and many scholarly analyses:

Once a Min said to R. Idith: It is written, 'And unto Moses He said, Come up to *YHWH*.'<sup>56</sup> But surely it should have stated, 'Come up unto me.' He [R. Idith] replied: 'It was Metatron [who said that], whose name is like that of his Master,<sup>57</sup> for it is written, 'For my name is in him.'<sup>58</sup> But if so, [retorted the heretic] we should worship him! The same passage, however, replied R. Idith, says: 'Be not rebellious against him,'<sup>59</sup> i.e., exchange Me not for him. But if so, why is it stated: 'He will not pardon your transgression?' He [R. Idith] answered: 'By our troth we would not accept him even as a messenger, for it is written, 'And he said unto him,<sup>60</sup> 'If Thy face go not' etc.<sup>61</sup>

Interestingly enough, the Rabbi does not attempt to avoid the important role of angel but, on the contrary, it is he who introduces Metatron as speaking to Moses. Moreover, this angel is imagined not only as speaking with Moses, but in fact it is he who calls Moses to ascend to him. Implicitly, we have a situation similar to the Magharians. Nevertheless the Rabbi emphasizes that, unlike the heretic's insinuation, there is no cultic approach involved in this situation. The permission to play such a role in revelation and guidance is based upon the fact that the divine name is found within the angel in a manner that is a clear continuation of the passage from Exod. 23. Since the presence of the divine name, namely the Tetragrammaton that appears in the verse from Exod. 24.1, within the name of the angel allows for moments when it is possible to confuse between the angel and God, we may assume that Moses has been understood by the Rabbi, according to this passage, as ascending to Metatron, represented by the Tetragrammaton though not necessarily as worshipping him. This is a fine point that is related to the possibility that the same name, namely the Tetragrammaton, is capable of causing confusion since it is found in connection with two exalted entities.

Two additional issues related to this passage are pertinent for our discussion: by adducing the verse from Exod. 23, the topic of the face of God is introduced, so we may assume that the angel mentioned is an angel of the face.<sup>62</sup> Yet, since it is the angel of revelation – Moses is asked to ascend to him for the reception of the Torah – the face fulfills not only a

form of visual but also a form of auditory revelation. After all, Moses was described as speaking with God ‘face to face’. Indeed, in some passages found in both the Heikhalot literature and in texts related to it, Metatron is called the prince of the Torah.

What is the meaning of the presence of the name within the angel according to this passage? Given the proof-text from Exod. 24.1 where the Tetragrammaton occurs, it is reasonable, as Scholem has already pointed out, that the similarity between the names of God and those of angels should be attributed to the presence of the Tetragrammaton in the name of the angel, and he drew the quite plausible conclusion that the angel Metatron reflects in fact the earlier angel Yaho’el,<sup>63</sup> that is one and in fact the first of the 70 names of Metatron listed in *3 Enoch*. According to some traditions Metatron has been described as the small *YHWH*, and the phrase ‘Metatron is the lesser *YHWH*’ is found in a variant of the above Talmudic passage preserved by a Karaite author.<sup>64</sup>

To conclude this point: the Tetragrammaton is imagined to exist within the chief angel not only according to the Heikhalot literature (as we shall see below in more detail), but as Scholem has correctly pointed out,<sup>65</sup> also according to the Talmudic passage on its correct interpretation. In other words, a clue to a proper understanding of various issues in ‘classical’ Rabbinism is sometimes found in the material preserved by the Heikhalot literature, and the Talmudic discussions that reach us reflect significant editing.<sup>66</sup>

Against this background of a strong connection between God and the Great Angel, the theological mistake of R. Elisha ben Abbuyah is clear. God and Metatron share not only the divine name, but also some form of throne, and they are, as pointed out by Saul Lieberman and Ithamar Gruenwald, synthronic. Upon seeing them seated, the Rabbi exclaimed: there are two powers in heaven, and consequently both he and Metatron were punished because of this mistake.<sup>67</sup> The common denominator between the two discussions is the ascription of common attributes to God and the Great Angel: both have the same name and both occupy a similar throne.

Nevertheless, the other Rabbis insist that they are not equal, but rather that one is derived from the other, and moreover that no worship should be addressed to one of the two. It should be emphasized that the element of enthronement that appears in *3 Enoch* is not new but rather a reflection of much earlier material, as pointed out by various scholars.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, we may speak of the existence of a theory in highly influential rabbinic texts according to which there is an ontological linkage between God and his angel rendering it a theological mistake to separate between them. Such a

theory of organic connection is reminiscent of the theory found in the group described by Justin Martyr and discussed in the Introduction above.

In *3 Enoch* it is written about Metatron, in a manner reminiscent of the situation described in the Parables of *1 Enoch* on the Son of Man, that:

Rabbi Ishmael said, ‘I said to Metatron, ‘Why are you called by the name of your creator, with seventy names? [Why are] you greater than all the princes, higher than all the angels?’

Unlike the rabbinic passage discussed above, this statement presents a double claim: that Enoch, translated into an angel, in his hypostatic existence that represents the morphic aspect, is called by both the name of God – apparently the Tetragrammaton – and by the 70 names of God, thus representing the nominal aspect of the mediator. Indubitably, the first claim is related to the description of Metatron as the Lesser *YHWH*,<sup>69</sup> reminiscent of the passage above from *Sanhedrin*. It is the entity that possesses the divine name that is addressed immediately afterwards as also possessing the 70 names that parallel the name of the divinity. This distinction between a core-name and a plurality of names is evident in another instance in the Heikhalot literature, in a treatise related to the unit called *Sar ha-Torah*, a much more magical tract, where it is said:

I adjure you Metatron, Prince of the Face, I pronounce upon you Metatron, Prince of the Face, and I seal upon you,<sup>70</sup> Metatron Prince of the Face, in the name of *ShQH̄WZȲY*,<sup>71</sup> who is called by seventy names.<sup>72</sup>

The distinction between the name *par excellence*, here *ShQH̄WZȲY*, and the other 70 names – one among them even being the form *MTRWN* – is quite evident. Yet even more important is the magical context of the many names that returns in the Middle Ages in a pronounced manner, as we shall see in the next chapter. The attribution of so many names to an angel is reminiscent of the innumerable names attributed by Monoimos, an Arab – namely Samaritan – Gnostic, to the Son as discussed above in the Introduction. It should be mentioned that in the Heikhalot literature there are instances in which the multiplicity of the being called Prince of the Face or Prince of the Torah is evident, and even a plurality of Metatrons is mentioned in this literature.<sup>73</sup>

Unlike in the Talmudic discussion in the Heikhalot text, and in accordance with earlier Enochic traditions, the patriarch is described as elevated while part of this translation process is his reception of the divine name. It seems that the divine name and the 70 names point to the patriarch’s unique status and to his mastery over the 70 angels. In a way, the many names represent a vision of a hierarchy in which the hegemonic

entity, called by the Tetragrammaton and by 70 names, presides over the second level of the hierarchy, constituted by many angels, each possessing one single name.<sup>74</sup> I would like to focus now on the reception of the one divine name. This represents the core of the transformation and of the unique status attained by a certain angel as it has already been hinted at in Exod. 23.21. However beyond explaining this verse in the context of a mortal, material form, the *Shi'ur Qomah* texts present a theoretical approach toward the name of God that may help elucidate the above discussion. In a relatively lengthy poem, this tradition compares the divine name to God by resorting to many attributes.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere in the same text we find the following statement: 'Thou are in Thy Name and Thy Name is in Thee.'<sup>76</sup> In another composition belonging to this literature it is written: 'He is His Name and His Name is He, He is in Himself, and His Name is in His Name.'<sup>77</sup> Both statements assume that the name is not an external entity to the named subject but, rather, that it is found within it and vice-versa. While this somewhat contradictory concept is not easy to understand, it seems to suggest that by giving the name to someone else God transmits something more substantial than the mere sharing of a linguistic designation. Particularly pertinent to the general theory in this study is the statement found in a treatise belonging to this literature entitled *Merkavah Rabbah*, according to which:

Who is able to regard the face of RWZYY<sup>78</sup> YHWH, God of Israel? His face is His name, and His name is His face. And the sayings of His lips are His name. His words are fire. The 'breath of His lips' is fire.<sup>79</sup> With His breath he ordained the whole entire world. Therefore, happy is the man who uses this secret; he sanctifies it by His Holiness, and he knows the secrets of creation.<sup>80</sup>

This is a vision of God reported by R. Ishmael. As in some of the biblical texts referred to in the Introduction, here is a clear juxtaposition between breath and face, an issue to which we shall revert later on in this chapter. However it is plausible that breath and the divine name, while not fully coinciding, at least overlap. In a way, the face of God is the divine name that is pronounced by the lips. Again, though different from the *Shi'ur Qomah* passages about the identity of 'name' and divine essence, it is the face that plays the role of the 'He' or the 'Thou' in the above-mentioned Heikhalot traditions. These two major marks of identity – the name and the face – play, as we shall see below, a role as defining elements in the identity of the Great Angel, which is both the angel of the face of God, and the carrier of the divine name within himself. These marks also appear in the description of Enoch's ascension on high. It should be mentioned that some form of

identity between the name and the spirit may be found if Davila's proposed juxtaposition between Exod. 23.21 and Isa. 63.11, on the grounds of similar usage of the form *QRBW*.<sup>81</sup>

There can be no doubt that this identity between God or His face and His name invites the speculation that by giving someone His name, God also gives something of Himself. In a way that is reminiscent of Gen. 2.7, God seems to infuse the name just as he infuses the breath and thereby adds something substantial to the entity that receives the name. These views should be compared to the theological theory found in Jn 10.38 where Jesus assesses that 'The Father is in Me, and I am in the Father.'<sup>82</sup>

In this context, an important suggestion made by Asi Farber-Ginnat should be mentioned. In a seminal article that was printed in Hebrew – and thus neglected by a vast number of studies on Heikhalot literature – Farber-Ginnat suggests identifying, in the sealing of names upon the limbs of the aspirant to the ascent experience, a certain assimilation to the *Shi'ur Qomah* structure that consists of limbs and names.<sup>83</sup> The implication of this view is that the mystic is striving to embody what I call the morphonominal structure of the higher hypostases or of God.

This self-externalization of a sublime entity by pronouncing the name is evident in Marcos' passage, preserved by Irenaeus, adduced by scholars several times in the context of *Shi'ur Qomah*:

When first the unoriginated, inconceivable Father, who is without material substance, and is neither male nor female, willed to bring forth that which is ineffable to Him, and to endow with form that which is invisible, He opened His mouth and sent forth the word similar to himself, who standing near, showed Him what he Himself was, inasmuch as He had been manifested in the form of that which was invisible.<sup>84</sup>

The name and the image are identical, in a manner reminiscent of the passage from *Merkavah Rabbah*, while the act of pronunciation is simultaneously the occasion for visualization. The name creates a form of self-recognition because it actualizes the shape of the divinity, perhaps a face.

Let me draw attention to the possible parallelism between Enoch's reception of the divine name and the tradition according to which the righteous are given the divine name as adduced from a rabbinic source. According to the Heikhalot text, is Enoch's receipt of the divine name a gift for his righteousness? When asked by R. Ishmael why he had received such an extraordinary status, Metatron responds with an answer that is concise and enigmatic: 'Because I am Enoch ben Yered.' The text goes on to describe the elevation of the patriarch so that he may serve as a witness, 'ed, to the depravity of the flood-generation.<sup>85</sup> As we shall see below, in this

context righteousness is mentioned, and such righteousness seems to me to be the implicit essence of his answer. My suggestion regarding the role of righteousness is corroborated by both earlier and later descriptions of Enoch/the angelic mediator found in the Middle Ages. Subsequent to the various discussions found in *1 Enoch* chs 1, 12, 15, 71, where it is written, inter alia, that Enoch was born for righteousness, we find a variety of statements to this effect in later literatures.<sup>86</sup> Yet there is plenty of late Midrashic as well as medieval Provençal and Ashkenazi material in which the righteousness of Enoch is mentioned, as we shall see below, and some of this material will be discussed in the Appendix and related explicitly to the complex Enoch/Metatron.

Last but not least: in the Heikhalot literature and in a late Midrash a tabernacle or *Mishkan* is attributed to the *Na'ar*, the lad, who according to some versions<sup>87</sup> is none other than Metatron, designated as *Mishkan ha-Na'ar*, or the tabernacle of Metatron, where the souls of the righteous are sacrificed.<sup>88</sup> In this context, Metatron plays a clear cultic role as a high priest who performs sacrifices. Yet, what is particularly interesting is the fact that the sacrifice of the souls of the righteous is conceived of as expiation for the sins of Israel in exile. I wonder whether the role of the high priest necessarily implies the attribute of righteousness, which is quintessential for the souls he sacrifices. Metatron's priestly role in the late Midrash is reminiscent of the passage found in the Babylonian Talmud where R. Ishmael, a high priest, encounters a divine being, God or a high angel, in the holiest of the holies, to be dealt with immediately below.<sup>89</sup> It seems that some parts of the Heikhalot literature are closer to some rabbinic appropriations of priestly elements which were less important in the general economy of the Heikhalot literature itself.<sup>90</sup>

It is necessary to provide a more general remark about the structure of one of the most influential parts of this literature. The *Shi'ur Qomah* composition includes two different aspects: the detailed size of the divine limbs and their incomprehensible names.<sup>91</sup> These two aspects correspond, in my opinion, to the morphic and nominal aspects we have seen in many of the sources above.

#### 4. Metatron: Proper name or office?

The meaning and the functions of Metatron in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages attracted the attention of many scholars, and an entire literature is available on the topic.<sup>92</sup> A chief stumbling block in understanding the passages dealing with Metatron is the assumption that this is a personal name, a special angel with a name that was adopted, according to some traditions, by the elevated Enoch. This assumption

creates problems for understanding a literature that is itself very complex. Thus, the existence of an ancient, semi-demiurgic Metatron is conceived by some scholars through a simplistic understanding of the function of this angel as incompatible with an allegedly later historical development of the ascent of Enoch.<sup>93</sup>

However, as pointed out already by S. Lieberman, Metatron is more of a title than a personal name.<sup>94</sup> The relationship between the many righteous persons noted below and Enoch has been conceived of as such: Metatron may be understood as the title, while the righteous the persons. More recently, a similar approach has been suggested by John Collins in relation to the title of the Son of Man, in the context of *1 Enoch*.<sup>95</sup> The possibility of the ascent of different persons to the status of Metatron is mentioned from a different perspective in an important observation by Alan Segal,<sup>96</sup> later amplified by Pieter W. van der Horst. I bring here the latter's formulation:

In early post-biblical Judaism there was in some circles, a tradition according to which the highest angel, called 'the angel of the Lord' in the Old Testament, was seen as God's primary or sole helper and allowed to share in God's divinity. It was part of this tradition that a human being, as the hero or exemplar of a particular group, to ascend and become one with this figure, as Enoch, and Moses. So these angelic mediators often began as humans and later achieved a kind of divine status in some communities.<sup>97</sup>

It would also be pertinent to cite Segal's hypothesis here according to which Metatron is 'the rabbinic name for many mediators in heretical thought'.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, what seems to be fascinating from this point of view is the ancient description of Moses' ascent on high and his replacement of a sublime figure sitting on the throne, as depicted in a fragment from the *Exagoge* by Ezekiel the Tragedian.<sup>99</sup> The possibility of the assimilation of a mortal into an already existing divine office, even one that is already occupied by a regal figure, should serve as a corrective for the simple understanding of the emergence of Metatron out of Enoch. Moreover, scholars increasingly regard Enoch's experience as a paradigmatic one that should inspire others.<sup>100</sup> It seems that the relationship between Jesus and the category of the supernal Son of Man, as interpreted by Adela Yarbro Collins, may too be understood as following this same pattern.<sup>101</sup>

Against this conceptual background, let me turn in some detail to an interesting testimony regarding the manner in which Enoch has been understood in circles close to Judaism. Abu Ma'shar, a major and influential Jewish-Arabic astrologer, is quoted as follows:

Abū Ma'shar says: 'There were three persons called Hermes. Hermes the First, he upon whom the threefold Grace was conferred, lived before the Flood. The meaning of Hermes is appellative, as is the case of Caesar and Khusrau.<sup>102</sup> The Persians, in their historical books, call him Hōshang, that is, the Righteous, and it is he whose prophecy the Harranians mention. The Persians say that his grandfather was Kayōmarth, that is, Adam. The Hebrews say that he is *Akhnūkh* [Enoch], that is, Idris in Arabic.<sup>103</sup>

There are a number of different elements in this passage that are relevant for the following discussions: the identification of Enoch with the righteous is indubitably a continuation of a vision of Enoch in terms found much earlier in Jewish sources, as mentioned above. However, given the fact that Abu-Ma'shar's discussions of Enoch had an impact on R. Abraham ibn Ezra, he served as an inspiration for the latter's view.<sup>104</sup> As we are going to see in further detail in the Appendix, the late Midrashic sources available in Europe in the eleventh century emphasized the righteousness of Enoch, and Abu-Ma'shar's excerpt testifies to the continuation of such a tradition in influential sources. Moreover the semi-divine status of Hermes, which may also be understood as pertinent to Enoch, is reminiscent of the apotheosis of Enoch. What is further important is the attitude toward Hermes: given the fact that there were three figures designated as Hermes, Abu-Ma'shar claims that 'Hermes' is just a word pointing to a function rather than a proper name. This is apparently the meaning of the corresponding Persian word: the righteous. This means that the same function remains together with its name over the centuries, and this has been assumed by different individuals throughout history. The occurrence of the terms 'Caesar' and 'Kusrau' demonstrates the functional nature of the name as referring to an office. This seems to be the meaning of an important discussion on Metatron that describes three moments in the development of this angel: during Adam's generation, in Enoch's generation and finally in his apotheosis. In the Heikhalot description of Enoch and in the late *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Akivah*, we find the following passage, which is echoed in many later discussions in the Middle Ages:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'I made him strong, I took him, I appointed him.'<sup>105</sup> that is Enoch, the son of Jared, whose name is Metatron, My servant, who is the unique one<sup>106</sup> among all the sons of heaven.<sup>107</sup> I made him strong in the generation of the first Adam ... 'And I took him:' [that is] Enoch, the son of Jared, from among them ... I appointed him over all the treasures and stores that I have in every heaven.<sup>108</sup>

This is a dense and important description of Enoch's translation on high. I shall address one aspect of it, and return later to another version of the passage. The view that Metatron was found at the time of Adam parallels the view found in BT *Hullin*, where the Prince of the World is described as follows:

R. Ḥanina ben Papa expounded: 'May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; let the Lord rejoice in His works.'<sup>109</sup> The Prince of the World said this verse. For when the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined after its kind<sup>110</sup> upon the trees, the plants applied unto themselves an a fortiori argument, saying: 'If the Holy One, blessed be He, desired a motley growth, why did He enjoin 'after its kind' upon the trees? Moreover, is there not here an a fortiori argument? If upon trees which by nature do not grow up in a motley growth the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined 'after its kind', how much more so does it apply to us!' Immediately each plant came forth after its kind. Thereupon the Prince of the World declared: 'May the glory of the Lord endure for ever: let the Lord rejoice in His works.'<sup>111</sup>

The clue to understanding this passage is the meaning of the proof-text from Ps. 104 exclaimed twice by the Prince of the World. The correspondence between this Psalm and the first chapter of the book of Genesis is well known and here we have an interesting exegetical application of such a correspondence. The verse should be understood, in my opinion, in its context:

29. When you hide your face, they are troubled; when you take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
30. When you send forth your breath, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth.
31. May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in His works.

Creation is described as including two factors: the divine looking to the creatures and the presence of the divine breath within them.<sup>112</sup> The three verses contain three different phases related to creation: the first is the negative phase, which deals with destruction by retreat according to v. 29. The second is the creation, effected by the presence of God in the next verse, while the last phase deals with the maintenance of creation. Important in my opinion is the recurrence of the 'face' in vv. 29–30: the presence of God's face is necessary for the productivity of the face of the earth. What is fascinating is the fact that we know of an angel in Muslim thought that is

both the angel of the face and of the spirit, and is reminiscent, as noted shrewdly already by Michael Schneider, of Metatron.

The following verse [31], quoted in the Talmudic discussion, implies the stability of the gaze of God's face and the presence of His breath, so that His Glory will endure. It seems that there is a connection between the face of God here and the face of God as it appears in the Metatron passage in BT *Sanhedrin*. The Prince of the World is praising God and implicitly referring to His face and breath, if we take into consideration the biblical context of the proof-text, and if we refer also to some form of Prince of the Face, which position brings him closer to Metatron.

Therefore the Prince of the World is found, according to the two Talmudic traditions, at the beginning of creation, watching what happens in the very first days, and also much later when he grows old. Some Rabbis conceived of this prince as a developing entity, rather than one that merely appears at a certain moment in history. This developing vision of the Prince of the World, congenial to the creation and growing with it, is paralleled by the view of Enoch seen in the quotation from *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*.

The triple description related to Enoch in the text in Heikhalot literature is reminiscent of a triple description of Hermes. It may be, as has been hinted by Abu Ma'shar, that while the function – Caesar or king – remains, someone else is chosen to fulfill it each time. This may be the meaning of the phrase 'whose name is Metatron'. I propose to interpret it as reflecting Enoch's investiture as Metatron, either as a synthronos, or as a witness or scribe. This reading of Metatron points to a function rather than a proper name, as observed already by Lieberman. This solution, in my opinion, is not new, but rather one that has been proposed already by Borsch in order to solve the problem of the reception of the status of the Son of Man by Enoch at a certain given moment, according to *1 Enoch*.<sup>113</sup> In principle, this solution is reminiscent of the more famous concept of the double body of the king in the Middle Ages: the office, and the individual that is altered by joining the office and then perishing.<sup>114</sup>

Let me adduce an example that testifies to this 'functional' nature of Metatron. In the passage quoted above in *3 Enoch*, describing the elevation of Enoch, there is a tradition that recurs in several manuscripts in varied forms, in which it is written: '*Piqqadativ le-Metatron*'. Odeberg's translation is 'I appointed him: [namely] Metatron, my servant' and Alexander's translation follows this line of understanding.<sup>115</sup> Grammatically speaking, the two translators understand the form '*le-Metatron*' as an accusative: I appointed him. In fact we have here an understanding that assumes a double accusative: one represented by the suffix '*iv*' 'him' attached to the verb, and another represented by the '*le*' of the phrase of *le-Metatron*. This reading

makes grammatical sense, and in some cases in the Heikhalot literature the phrase *le-Metatron* indeed reflects an accusative structure.

However, I am not sure that this is in fact the correct grammatical and conceptual reading of this specific passage. In Hebrew, the most common understanding of 'L' is different, basically adverbial: this will amount to a reading of the text as follows: God appointed Enoch, already translated on high, to the function of Metatron. The suffix form *Piqqadativ* should be understood as indeed having the name of Enoch and not that of Metatron in the accusative. This form points to the transition of Enoch into the new function he receives as Metatron. Metatron is not, at least not always, a proper name but rather a term that refers to a title for a certain office. Thus, the word 'namely', reflecting the translators' understanding that there is a problem in their rendering, is not necessary, nor does it correspond to anything in the Hebrew text. The function is that of the servant, '*eved*', or my servant, '*avdiy*', according to another manuscript.

That this reading is not only grammatically preferable but also logically imperative is proven by the two other parallel verbs that have the same grammatical structure. The verbs '*Ibbartiv*' and '*Leqahtiv*' – which mean respectively 'I made him strong' and 'I took him' – which occur just before the *Piqqadativ*, point unequivocally to Enoch. Especially symptomatic is the following sequel related to the second verb: 'I took him [namely] Enoch ben Yared, from among them and I elevated him . . . to the heights of heaven, in order to be my witness.' This version is found both in *3 Enoch* and in the *Midrash Alphabet of R. 'Aqibah*.<sup>116</sup> The witness, like the servant, is a function and not a proper name, and Enoch has been elevated to serve in these functions and as such he is called by the relevant names, the most important of which is Metatron – a name that points to a function that, in my opinion, already existed.

The three verses describe the three phases in the transformation of Enoch into Metatron: he was first made strong while Adam was alive, then he was taken on high and finally he was appointed over other angels. As seen above, Metatron could exist in the time of Adam as a function but not as a personal name given to the later Enoch. What happened to Enoch according to such a view is that he was transformed and assumed then the office of Metatron, which I assume was conceived of as already existing. Moreover, the alternative reading that attributes the appointment to Metatron is also difficult because it creates a rupture between the accusative form of the three verbs, attributing the third operation to Metatron, and the first two to Enoch.

Indeed, in several texts Enoch assumes the function of witness when he is translated on high and this is a function that Metatron assumes in instances that are not connected to Enoch at all. So, for example, a medieval Midrash

that presumably draws on older material states: 'He brought the writ and he wrote upon it a bill of giving, and it was signed by the Holy One, blessed be He, Metatron, and Adam.'<sup>117</sup> Thus Metatron served as a witness at the time of Adam, a fact that is reminiscent of the mentioning of the angel together with Adam in the above quotation. We may wonder if he is serving as a witness in the context of someone who will sin, namely Adam, just as Enoch served as a witness to the sins of his generation. Another tradition speaks about a contract related to Adam and signed by two angels, thereafter lying in the archives of Metatron.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, in the stream of traditions related to Metatron, there is no problem in documenting his presence before Enoch or in assuming, at the same time, that Enoch assumed the function previously fulfilled by Metatron.<sup>119</sup> The angel with this name has a duty that is either that of the angel of presence, a duty filled by many angels, or a duty of bearing witness. Last but not least in this context, the vision of Metatron as a generic name is found in the thirteenth-century thought of Nahmanides who proposed a nexus between Metatron and Metator, a messenger, found elsewhere in rabbinic literature.<sup>120</sup>

Unacquainted with the foregoing interpretations of the religious phenomena under scrutiny, both Dan and Kaplan prejudged what is possible in a certain literature by the criterion of what they think plausible from a logical point of view.

### 5. Overt and hidden sonship

That the fallen angels have been described in Gen. 6.2 as 'sons of 'Elohim' is well known, and much material describing the development of this theme in late Midrashim and in Jewish mysticism is still found in manuscripts, some of which are not covered by common scholarship on the topic. However, this angelic type of sonship, widespread as it is, deserves a more detailed analysis than present in the available scholarship about late antiquity. This cannot be done here, though I hope to return to it in additional studies.

Here we are concerned with an angel mentioned in connection with Enoch, just before the event of the fallen angels: Metatron. It should be emphasized that neither in the Talmudic passage nor in the Heikhalot literature dealing with the archangel analyzed above is there any mention of the term 'Son' as a theophoric mediator.<sup>121</sup> Notwithstanding this absence, it seems that, in a way, the reference to Metatron as *na'ar*, lad or youth, may constitute a substitute for what in earlier discussions in pseudepigrapha has been described as the Son of Man – a title that, as seen above, especially relates to Enoch. Several scholars have briefly pointed to this possibility independently of each other, though they have not supplied any proof for this interesting suggestion.<sup>122</sup> Let me attempt to make a stronger case for

such an affinity. In Dan. 7.9–10, the pair of supernal figures 'Attīq Yomin/Son of Man appear, reflected, according to scholars, in the 1 *Enoch* couple of Lord of the Spirit/Son of Man. Further, the Aramaic expression *Bar 'Elohim*, namely the son of 'Elohim, that occurs in Dan. 3.25, and is interpreted as an angelic manifestation in Jewish traditional commentaries, could supply a contribution in this direction. In the first case, I assume that the two figures are distinguished by age: the old versus the Son of Man. If in 1 *Enoch* the Son of Man is the apotheosis of Enoch, with all the problems related to this core issue in terms of understanding the part of the Parables, this type of dichotomy seems to apply there too. Likewise, in 2 *Enoch* two different faces are imagined to be found on high: the Small and the Great,<sup>123</sup> probably reflecting the impact of the figures above found in the book of Daniel. Moreover these two faces are reflected in the creation of man. In the book of 1 *Enoch* ch. 46, the head of 'Attīq Yomin, and the face of the Son of Man are mentioned, reflecting again the picture drawn by the book of Daniel.<sup>124</sup> In one of the compositions related to the Heikhalot literature, Metatron is indeed described in terms reminiscent of Dan. 7.<sup>125</sup>

It may therefore be worthwhile to examine whether in the Heikhalot literature the term *na'ar* represents 'youth' in distinction to the Divinity, and as such, can be seen as corresponding to a parallel to the Son of Man in the other two couples mentioned above.<sup>126</sup> For a better understanding of the figure of Metatron let me survey some of the material concerning youth in the various Hebrew corpora in late antiquity. I will start with a Talmudic description of an angelic power as a youth:

Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Yonathan: 'The following verse was uttered by the Prince of the World: "I have been a youth and now I am old."<sup>127</sup> For who else could have said it! If the Holy One, blessed be He, be suggested, is there any old age in his case? Then David must have said it? But was he so old? Consequently it must be concluded that the Prince of the World had said it'.<sup>128</sup>

R. Yonathan distinguishes between God, who according to this passage was never young, and David, who was not yet old when he wrote the verse from the Psalm and an entity that constitutes, in my understanding, a third category: that which was once young and became old. Age here is paramount. I wonder if there is a specific figure other than Enoch, in the mind of the Amora', that was young and became old. As pointed out by Andrei Orlov, in 2 *Enoch*, Enoch is addressed several times by God through the appellation 'Youth'.<sup>129</sup> In the same book, a description of Enoch as the governor of the earth is also found.<sup>130</sup> Since these two elements occur in relation to Enoch in the same composition, it is quite plausible that the Talmudic discussion,

where *Na'ar* and *Sar ha-'Olam* occur together, also reflects the transformation of Enoch into an angel. In any case, scholars claiming that rabbinic 'classical' Judaism does not put forward anything related to an apotheosis of Enoch, like L. Kaplan,<sup>131</sup> should explain the meaning of the biblical proof-text that deals with the transformation from young to old and the meaning of youth in this discussion. Thus, it seems that we can suggest that an identification of the Prince of the World with Metatron, even if implicit, is found in several medieval sources, as conjectured by Odeberg.<sup>132</sup> Scholars admit the connection between 2 *Enoch* and the Hebrew Enoch,<sup>133</sup> and there is good reason to assume that the connection between *na'ar sar ha-'olam* in the Talmudic passage reflects a view parallel either to 2 *Enoch* or to a tradition that is found in the Hebrew book of *Enoch*.

Especially important in our context is a remark by Deutsch, who pointed out that the same Rabbi is also the author of another statement according to which God Himself appears sometimes as an old man and sometimes as a youth, though the term used for youth is *bahur* and not *na'ar*.<sup>134</sup> However, it seems that these two statements, though differing from each other, also act as supplements: they differ since in the first statement God is denied youth, while in the second youth is ascribed. They nevertheless complement each other by pointing to a similarity between God and Metatron that is part of a larger view reflected in a long series of resemblances. As we have already seen above, the same R. Shmuel ben Nahmani is the tradent of the view that the righteous receives the divine name, creating an additional similarity between God and an elected figure. We shall now look at the concept of *na'ar* and ruler according to 3 *Enoch*.

It may be inferred that 'youth' is not a term that was associated with one particular person, such as Melchizedek in its hypostatic mode subsequently assigned to other figures, as assumed by Davila.<sup>135</sup> Rather, in the manner in which I have attempted to describe above, the office of Metatron is an office or function that can be filled by more than one entity. According to this reading Adam,<sup>136</sup> Enoch, Melchizedek, or Jesus,<sup>137</sup> or the variety of Gnostic demiurges called by this name,<sup>138</sup> can all become a 'youth'. If this approach is accepted, there is no need to separate between Metatron and the youth or to assume that this nexus is a later development that does not reflect an earlier tradition. In fact, one of the two texts adduced by Davila in order to demonstrate the youth's independence of Metatron actually makes significant reference to the spelling of the name of Metatron.<sup>139</sup>

As mentioned above, in the context of the two literatures that concern us here, the Heikhalot and the Talmudic literature, sonship does not appear explicitly in relation to Metatron. This point may be explained, as it has been by some scholars, through an attempt to distinguish those forms of

apotheosis from Christian parallels.<sup>140</sup> However this argument, deriving from an absence, although plausible, is not why I assume that a concept of sonship is somehow implied in the concept of Metatron. In a very important comment, Yehuda Liebes recently drew attention to a parallel between the way in which Enoch's transformation into Metatron is described in the Heikhalot literature, and the manner in which God's attitude to Abraham is depicted at the end of a version of *Sefer Yetzirah*.<sup>141</sup> Let me adduce a passage from this book found at the end of the short version, describing Abraham:

Since Abraham, our forefather came, and contemplated . . . then the Master of All revealed to him and He put him into His bosom, and kissed him upon his head and called him His beloved,<sup>142</sup> and put him as his son [*samo beno*], and signed a covenant with him and his seed<sup>143</sup> forever, 'and he believed in God and this has been counted as righteousness<sup>144, 145</sup> and he signed a covenant between the ten fingers of his feet, which is the flesh of the circumcision, and he signed a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands, and this is the tongue, and He bound the twenty-two letters on his tongue, and revealed to him their foundation.<sup>146</sup>

I understand this passage as depicting two types of relationships between God and Abraham: one of a father to his son, which is reflected by the covenant of circumcision, as a father is obliged to circumcise his son, and that between the teacher and his pupil, represented by the circumcision of the tongue and God's teaching Abraham the combinations of the letters as any teacher would in Ashkenazi examples in the Middle Ages. This is quite an extraordinary expression of intimacy that does not fit the more restrained style and mode of thinking that permeates the book. Liebes points out the following parallels between this passage and the description of Enoch's elevation in 3 *Enoch*:

1. The language of excessive love, which is not characteristic of rabbinic literature. In 3 *Enoch* the translation of the patriarch is described as motivated by 'the great love and great mercy, that He loved me and was fond of me, more than any of the sons of the height.'<sup>147</sup>
2. In both cases, the letters by which the world has been created have been given to the elected individual. In 3 *Enoch* it is written that 'He wrote with his finger, with a pen of flame upon the crown which was on my head, the letters by which heaven and earth were created, the letters by which seas and rivers were created, letters by which stars and the zodiac signs were created, etc.'<sup>148</sup>

To those two points I would like to add some other elements that are presumably shared by the ways in which the two figures have been

perceived: they were loved, elected and brought into the immediate presence of God; Abraham was put in the bosom of God and some form of elevation might be implied in this act, while Enoch was elevated. However, in the case of Abraham the language of love and intimacy culminates explicitly in a status of sonship attained through adoption; the Hebrew version is *ve-Samo Beno*: 'and He put him as His son'. This phrase has no correspondence in the Heikhalot passage about Enoch unless we assume the correspondence between *Na'ar* and a concept of sonship. The possible identification of the *Na'ar* as a son is important for our understanding of the Heikhalot literature and should be proven independently of the above parallel to the end of *Sefer Yetzirah*, which should serve only as an additional proof. By all accounts this text in *Sefer Yetzirah* is outstanding in its formulation: Abraham, a mortal, is adopted as a son of God. This succinct formulation remains all we can learn directly from the book about God's elevation of the 'author' to His bosom. Moreover, according to Jn 1.18, sonship is described expressly by using the image of bosom: 'No one has ever seen God; the Only-begotten, the one being in the bosom of the father, has revealed Him.'<sup>149</sup> It should be mentioned that the image of embracing one in the bosom has an interesting history from the theological point of view, as Boyarin recently remarked.<sup>150</sup>

According to a parallel to this text found at the end of the long version of *Sefer Yetzirah*, while the phrase '*ve-samo beno*' does not appear there, another interesting phrase is used: 'He called upon him [namely upon Abraham] the glory of God, as it is written'<sup>151</sup> "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you."<sup>152</sup> It is difficult to understand the precise nature of the glory conferred upon Abraham. It seems to reflect an earlier view that we learn from *Ben Sira* 44.19, while in *Acts* 7.2 the God of Glory appeared unto Abraham. In any case, to follow the longer passage quoted above, Abraham received two covenants that may be of some import for our discussion in this chapter. The covenant of circumcision is related to what I called the morphic aspect, related to the father while the covenant of the tongue is connected to language and the letters of the alphabet related to the teacher. However, as evident from a discussion elsewhere in the same book, the letters constitute a name – meaning a divine name – constituting a fairly nominal view.<sup>153</sup> The detailed discussion of the correspondences between limbs and letters is central to *Sefer Yetzirah*. Was this the covenant of *Kavod* that Abraham received according to the last statement? It should be mentioned that Abraham, like the righteous in the above quotations, is called by the divine name twice in *Genesis Rabba*.<sup>154</sup>

However, just as Abraham the beloved figure is referred to as a son, I wonder if the language of 'excessive love' in connection with Enoch does not imply some form of sonship. In a study of the role played by sons in the

economy of the Hebrew Bible in comparison to Christianity, Jon Levenson devotes a chapter to Joseph in which he describes the development in the biblical narrative as 'The Beloved Son as Ruler and Servant',<sup>155</sup> justifying the legitimacy of the younger over the older brothers. I propose to understand, in a manner suggested by Gary Anderson, Enoch's elevation as a technique for legitimizing the mortal's ascent on high as reward for his righteousness. After all, much of the way in which Joseph is conceived in rabbinic literature relates to his righteousness. In both cases, the 'excessive love' of God is expressed towards the older figure through the gift of a special gown.<sup>156</sup> Last but not least, in the late antiquity book *Joseph and Asenath*, the latter sees an angel similar to Joseph that is described in terms quite reminiscent of the archangel.<sup>157</sup>

In fact, we have here two forms of synchronicity: in 3 *Enoch* there are at least two thrones, while in *Sefer Yetzirah* the bosom of God serves as some form of throne, reminiscent of images adduced by Martin Hengel.<sup>158</sup> It seems that the first throne is much more concerned with the idea of the mystic as a cosmokrator, while the sitting in the bosom in the second reflects an intimacy with the divine.<sup>159</sup>

Let me turn to an expression found in 3 *Enoch*: Enoch was exalted to a position higher than the 'sons of the height' – a phrase that is a translation of the Hebrew *Benei marom*.<sup>160</sup> There is nothing particularly special in this expression, which means 'those who are found in heaven' or 'members of the realm of the height' although the use of the Hebrew *Benei* may imply that Enoch is higher than the other 'sons', namely angels, on high. Since these angels are described as 'sons', metaphorical as the usage may be, perhaps some form of sonship in the singular also underlies this comparison. Elsewhere in the same book Metatron is described as one of the 'sons of the height'.<sup>161</sup> In any case, in Alexander's translation Enoch/Metatron describes his ascent as follows: 'The Lord, blessed be He, took me in partnership in the heights, so that I became a prince amid the ministering angels.'<sup>162</sup> The Hebrew is less clear: '*Zivgani haba'h ba-marom le-sar u-le-naggid*.' It has a strong parallel in the words of God immediately afterwards, where it is said that He told the angels:<sup>163</sup>

'I took more delight in this one'<sup>164</sup> than in all of you, so that he shall be prince and ruler over you in the heavenly heights.' Immediately they went forth toward me and prostrated themselves before me . . . And because I was the smallest among them [*qaṭan be-tokham*] and a youth amongst them with respects to days, months and years, therefore they called me youth [*na'ar*].<sup>165</sup>

Let me start by remarking that *qaṭan* and *na'ar* are two attributes that may be understood as separate aspects. Both are important: the latter is described as

the reason why Enoch was designated on high as *na'ar*. The former too has the same connotation: after all, Metatron has been called in the same book 'YHWH Qaṭan'.<sup>166</sup> May we, nevertheless, surmise that the small YHWH corresponds to the divine name while *na'ar* corresponds to the 70 names? After all, according to this book it is the angels who are described as calling him *Na'ar*<sup>167</sup> while God refers to him as both *Na'ar* and YHWH Qaṭan.<sup>168</sup> We may, in my opinion, distinguish between three forms of changes that Enoch underwent when he was elevated. First, the change from small to great, represented by the term *qaṭan*, namely a nominal change, and the subsequent enhancement of Enoch's body to a remarkable size similar to that in *Shi'ur Qomah*, namely a morphic change. Finally, the change from youth to the status of a ruler, when the youngest becomes the wisest and most important among the angels, namely the oldest, according to the discussion from *Yebbamot* analyzed above in the context of the verb from Ps. 37. This is the third change, the functional one. Or, from another perspective: in comparison to the Great YHWH, namely God, Metatron is nevertheless small, while in comparison to the angels, Metatron is young.<sup>169</sup> The two perspectives entail a similarity and a difference that are reflected by the two types of designation. However it should also be pointed out that, as I shall attempt to show immediately below, the term 'youth' is related to some form of sonship.

Why did Enoch merit the translation into an angelic figure? The answer is given immediately afterwards:

I took from them the most selected of them, he [Enoch] that weighs all of them in faith [*'emunah*], righteousness [*Tzedaqah*] and meritorious deeds, and I took my compensation [*sekhari*] from the world under all heavens.<sup>170</sup>

The themes of faith and righteousness are quite explicit and they correspond exactly to two key words in the verse in Gen. 15.6 concerning Abraham: 'and he believed in God and this has been counted as righteousness', cited in the above passage from the end of *Sefer Yetzirah*. However, this additional correspondence between the Heikhalot text and Abraham's image in *Sefer Yetzirah* is further reflected in the Talmudic passage dealing with the young and old; the transition from youth to old age in the rabbinic text should be understood by paying special attention to the fuller context of the verse from Ps. 37:

18. The Lord knows the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be forever.

19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20. But the wicked shall perish; the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the meadows; they shall be consumed; they shall pass away like smoke.

21. The wicked borrows, and does not pay back; but the righteous man gives with good loving kindness.<sup>171</sup>

22. For those blessed by him shall inherit the earth; and those cursed by him shall be cut off.

23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delights in his way.<sup>172</sup>

24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

25. I have been young, and I am now old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26. He lends generously at all times; and his seed is blessed.

27. Depart from evil, and do good; and you shall abide for ever.

28. For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake his pious ones; they are preserved for ever; but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it for ever.

30. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.

This apotheosis of righteousness, to be sure, originally unrelated to the biblical narrative about Enoch, has elements that appear important for understanding both the way in which Enoch behaves as a mortal, and the way that Metatron acts as an angel who is at once wise and serves as a judge. Therefore, righteousness is a clue to understanding the discussions both in *3 Enoch* and in the short passage from *Yebbamot*. It may also help us to better understand the *Sefer Yetzirah* emphasis on the seed of the righteous Abraham. I assume that those verses were the background to the three texts we deal with: the Heikhalot passage, *Sefer Yetzirah* and the excerpt from *Yebbamot*.

This analysis is consistent with the Talmudic discussion brought above in the name of the same R. Shmuel ben Nahmani in BT *Babba' Batra'*, about the righteous that receives the divine name. If correct, the above analysis demonstrates the need to read some of these difficult texts against the more complex background of the contemporaneous literature, rather than shy away from making use of different literary genres. Yet, what seems to be of special importance is the difficulty of understanding some of the rabbinic discussions that do not have parallels in Heikhalot literature. One may argue that the Heikhalot literature misrepresents the figure of Enoch by exploiting the righteousness that is found in earlier sources even when there

is no specific name mentioned, as in the Psalms, BT *Babba' Batra'* and in *Yebbamot*. It could be claimed that such a synthetic reading attempts to make sense out of disparate material that was never connected. On such a view, the Heikhalot material would be just a concocted discourse, as suggested by E.E. Urbach.<sup>173</sup> However this theory, even if true at times, does not hold water in our case, since many of the descriptions of Enoch as the righteous who ascended on high are found in the pseudepigraphic corpora written before the rabbinic literature.

Let us return to another aspect of 3 *Enoch*: the patriarch describes his apotheosis to the visitor that has ascended on high, R. Ishmael, by claiming that God has appointed him over the angels as prince and ruler through use of the verb *ziuweganiy*, as found in some manuscripts. It is difficult to find a good translation for this term, and I believe that P. Alexander has suggested a very helpful solution when he resorted to the syntagm 'he took me into partnership'.<sup>174</sup> Just as God was the ruler before Enoch's apotheosis so is He afterwards, but now He has a partner. To an extent, this partner is described as the best of humanity and as God's compensation. In a way it represents a double move: Enoch is rewarded for his righteousness by being raised on high, while God is also rewarded, by having on high the man who outweighed in his righteousness the entire human race, which will be destroyed by the flood.

The verb under scrutiny relates in most cases to a couple, and to finding an appropriate match or partner, sexual or otherwise. In other cases, it implies some element of equality. While this verb appears plenty of times in rabbinic literature, it is rare in the Heikhalot literature though it does appear there in one interesting context. In one of the versions of the story of the Ten Martyrs, the angel Gabriel serves as the prototype for the beauty of R. Ishmael, and also comes to guide him on his ascent on high.<sup>175</sup> As Metatron serves these purposes in the other versions of this story, the two angels apparently share the same beauty. The angel that embodies himself in order to serve as the morphic, facial prototype of Ishmael is described as accompanying this Rabbi – whose name is quite theophoric – in the following manner '*nizdawweg lo Gabriel ke-she-'alah le-raiy'a*'.<sup>176</sup> 'Gabriel associated himself to him when he ascended to the firmament.' Though no fatherhood is assumed, despite the reproduction of the face and its beauty in the person of Ishmael as well as the use Gabriel makes immediately after the above sentence of the formula recurring in 3 *Enoch*, 'Ishmael my son', the similarity between the ascendant and the guide is described by the same root *ZWG* which also describes the similarity between God and Enoch. Therefore, Ishmael has been created in the image of Gabriel/Metatron, the latter accompanies him on his way in heaven, and this company is designated by the verb *ZWG*. En passant, according to one passage in

*Merkavah Rabbah*, the angel Zebudi'el tells R. Ishmael that his power comes from his 'father in heaven'.<sup>177</sup> Though this may be just a metaphor, I propose to retain the possibility that it may reflect a non-metaphorical description of the relationship between the two beings. Last but not least, there is a pattern shared by both Enoch and Ishmael whereby they are both described as the seventh in a certain line.<sup>178</sup>

To return to the relationship between Enoch and God: Enoch too has been given many divine qualities, and his stay on high together with God has also been described by resorting to the very same verb. Does this imply that a certain type of fatherhood, more evident in the case of Ishmael and Gabriel/Metatron, is also relevant for the affinity between God and Enoch? We shall return to this issue in a while.

In another discussion, preserved in one of the versions of 3 *Enoch*, there is a further instance where the verb *nizdawweg* occurs, again in the context of God. This time it refers to the presence of God together with Moses.<sup>179</sup> The verb stands for the association of the divinity with a mortal, even if the mortal does not deserve such.

The role played by the angel Gabriel/Metatron in the conception of Ishmael, someone who will ascend or is destined to ascend on high, is reminiscent of a passage found in the Gnostic writing entitled *Pistis Sophia*, in which Jesus describes himself as taking the form of this angel in order to evade the archons, and then being instrumental in inseminating Elisabeth, John the Baptist's mother, with the soul of Elijah and an emanation from the Little Iao. The occurrence of these two figures together will concern us more in the next chapter. Here I would like to draw attention to the following passage found in this context:

Rejoice now and be glad, because when I entered the world I brought the twelve powers with me, as I told you from the beginning, which I took from the twelve saviours of the Treasury of Light, according to the command of the First Mystery. These now I cast into the wombs of your mothers when I came into the world, and it is these, which are in your bodies today. For these powers have been given to you above the whole world, for you are those who are able to save the whole world, so that you should be able to withstand the threat of the archons of the world, and the sufferings of the world and their dangers, and all their persecutions which the archons of the height will bring upon you. For I have said to you many times that the power, which is within you I have brought from the twelve saviours, which are in the Treasury of Light. For this reason I have indeed said to you from the beginning that you are not from the world; I also am not from

it. For all men who are in the world have received souls from [the power] of the archons of the aeons. The power, however, which is in you, is from me but your souls belong to the height. I have brought twelve powers of the twelve saviours of the Treasury of the Light, taking them from the part of my power, which I received at first. And when I entered the world I came to the midst of the archons of the sphere, and I took the likeness of Gabriel, the Angel of the aeons, and the archers of the aeons did not recognize me.<sup>180</sup>

The issue of insemination is important both in this passage and in the earlier passages related to Gabriel and Ishmael. In both cases, the problem of maleficent powers is involved. R. Ishmael will die together with other nine sages because of the persecution of the Romans, and this is a major theme in a literary composition related to the Heikhalot literature, the Ten Martyrs, and in the poetic composition entitled '*Eleh 'Ezkerah*. As we shall see in the analysis of the context of this passage in the next chapter, Jesus inseminates John's mother, and as we know both John and Ishmael were decapitated. The Jewish influence on the *Pistis Sophia* passage is obvious given the reference to the Little Iao and Gabriel in this passage, as pointed out by various scholars.<sup>181</sup> In some cases other expressions like Great Yao,<sup>182</sup> the little Sabbaoth<sup>183</sup> and Great Sabbaoth<sup>184</sup> appear in this book. Moreover, in one instance Jesus and his disciples pray by turning to the four corners of the world while pronouncing the name YAO, a practice that is reminiscent of the sealing of the extremities of the universe by the different combinations of the letters YAW in *Sefer Yetzirah*.<sup>185</sup> In any case, quotations of verses from the book of Psalms are massive and debates about the meaning of some of their verses reflect earlier Jewish sources. The assumption that there is a Great and a Lesser Yao are paralleled by references to the Great and Lesser Adonay, worshiped by Jews.<sup>186</sup>

The similarities between the two treatments: the Heikhalot one and the Gnostic one, are quite evident. This does not mean that the Heikhalot text and the literature connected to it have taken their views from the *Pistis Sophia*, but it seems plausible that a common matrix existed and informed the two treatments. This is clearly the case when Gabriel announces to Miriam the descent of the Holy Spirit and the birth of Jesus. However, it seems that in the Greek Bible the angel's role is more that of an announcer and that he is less involved in the act of insemination itself. In *Pistis Sophia*, Jesus also speaks about the way in which Mary has been inseminated, again resorting to the disguise of Gabriel.<sup>187</sup> However, Odeberg and subsequently Fossum connect this passage and the one immediately following it – which I shall discuss in the next chapter – to some form of cyclic manifestation of the

divinity in the bodies of prophets, a view found in some Jewish–Christians circles and especially in the Pseudo–Clementine *Recognitions*.<sup>188</sup> It is interesting to point out that R. Ishmael, together with the other sages who died as martyrs, was understood by many Kabbalists to be the transmigration of Joseph's brethren who returned to this world in order to suffer and thus expiate their ancient sin against their brother.<sup>189</sup>

Last but not least in this context, in a Midrashic series of discussions found in the *Pistis Sophia*, concerning the figures of truth, righteousness, mercy, and peace in Ps. 85.11, understood as hypostases, Jesus is identified as the spirit of righteousness descended here below.<sup>190</sup> As we know, John the Baptist was described as righteous by Josephus Flavius and in the Greek Bible.<sup>191</sup> Interestingly enough, the connection between Iao and insemination found in the above passage is paralleled by an Ophitic tradition in which the mysteries of Son and Father are ascribed to Iao: 'And Thou, archon of the hidden mysteries of Son and Father, who shineth by night, through Iao, second and first, lord of death.'<sup>192</sup> Last but not least in this context, Gershom Scholem pointed out the affinity between the theme of the cosmic veil in *Pistis Sophia* and the view of the curtain found in 3 *Enoch*.<sup>193</sup>

Let me address another discussion related to the *Na'ar*, originating in an important Genizah text belonging to the Heikhalot literature. There a lengthy description of the similarities between the appearance of God and that of the youth is found, a part of which states:

and his adornment is like the adornment of his Formator, ZHWBDYH is his name. And behold he takes [you] by your hand, and seats<sup>194</sup> you on his bosom.<sup>195</sup> It is not just that you entered with his leave; but he has seated others on the seat that is prepared be[fore the throne of] glory.<sup>196</sup>

I am concerned here with the name attributed to the 'youth': ZHWBDYH, which has been called more recently a *nomen barbarum*.<sup>197</sup> However, I am not so certain that this name is meaningless. It is evident that it is comprised of two units: the four consonants of the Tetragrammaton, which represent the similarity between the youth and God, and the remaining consonants ZBD. This make-up holds for another 'meaningless' name like ZBWDY'L, which emerges from a different type of theophorism.<sup>198</sup> No doubt the various theophoric combinations related to the root ZBD did not receive due attention in the scholarly discussions of the Heikhalot literature. So, for example, as mentioned above, one of its forms was conceived of as a *nomen barbarum*, while Scholem argued that this name is no more than an error for the name Zohahari'el.<sup>199</sup> It should be mentioned that in another case, the form ZHWBDYH is ascribed straightforwardly to Metatron<sup>200</sup> while the

Prince of the Torah is referred to by the names 'ZBWDH'Y and ZHWBDY'L.<sup>201</sup> In a text belonging to the *Shi'ur Qomah* literature it is said: 'And when the Holy One, blessed be he, calls the Youth, thus does he call him: ZHBDY', ZHWBD, ZHWBD.'<sup>202</sup> This form is conceived to be a name and immediately afterwards the author brings a series of nicknames, *kinnu'i*. As one of the names of Metatron, the form ZBWDY'L appears in *Merkavah Rabbah* as well as in other treatises,<sup>203</sup> and in the magical treatise known as the *Sword of Moses*,<sup>204</sup> while the same name appears in the *Heikhalot Rabbati* as one of the two names or paroles that someone shows when he ascends on high.<sup>205</sup> In the latter text the form 'ZBYHD'YY is also found.<sup>206</sup> As the first name of the angels that are appointed upon a ladder that reaches from Jerusalem to Zebul, the form *Zevad'el* appears.<sup>207</sup> This is the context in which we must interpret the affinity between the verse from Gen. 30.20 and the relevant passage of the *Heikhalot* literature.

The recurrence of the root ZBD in so many parts of the *Heikhalot* literature and in so many different theophoric forms demonstrates that we are dealing with an important issue related quite consistently to the *Na'ar* and, in my opinion, in several cases more specifically to Metatron. As the root ZBD occurs in several theophoric names in this literature, it is certainly not an accidental result of a scribal error. The noun *ZeBeD* and the root that generated it (unlike the proper nouns which are presumably related to the verb) is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible, and it is therefore difficult to be certain regarding its meaning.<sup>208</sup> However, it appears in a context that is quite relevant, in Leah's words following the birth of Zebulun:

19 And Leah conceived again, and bore Jacob the sixth son.

20 And Leah said: 'God has endowed me [*zevadaniy*] with a good dowry [*zeved tov*];<sup>209</sup> now will my husband dwell with me, [*yizblenyi*] because I have born him six sons.' And she called his name Zebulun.

The correspondence between the root ZBD and son in the verse is quite evident, and it is related to some form of a divine act with a genetic aspect: God's giving Leah a son. In some commentaries on this passage the form *Yizblenyi*, 'he will dwell with me', is described as related to the term Zebul, one of the names of the seven supernal heavens.<sup>210</sup> According to one relatively late text close to the *Heikhalot* literature, it is possible to interpret the name of a Great Angel dwelling in the Zebul as Metatron.<sup>211</sup>

In many other biblical verses, the root appears as a proper name but what seems to be interesting for my point here is the theophoric nature of some of those biblical usages. Thus the form *Zavdi'el*, seen above in the *Heikhalot* literature, appears in the Bible<sup>212</sup> while *Yozavad*,<sup>213</sup> another theophoric name, is documented much more. So it is the case with

Zabadyah<sup>214</sup> and Zevadiyahu,<sup>215</sup> and even Yehozavad.<sup>216</sup> In the onomastic of the end of the second temple and in the early rabbinic literature, proper names stemming from this root recur many times, including, for example, the name Zebdee, the father of the apostle John.<sup>217</sup>

Thus, given the importance of the variants of theophorism related to this root in the Bible and in the *Heikhalot* literature, we may suggest the following solution for the use of this root: the angelic and sometimes even divine names relate to theophoric forms, *YHW*, *YHWH* and 'El, plus ZBD, and the latter form may be understood as dealing with a son as a present. In a text close to the *Heikhalot* literature, the syntagm '*Zevad Zohar*' appears as part of a longer list of the gifts that God gives to the righteous, which includes inter alia the seat of glory or his mantle.<sup>218</sup> Therefore the description of the youth as *ZHYBDYH* is just one of the theophoric constructions built upon this root and the letters of the Tetragrammaton. If this reading is accepted, and I see no better possible way to make sense of this name, the youth in the above passage is described in a manner reminiscent of *YHWH Qatan*: a quality plus the divine name. This interpretation may point to the existence of a view in this literature that understands the youth as a son related to God and having a theophoric name.<sup>219</sup> Or, to put it in other words, ZBD plus a divine name is reminiscent of the theophoric form of the biblical *Benayahu*, the son of *YHW*. With the assumption that ZBD plus *YHW* is indeed a meaningful unit in the *Heikhalot*, it is possible to suggest it as filling the form *HWBDYH* in a Genizah fragment, which deals with the youth.<sup>220</sup>

If the combination of consonants of the name for the youth, *ZBDYHW*, is indeed to be understood as related to the idea of son, we have here another parallel between Enoch as *na'ar* of the *Heikhalot* and Abraham in *Sefer Yetzirah*: both are, in different ways, Sons of God. It should be mentioned that in one instance at least, the form ZBWDY'L is followed by the syntagm '*YHWH 'Elohei Israel*' which points to the theophoric name as referring to God.<sup>221</sup>

This is as far as we may go in describing the relationship between the two patriarchs on the basis of the *Heikhalot* texts. However, a form of partnership is somehow reflected also between Abraham and God in *Sefer Yetzirah*. The patriarch has been described in this book as doing exactly what God did when He created the world, namely combining letters, and in his case it also worked, '*altah be-yado*'.<sup>222</sup> Whether this phrase means the creation of the world or only of a Golem, as some interpreters understood it, or of both, is less relevant for our discussion. As mentioned above, according to the *Sanhedrin* passage the righteous could create a world. In any case, in some rabbinic statements Abraham is described by resorting to the term *shuttaf*, or partner of God,<sup>223</sup> in a manner similar to the way the righteous are

described according to another rabbinic position.<sup>224</sup> This concept originates much earlier and is found in the context of Moses, who was designated by Philo as *koinonos*.<sup>225</sup> While Enoch is portrayed more as a case of adaptation to God's physical features Abraham's activity in *Sefer Yetzirah* is closer to an imitation of God's operations.

The parallel between the two 'righteous' patriarchs, Abraham and Enoch, may indicate that a common denominator between them, namely sonship as found in *Sefer Yetzirah*, is hidden in the Heikhalot literature insofar as Enoch/Metatron is concerned. This occultation notwithstanding, several scholars have pointed out that the Metatron-elevated status in 3 *Enoch* depends on the figure of the Son of Man,<sup>226</sup> even without being aware of the parallel to the image of Abraham in *Sefer Yetzirah* or of my proposal for decoding the meaning of *ZHWBDYH* as the Tetragrammaton and some form of son as a gift given by God; we shall return to the proposals of two additional scholars below. It should be noted that despite the central role of theophoric constructs based on *ZBD* in the Heikhalot literature, this name disappeared in later forms of Jewish mysticism.<sup>227</sup> In this context allow me to further note the fact that while the various theophoric forms related to *ZBD* appear in various treatises belonging to Heikhalot literature, they do not appear in the so-called Hebrew book of *Enoch*. Yet only in this book do we have a description of the ascent of Enoch and his transformation into Metatron. Are these two absences not only complementary but also significant? Given the incomplete understanding we have of the deeper structures of thought found in this literature, it is hard to provide a definitive answer, but tentatively I would say that they represent two different hints at the issue of sonship.

Before leaving this topic I would like to draw attention to an interesting parallel between the above passage from *Sefer Yetzirah* and a passage from the *Testament of Abraham*. At the end of the pseudepigraphic book in its longer Greek version, there appears the following passage that describes God's voice speaking to the angels:

Take therefore my friend Abraham into Paradise, where are the tabernacles of my righteous ones, and the abodes of my saints Isaac and Jacob in his bosom,<sup>228</sup> where there is no trouble, nor grief, nor sighing, but peace and rejoicing and life unending.<sup>229</sup>

Here the bosom of God is found together with the description of Abraham as the friend of God. It seems therefore that righteousness is also shared by a common source of these two texts. Thus, we have here in a relatively early text evidence of some form of elevation of Abraham. It should be mentioned that this *Testament* contains descriptions that are significant parallels to Enochic literature, as pointed out insightfully by Deutsch.<sup>230</sup>

The discussion of the passage from *Sefer Yetzirah* is intended to show that it is not only in the inter-testamental pseudepigraphical literature that a vision of sonship is found, but also in a book that had been accepted, in fact canonized, in many Jewish circles toward the end of the first millennium CE. However, despite the immense impact of *Sefer Yetzirah* on medieval Jewish mysticism, let me point out that the traces of the above passage in medieval literatures were relatively modest. None of the discussions of sonship to be discussed in the chapters below seem to emerge from this passage in a significant manner. Thus, it is not from this book that Enoch/Metatron turns out to be described as a son, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In this context I would further like to draw attention to the conclusion that Deutsch drew from a comparison between Metatron and a Gnostic source, *The Tripartite Treatise*, pars 86–7. He argues that by being not only the angel or Prince of the Face, but actually the very face of God, Metatron is similar to the countenance of God, which is identical to the son according to this Gnostic treatise.<sup>231</sup>

Furthermore, in an article devoted to the exaltation of Adam and the protest of the angels against his creation, Gary Anderson reached the conclusion that in 3 *Enoch*'s episode dealing with the protest of the angels against Enoch's elevation on high, there is a background of what he calls 'the elected son', who he straightforwardly relates to Enoch.<sup>232</sup> Though he does not deal with the occurrence of the term 'son' he assumes that a certain almost psychological 'complex' is found beyond the various versions of the angels' protests against the special status of some mortals.

All of the above discussions are independent of a passage from 3 *Enoch* which has not drawn the due attention of scholars but is of utmost importance for the thesis of this book. In several manuscript versions of this book God describes the transformation of Enoch/Metatron in the following terms:

And I put upon him my honor, my majesty and the splendor of my glory<sup>233</sup> that is upon my Throne of Glory. I called him lesser *YHWH*, the Prince of Presence, the knower of Secrets. For every secret did I reveal to him as a father and all the mysteries declared I unto him in uprightness . . . Seventy names did I take from [my] names and called him by them to enhance his glory.<sup>234</sup>

Let me first mention that the glory that is conferred upon Enoch is reminiscent of the glory accorded to Abraham in one of the versions of the end of *Sefer Yetzirah* adduced above. While this version is found in four manuscripts, others employ instead of *ke-'av*, as a father, *be-'ahavah*, in love, or *ke-'ahuv*, like a beloved.<sup>235</sup> The version 'in love' has some advantages and

parallels the phrase 'in uprightness'. Nevertheless, there can be only little doubt that the version translated above has quite a significant parallel in another, similar discussion in the same book. R. Ishmael describes the way in which Metatron taught him as follows:

He showed it to me pointing out with his fingers<sup>236</sup> like a father who teaches his son<sup>237</sup> the letters of Torah.<sup>238</sup>

As mentioned above, the relationship between Metatron and R. Ishmael is not merely that of teacher and disciple, but rather involves some form of fatherhood, since R. Ishmael was conceived by his mother while looking at the countenance of the embodied Metatron. Thus, we have a metaphor that hints at much more beneath its surface. Therefore *ke-'av*, as a father, is not just a form of speech, or a metaphor for intimacy, but involves a much stronger form of concrete relationship. I assume that this is also the case with the use of the same expression in *3 En.* 48C.7. This understanding of Enoch as son parallels the way in which Abraham is presented in the passage from *Sefer Yetzirah* adduced above.

I would like to adduce a passage in which the youth and the son are referred to by identical terms in relation to a father. Phillip Alexander drew attention to some similarities between a description of the soul's ascent found in the Gnostic sect of the Ophites according to Origen's *Contra Celsum*, 6.27, and the description of the ascent found in *Heikhalot Rabbati*.<sup>239</sup> In addition to the similarities he pointed out, we may mention the possible implication of the following passage: 'he who impresses the seal is called father, and he who is sealed is called young man and son.'<sup>240</sup> Here the son is described as receiving a seal, *sphragis*, as a youth. As we have seen above, the stamp describing the relationship between the father and the son Jesus is part of a morphic similarity according to the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, discussed in the Introduction and several other passages adduced there as well as in the *Heikhalot* literature. In this context, the biblical verse related to the angel's command to Abraham to desist from the sacrifice of Isaac should be mentioned. The angel refers to Abraham's son as *ha-na'ar*.<sup>241</sup> Such a reference implies that in certain situations, even in the presence of the father, a son can be described as 'the youth'. If this suggestion can be substantiated by additional proofs, it may show that the Ophitic passage has some additional biblical context.

This description is part of an ascent narrative. Though the identity of the father and youth is not entirely clear,<sup>242</sup> it seems to me plausible to identify the son receiving the seal with the youth. Moreover, given the fact that in the above cases in the *Heikhalot* literature, especially in *3 Enoch*, 'the youth' is a term that is sometimes applied after Enoch ascends on high and receives the names – a parallel to the seals – the application of the term

youth may relate to some form of rebirth after a transformation. This transformation may be related to an unction that is mentioned immediately afterward in the same chapter: 'I have been anointed with white ointment from the tree of life.' Interestingly enough, unction is mentioned in the description of the extraction of Enoch from his material body in *2 Enoch*, an issue that will be dealt with in Chapter 3.<sup>243</sup>

As part of the ascent and at its arrival to the realm of the seven archons, the soul exclaims:

I salute the one-formed king, the bond of blindness, complete oblivion, the first power, preserved by the spirit of providence and by wisdom, from whom I am sent forth pure, being already part of the light of the son and of the father: grace be with me; yea, O father, let it be with me.<sup>244</sup>

This sense of integration into a realm in which the son is already found is again reminiscent of the apotheosis of Enoch in the Slavonic book *2 En.* 22.8–10 where he becomes one of the glorious. Last but not least, in an important parallel adduced by Odeberg to *3 Enoch's* discussions of the youth and found in Mandaic material, the youth is also described as the 'son of the Splendors', *Bar Zivaya*, which is identical in some sources to the righteous.<sup>245</sup> The numerous instances in which a hypostatic angelic entity is designated as a youth points to a certain office rather than just ad hoc descriptions of disparate figures. Moreover, as we shall see below in the Appendix, a late eleventh-century Byzantine Jewish text uses a parable of a father and three sons with Enoch as the youngest among them, while the father according to this discussion is no other than God.<sup>246</sup>

Last but not least in this context, G.G. Stroumsa has pointed out a similarity between the view of Metatron as both youth and old, and Jesus.<sup>247</sup> He also draws attention to a parallel between the six letters of the name of Jesus and Metatron<sup>248</sup> and between the concept of son and servant.<sup>249</sup>

Those various affinities, as well as the speculation of the modern scholars mentioned above, may point to the possibility that Metatron too has been conceived of as an adopted Son of God. Although not seated at the right side of God, as Jesus was imagined, Metatron is given a status that is quite unique, and the strong affinity between his status and that of God, which generated the theological mistake of Aḥer, reflects this exalted mode of existence. Accordingly the mistake of Aḥer consists not in the very assumption of two powers on high but in the separation he assumed or provoked, of the intimate affinity between the two powers on high. While the hierarchy between God and Metatron is clear, according to the manner in which I understand the late antiquity sources, Aḥer's vision of their equality and separation may erroneously induce an image of two

independent authorities contrary to the more accepted view of their intimate connection.<sup>250</sup> If I am correct insofar as the affinity between Metatron and the concept of sonship, then Aḥer's separation on high constitutes a rift between the supernal son and the father, and the creation of an opposition between the two. The humiliation of Metatron is a punishment that does not, however, diminish his status in a dramatic manner, and to this issue we shall revert in the Concluding Remarks. A father's punishment of his son does not destroy the filial organic relationship.

### 6. On sonship in rabbinic sources

Rabbinic Judaism, following the Hebrew Bible, conceived of the entire Jewish people as being the Sons of God, either in a static manner, or in a dynamic one. This means that either the covenant automatically qualifies the Jews as sons, or their performing the will of God does. This is well known from a variety of early rabbinic sources, and we shall return to this issue in the Concluding Remarks. Here I am more concerned with instances in which individuals have been addressed in this literature as sons of God. One of the earliest attempts to describe the relationship between son and father is attributed to one of the most important early rabbinic figures, R. Shimeon bar Yoḥai.<sup>251</sup> Though preserved in a late Midrash, the Yemenite *Midrash ha-Gadol*, scholars view the following statement as reflecting an early position:

R. Shimeon ben Yoḥai said: So did the Old Man<sup>252</sup> say to Abraham: Your son that you want to sacrifice resembles you and he was created in your icon, and you stick a knife in him?<sup>253</sup> Is there a man who sticks the knife in himself?<sup>254</sup>

This argument is part of an attempt to convince Abraham to desist from his decision to comply with the divine revelation to sacrifice Isaac. The argument is based on similarity, or some form of isomorphism, which at the end of the quotation culminates in a form of identity; the expression used by the Midrash is '*be-'atzmo*'.<sup>255</sup> Satan understands the sacrifice of one's son as a form of suicide. Thus a strong type of external, morphic affinity that amounts to identification is assumed. Nothing here is related to a nominal linkage between the father and son beyond the regular assumption that Isaac is called the son of Abraham. However this type of affinity may reflect, as Yair Lorberbaum points out, the similarity between man and God, in whose image he was created; the same verb *BR*' occurs in both cases, which is uncommon in order to describe the birth of a son from his father.

In the course of the ascent of and increasing cruciality of sonship in Christianity, it seems that Jewish authors attenuated and sometimes even

obliterated the role of sons as hypostatic mediators, and even criticized such a view. This is why the analyses above had to utilize hints rather than more substantial expressions. Nevertheless, some of the earlier traditions apparently survived in traditional Jewish writings. For example, in the Aramaic translation of Ps. 80.16, the Hebrew word *Ben*, son, is translated as the King Messiah. Even more important is the passage from the Palestinian Talmud, cited in the name of R. Abbahu, an important rabbinic master active in Caesarea who was in contact with Christian thinkers, according to which: 'If a man say: 'I am God' he lies. 'I am the Son of Man' he will finally regret it. 'I ascend to heaven' he will not be able to fulfill it.'<sup>256</sup>

There is a clear threefold hierarchy of deception: first the claim to be God, then the claim to be His son described as the Son of Man, some form of lower, though presumably permanent associate to God, and last the claim that someone can ascend, perhaps temporarily to heaven. Scholars have recognized this statement as a polemic against Christianity.<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, it demonstrates that in some Jewish circles in the rabbinic period, the appellation Son of Man was recognized as a Messianic title. It should be mentioned that the title Son of God is not mentioned in this critique and I assume that this is not an accident. Let me turn to an even more seminal discussion that includes several references related to a Son of God, found in a relatively late Midrash, which have escaped many scholarly discussions of either the Son of Man or Son of God in Christianity:

'I shall tell the decree [of the Lord]<sup>258</sup> – It is told in the text of the Torah and in that of the prophets and in the hagiography: In the text of the Torah: 'Israel, My firstborn son'.<sup>259</sup> In the text of prophets: 'behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, elevated to the heights'<sup>260</sup> and what is written afterwards: 'Here is my servant I shall uphold.'<sup>261</sup> In Hagiography: 'The Lord said to my master.'<sup>262</sup> 'The Lord said to me: You are My son.'<sup>263</sup> And another verse says: '[I saw one like the son of man] coming with the clouds of heaven.'<sup>264</sup> 'The Lord said to me: "You are My son." . . . 'You are My son': From here there is an answer to those who say that [He] has a son. But you answer to them: 'It is not said 'I have a son' but: 'You are My son'. It is like a servant that his master wants to make him a pleasure and tells him: 'I like you like my son'<sup>265</sup> R. Huna said: 'Suffering has been divided in three parts: One [third] was taken by the forefathers of the world and all the generations. One [third] was taken by the generation of destruction, and one [third] the generation of the Messiah. And when his time will come the Holy One, blessed be He, says: "I should create him as a new

creature.”’ And thus he says: ‘I have today created you.’<sup>266</sup> In that hour He created him.<sup>267</sup>

This passage represents an unusual accumulation of verses that played a central role in early Christology. In a way, the anonymous homilist has brought them together in order to solve all the ‘theological’ problems in one move. The issues of the Son of Man in the book of Daniel, the servant of the Lord in Isaiah, and even more so sonship in Ps. 2, become either metaphorical or futurist. In the first case, the son is not a genetic being but the upgrading of a servant that is treated as if he is a son, a sort of adoption, while in the future sonship does not mean a genetic affinity to the father, or a matter of incarnation, but rather his creation as a Messiah in the moment of redemption in order to undo his suffering. Nonetheless, the son in Ps. 2 is understood both as a Messianic figure<sup>268</sup> and as a suffering servant. However, if in the Christological interpretation the servant of Isaiah was elevated to the rank of a genetic son, in the Midrashic interpretation the biblical son in the Psalm is reduced to a servant. Nonetheless, in both cases they constitute eschatological figures. *Ha-Yom*, ‘Today’, a term that in the Bible deals with the past or the present of the author, is interpreted eschatologically and the verb *Yilidtikha*, which has a strong genetic valence, is reinterpreted in the Midrash rather artificially as if dealing with a new creation. Last but not least, again as part of an anti-Christian effort to remove the Christological understanding of the Scripture, the son in the Psalm is associated with Israel as a corporate personality by quoting Exod. 4.22.

In some rabbinic discussions God refers to select individuals as his son/s, and the expression does not draw any form of hesitation. The best known episode in this context is the famous debate known as the oven of ‘Akna’y, which ends with the victory of the Rabbis who are unwilling to accept the authority of the divine voice that corroborates the position of an exceptional Rabbi, R. Eliezer. God laughs and exclaims twice: ‘My sons, defeated Me!’<sup>269</sup> This episode attracted much attention in scholarship and is conceived of as a formative moment in the history of Rabbinism, as it canonized the independence of a majority constituted by rabbinic scholars in making halakhic decisions, even against the will of God as expressed by the so-called ‘daughter of voice’.<sup>270</sup> Though the Rabbis do not accept the intervention of the divine voice, they are apparently convinced by the fact that God Himself confesses His defeat. Those Rabbis who oppose the role played by the divine voice nevertheless resort to it in order to validate their claim. From the perspective of our specific discussion, it is important to point out that given the emphasis on the ‘Sons’ of God, the defeat is less a defeat than a family affair in which the son delights the father, in a manner that is seen more frequently in late Hasidism.<sup>271</sup>

For example, R. Ḥanina ben Dosa’, a first-century Galilean charismatic figure, whose descriptions and ideas will preoccupy us very much in this book, is described by a divine voice as ‘My son’ in a passage worthwhile of detailed analysis:

‘Hearken unto Me, ye stout-hearted, who are far from righteousness.’<sup>272</sup> Rav and Samuel – according to others, R. Yohanan and R. Eleazar – interpret this differently. One says: ‘The whole world is sustained by [God’s] charity, and they<sup>273</sup> are sustained by their own force.’ The other says: ‘The whole world is sustained by their merit, and they are not sustained even by their own merit.’ This accords with the saying of R. Yehudah in the name of Rav. For R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav: ‘Every day a divine voice goes forth from Mount Horev and proclaims:<sup>274</sup> “The whole world is sustained [or nourished] for the sake of My son Ḥanina, and Ḥanina My son has to subsist on a kab of carobs from one week end to the next”’.<sup>275</sup>

The *Bat Qol* is God’s voice, which announces the Sonship of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa’, a famous charismatic wonder-maker. However, it should be mentioned that this Rabbi is also addressed as ‘My son’ elsewhere in the tract *Berakhot*, where a very distinguished Rabbi, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai, asks him to pray for the life of his son.<sup>276</sup> R. Ḥanina does so by putting his head between his knees, a posture known as the posture of Elijah in the Bible and in some instances in Jewish mysticism. When asked by his wife why he did not pray for his own son, the venerable R. Yohanan says that R. Ḥanina is no more than a servant, ‘*eved*, who has free access to the master, while he himself is like a noble man or a prince, whose access to the king is much more limited. This may indicate some degree of disagreement with the view that Ḥanina was considered a son, and indeed R. Yohanan derides this view by calling him a servant. In many Jewish ancient sources two understandings of worship are described, one that relates to a son and one that relates to a servant.<sup>277</sup>

Scholars have been inclined to relate sonship to a category of ‘charismatic wonder-makers’.<sup>278</sup> I would like to adopt the term without claiming that indeed such a category is to be surmised as dramatically different from the rabbinic establishment, as Vermes and, in another way, J. D. Crossan presupposed.<sup>279</sup> In any case, it is in the rabbinic corpus that his sayings have been preserved. This brings me to a more general observation related to the transmission of the concept of sonship in Judaism.

Following Vermes’s assumption that the above passage about R. Ḥanina ben Dosa’ is historically and phenomenological relevant for the understanding of the spiritual ambiance in Galilee in the period of nascent

Christianity, the same statement is certainly also relevant for the understanding of concepts of sonship which are explicitly related to it in the subsequent Jewish literatures, where it is quoted verbatim. Thus, we may assume that in some cases the similarities between the Jewish and Christian views of sonship may be explained as drawing independently from common Jewish sources. However, what is more complex is the possibility that since this category of sonship has been known and was quite popular in Jewish literatures, it may have an impact even in cases in which R. Ḥanina is not quoted explicitly.

Let's turn to a more general understanding of R. Ḥanina. I believe that the issue son/servant does not exhaust the complexity of the passage quoted above. The passage begins by mentioning the righteous. Yet at the same time the very name of Ḥanina points to giving, and it seems that the two themes are mentioned together in Ps. 37.21, a Psalm that has already been quoted above: 'The wicked borrows, and does not pay back; but the righteous man gives with good loving kindness.'<sup>280</sup> The original Hebrew word translated as 'giving' is *Honen*, and is quite identical with the root from which the name Ḥanina emerges. It should be mentioned that even the description of Ḥanina as a servant, 'eved, may be related to righteousness on the basis of Isa. 53.11: *Tzaddiq 'avediy*. This vision of Ḥanina as perfectly righteous, *Tzaddiq gamur*, demonstrates the point that can be made by a more detailed analysis of the praise of this figure by the *Bat Qol*.<sup>281</sup> Thus righteousness in this context is also definitely related to sonship. Unlike G. Vermes's interpretation of this figure, I proposed to emphasize much more the 'righteous' aspect of Ḥanina, just as the epithet Ḥasid that is attributed to him should not be overlooked as part of the high esteem this figure gained in the rabbinic literature.

Let me turn to another element of his interpretation. Vermes claims that the statement of the *Bat Qol* should be understood as asserting that the 'whole world', *kol ha-'olam*, points to Ḥanina's contemporaries, namely his generation.<sup>282</sup> To be sure, this is indeed a possible interpretation; in rabbinic Judaism *'olam* may also mean people and this is indeed the case in the first part of the cited passage. However, it does not mean that this is the intention in the last statement quoted above, where the term 'world' means instead a created universe. I would therefore opt for a more cosmic understanding of the role of the righteous in the case of Ḥanina. God describes him not only as His son but also as the person for whose merits the world is sustained. I would also in this case propose a more literal translation of the verb '*niyzon*' as 'nurtured': the entire world is nurtured because of God's son, while he himself consumes only the minimum. Nourishment is also quite important in another event related to R. Ḥanina, the miracle of the bread. According to this legend, the empty house of R. Ḥanina (a pauper according to some

rabbinic statements) was miraculously filled with bread only in order to distribute it to a needy neighbor.<sup>283</sup>

This cosmic understanding is related directly to his wonder-maker character, though I am inclined to understand it again in the context of his being perfectly righteous. According to a rabbinic statement, the entire world stands upon a pillar whose name is *Tzaddiq*.<sup>284</sup> Since the pillar hardly deals with 'people' or a generation, I assume that in this context world means the universe, and I propose to read the statement of the *Bat Qol* accordingly. This is also the case in the *Sanhedrin* passage adduced above according to which the righteous men are capable of creating worlds.

Let us now turn to the important detail mentioned above regarding the way in which he prayed. Placing one's head between the knees is a well-known practice, mentioned already in the Bible, known as Elijah's posture and allegedly also used by R. Nehunyah ben ha-Qanah according to a famous passage in a Heikhalot treatise.<sup>285</sup> Since R. Yohanan claims, as seen above, that Ḥanina has free access to God, we may assume that the posture mentioned in the Talmudic treatise facilitates his ascent on high where he beseeches God. As pointed out by G. Vermes, in a few rabbinic sources there is an affinity between Ḥanina and Elijah, and this affinity may strengthen the apothotic and ecstatic elements in the figure of Ḥanina.<sup>286</sup> I assume that references to him as a son and a servant of God describe a degree of intimacy and consequently the possibility of having an impact on God that is not characteristic even of the rabbinic elite, as the Talmudic source explicitly claims. Thus, to the affinity between the category of holy man represented by Ḥanina and Jesus we may add not only those elements adduced by Vermes, but also their shared mention of righteousness.

Last but not least, according to a rabbinic interpretation of the term *Ḥaninah*, found in Jer. 16, the word stands for the Messiah.<sup>287</sup> I do not suggest drawing any direct connection between this discussion and the historical R. Ḥanina. Yet quite a surprising image emerges from the combination of all the elements regarding Ḥanina ben Dosa' and his name, especially sonship, on the one hand, and Jesus who was active in the generation preceding R. Ḥanina, on the other hand.<sup>288</sup> The extraordinary personality of this figure notwithstanding, he was venerated by the rabbinic elite generations after his death. For example, we read in the Babylonian Talmud that:

R. Zeira said in the name of Raba ben Zimuna: 'If the earlier [scholars] were sons of angels, we are sons of men; and if the earlier [scholars] were sons of men, we are like asses, and not [even] like asses of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa' and R. Phinehas ben Ya'ir,<sup>289</sup> but like other asses.'<sup>290</sup>

This passage is the direct continuation of the treatment of the 'new faces' adduced above in which the concept of the Son of Man occurs. I read this passage as follows: the discussion deals with repairing shoes, and this repair transforms the old into a new entity. This new entity is called face, and the difference between the two is described as the difference between the Son of Man as a supernal entity and the Son of Man as an ordinary being. In my opinion, the term 'son of angels' parallels the first face, or the Son of Man, while the ordinary men parallel the Son of Men. By dint of the scale proposed in the view of R. Zeira, there are two levels: the earlier generation and the present generation. If the earlier generation was like the sons of angels, paralleled to the Son of Man, the second generation is like ordinary men. Is it implicit that Ḥanina ben Dosa' and R. Phineḥas ben Ya'ir are like angels, namely like the Son of Man, while the second generation is like men or even asses according to a second possibility? If this analysis is accepted we have a view of the Son of Man as some angelic being in the context of a legalistic discussion in the Talmud.

The affinities between a 'son' figure and righteousness in Rabbinism, and between Enoch and his righteousness and the ascent on high by what I consider to be another 'son' figure in Heikhalot literature, are reminiscent of the views adduced above about the Son of Man, related again to Enoch and his ascent, in the *1 Enoch* passages.

To be sure, in rabbinic literature there are also other instances in which God addresses individuals as His son in addition to the much more widespread view of the people of Israel as the Sons of God.<sup>291</sup> However, it is hard to see such instances as reflecting a more articulated theory of sonship, as seen in the case of R. Ḥanina. Of possible import may be the reference to R. Ishmael as 'My son' by God in a passage belonging to the Heikhalot literature, but preserved only in the Babylonian Talmud:

It was taught: R. Ishmael ben Elisha says: 'I once entered into the innermost part [of the Sanctuary] to offer incense and saw Akathriel Yah, the Lord of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne. He said to me: 'Ishmael, My son [Beniy], bless Me!' I replied: 'May it be Thy will that Thy mercy may suppress Thy anger and Thy mercy may overflow Thy other attributes, so that Thou mayest deal with Thy sons [baneikha] according to the attribute of mercy and mayest, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice!' And He nodded to me with His head.'<sup>292</sup>

This is an important and quite exceptional passage in rabbinic literature, and it has attracted much attention in scholarship.<sup>293</sup> I see it as describing what I call a 'theurgical event', in which a man is blessing God and this blessing is conceived of as capable of changing something within the divine sphere. For

the present discussion, attention should be paid to the fact that references to sonship appear when God or at least His representative attribute extraordinary features to individuals. In this case, we may speak about theurgical sonship, a category to which we shall return in more detail in Chapter 4. I wonder whether the special form of conception of R. Ishmael as born in the image of Gabriel/Metatron, as it has been mentioned above, is connected to the extraordinary status in this passage where God asks him to bless Him. In any case, we have here another possible example of a contact with God and sonship, and the 'son' bears a theophoric name.

It should be mentioned that in two other cases related to first-century CE miracle-making figures, *Ḥoni ha-Me'aggel* (Ḥoni the circle-drawer), and his grandson Ḥanan, a view of sonship is implied in one way or another, as pointed out by Vermes, who saw in them representatives of a charismatic kind of Judaism.<sup>294</sup> Ḥoni was appreciated as a miracle-worker who could compel God to cause rain, and was also known as someone who prays to God as a son does to his father.<sup>295</sup> Nevertheless, let me emphasize that it would be difficult to see in those figures just ordinary magicians, since they used prayer directed toward a higher entity as a means for changing the course of nature. Their petulant prayer is the major tool in their performances.

To Vermes's view, one which strove to identify an entire religious category different from the rabbinic elite, let me add the following observation: those three names stem from the same Hebrew root *HNN*, which means to give or to grace, namely a root that is strongly connected to the concept that God endowed the person. This is, to my best knowledge, the closest semantic structure to the concept of *charis*, the free gift of God. Thus, the names related to charisma are also connected to some form of sonship. However, what is in my opinion even more interesting is the fact that from the consonants of the same root in Hebrew were derived two main appellations for God in Jewish tradition: *Ḥanun*, which means merciful, and *Ḥonen*, which means someone who bestows, as in the phrase *Ḥonen ha-da'at*, 'He that bestows knowledge.' In a way this affinity between the names and the characteristic of a certain person is reminiscent of the Talmudic view that the name of something is generative, or causes something: *ha-Shem Gorem*.

## 7. Theophoric mediation

The rabbinic material, unlike the Heikhalot writings, deals with extraordinary figures who are not conceived of as attaining hypostatic existence even if they ascend on high, as is the case with Elijah. Neither do they acquire theophoric names that contain elements of the Tetragrammaton,

notwithstanding Elijah whose name was theophoric even before his ascent. The exceptional rabbinic figures function much more as intercessors than as theophoric mediators. With the hypostatic Enoch as Metatron in 3 *Enoch*, it seems however that the mediating function is much more important than the interceding one. This is the reason why the rabbinic figures, unlike the Heikhalot protagonists, are conceived of as masters of prayer while their Heikhalot contemporaries are much more interested in mystical and magical techniques.

The way mediation operates in the late antiquity Jewish sources surveyed above, at least as I understand it, puts much less emphasis on divine transcendence and the need to fill an ontic gap than on the more full presence of the divine within this world, which took a variety of forms. Some of the theological solutions for overcoming the gap constitute a continuation of earlier traditions, while others represent new developments.<sup>296</sup> I see in the multiplication of divine powers, attributes and names for God a theological development that strives to elaborate on the nature of God, a topic that in the biblical theologies is rather obscure. We may see an entire development of Jewish theology as moving from the more unified personal divinity in the biblical literature to more complex structures based on subordinating and emanational hierarchies – angelological, involving hierarchies of Glories, sefirotic and anthropomorphic systems, or other varieties of systems that are constituted for example by separate intellects or divine sparks. This vector, consisting in fragmenting the divine personality and sometimes attributing special functions to certain segments of the supernal world is too wide and important a topic to be addressed here in an appropriate manner and it requires a separate and extensive treatment that cannot be carried out in the present framework. The more unified persona of God, with His pathos, love and anger, as found in the Hebrew Bible and which also echoes in rabbinic thought since the early Middle Ages, has sometimes been replaced in the Middle Ages by very complex speculative systems.

On the other hand, it should also be emphasized that this theological centrifugal development, that becomes more important with time, does not completely replace the ancient personal depictions of God. Systems are based on smaller units that are organized by some basic rules, one of which is hierarchical organization, and this is the direction in which the various Jewish theologies move in the Middle Ages. It is interesting to point out that the hierarchies are sometimes described by resorting to the Tetragrammaton: this is the case with the Great Angel, Yaho'el or Metatron, the entire realm of ten *sefirot*, sometimes with each of the *sefirot* separately, and even with the separate intellects, and what is more pertinent for our subsequent discussions, some of the various occurrences of concepts

of the Son. We may describe the development from late antiquity forms of mediators to medieval ones as a rise in the importance of the more complex and systemic forms of mediation over the more personal and singular sorts. Among philosophers, sometimes the Tetragrammaton has been attributed to the Aristotelian concept of Agent Intellect as understood by the Judeo-Arab philosophical traditions as a cosmic power. In the Middle Ages, especially in the various philosophical traditions, we may speak of a depersonalized vision of the mediator that is quite consonant with depersonalized theologies. In the rabbinic period, we find the personalized mediators especially in the form of righteous men and angels. Those fragmenting tendencies allow much more elaborate theological analysis than the first two basic corpora of Jewish culture, and we may describe the mainline kabbalistic theosophies as inclusive theologies that competed with the philosophical and more exclusive theologies.<sup>297</sup> Different as these tendencies are, both resort to the Tetragrammaton in order to point to an extended realm of divinity: the sefirotic realm in Kabbalah, and the intellectual realm in philosophy and some forms of Kabbalah.

However, this theological development was coupled, as mentioned in the Introduction, with the apotheotic vector. If Moses is one of the most important protagonists involved in different descriptions of biblical theophanies, the vicissitudes of two other figures, Enoch and Elijah, represent a relatively minor theme in the Bible, that of marginal testimonies of human apotheosis in a document in which the theophany or the kratophany, namely the revelation of the holy as power, is the center of religion. While, according to the Hebrew Bible, Moses never visited God but was often visited by Him, those two figures were taken alive to a higher realm. As different in time and nature as the manner is in which these two figures are portrayed in the Bible, they are often associated in post-biblical literatures to illustrate the possibility of ascending on high. In Jewish texts both become angels: Enoch turns into Metatron, Elijah retains his theophoric name and serves as a mediator, while in medieval texts the consonants of Moses' name, in Hebrew *MoSheH*, become an acronym for *Metatron, Sar ha-Panim*, Metatron the Prince of the Face.<sup>298</sup> Elijah's name in Hebrew, *'Eliyahu*, is doubly theophoric: the consonants *'El* and *YHW* both point to divine names. Thus the prophet's name, unlike that of the antediluvian patriarch, is conceived of to be particularly appropriate for expressing a transformation that brings someone closer to God. Moreover, the fact that the Hebrew Bible does not mention Elijah's parents added to his special status.

However, also in the case of Metatron there are at least two different types of affinities between this figure and divine names: the Heikhalot tradition about the Lesser *YHWH*, and the rabbinic statement to the effect

that 'his name is like that of his master', which has been interpreted in the Middle Ages as teaching that the numerical value of Metatron, namely 314, is numerically equivalent to that of the consonants of the name Shadday.<sup>299</sup> In a third case, the angel Michael was described as the Lesser *YHWH*, in a quotation from *Sefer ha-Razim* preserved only in an early Ashkenazi source.<sup>300</sup> In these cases, the connection between a Great Angel, some form of vice-regent and a divine name has been preserved in Hebrew, in treatises that became authoritative, accessible and widely copied by numerous medieval masters, which served as anchors upon which medieval thinkers could rely when they adopted other, old or new, theologoumena.

The main axis of most of the discussions in the following chapters has much to do with echoes of discussions concerning the figures of Yaho'el and Metatron, two of the main angels in late antiquity Jewish angelology who function there as theophoric mediators and as Sons of God.<sup>301</sup> It seems that some of their attributes in the medieval sources are connected to ancient traditions relating to an archangel who created the world or/and revealed the Torah. Many scholars have treated the various testimonies concerning these angels<sup>302</sup> though their reverberations in the medieval period still await even more extensive study, and the following discussions in the next two chapters will attempt to fill in part of this gap. However, such an examination cannot be undertaken without a previous survey of what themes have been available already in the classical texts that preserved what I suggest to call 'anchors' for material that arrived from other sources.

Let me draw attention to another element that may be pertinent to my point: the absence of the theory of image, *tzelem*, in order to point to the affinity between the human form and that of God in the Heikhalot literature. Though rabbinic Judaism emphasized the human *tzelem* as an extension of the divine within the human, as Yair Lorberbaum has pointed out in a convincing manner,<sup>303</sup> this is not the case in the Heikhalot literature. There we can find emphasis on the beauty of a few mortals, as in the cases of R. Abbahu and R. Ishmael, and in the case of the latter a form of imprint of the beauty of Metatron.<sup>304</sup> This imprint should also, however, be understood as being connected to the concept of divine beauty that is found in many Heikhalot texts, which is presumably echoed in the beauty of Metatron.<sup>305</sup> Because few elite figures were engendered by the manifestation of a higher being, we may even resort to the term 'momentary embodiment' of Metatron, and we may assume that some concept of sonship, or even double sonship, is implicit in beauty. In any case R. Ishmael is recognized for his extreme beauty when he ascends on high. Though not a *Tzelem* of Metatron, as some medieval authors described the creation of Adam,<sup>306</sup> there is a structure of thought in the Heikhalot material according to which there is some form of continuity between the beauty of the countenance of

the angel of the face and that of the mystic from the moment of the latter's conception. This continuity involves some form of organic sonship just as in rabbinic Judaism God is imagined to play a part in the act of conception, in addition to those played by husband and wife.<sup>307</sup> It seems that we may surmise a triple hierarchy starting with the beauty of God, that of Metatron – the exalted mortal – and that of the mystic, who constitutes some form of impression of Metatron's countenance within this world.<sup>308</sup>

It should be pointed out that applying the scheme found in the case of R. Ishmael to Metatron himself yields an interesting situation. R. Ishmael was born through the descent of Metatron and his temporary embodiment into a human that ensured R. Ishmael's birth, after which Metatron serves as R. Ishmael's supernal mentor. If this hypothesis is corroborated by additional sources then we have here an instance of the phenomenon I designated as the double sonship in Heikhalot literature. We can ask whether this scheme reflects a lost narrative according to which the birth of Enoch is also understood in a similar manner.

Last but not least in this context, in some instances in rabbinic literature sonship is conceived, as seen in the first quotation above, as some form of substantial extension of the Father within the Son. It should be noted that, interestingly enough, in at least one instance attributed to R. Hanina ben Dosa, God describes Himself as the brother of Israel.<sup>309</sup> Though this brotherhood can be understood as an emotional participation of God in the troubles of Israel, as we find in other cases in the context of the suffering of the *Shekhinah* – described in those contexts by referring to the concept of a twin – the very fact that the term 'brother' appears reinforces the possibility of understanding the affinities between the human and the divine as more than just organic sonship.

In the following discussions we shall attempt to deal with inner developments in Jewish mysticism concerning the concepts of sonship, as well as with lateral influences of contemporary (medieval or later) Christianity. In most of the following discussions, the hypostatic Son is not just an eminent and solitary entity sitting at the side of the Father, but rather part of more articulated metaphysical systems, and his nature is greatly indebted to the inner logic of the respective mediating system. In other words, while in the Hebrew Bible the divine will, the divine name and divine word were conceived of as major modes of presence in this world, the son as the ruling king being only, and I would say also a marginal, one, additional forms of mediations occurred and adopted a hypostatic status as well as some of the attributes of other mediating entities as part of the exchange of attributes between them.

## 8. Conclusions

The discussions found in mystical corpora since the late twelfth century may constitute a certain continuation of earlier concepts found in Judaism, though lateral influences stemming from Christianity, what Yoshiko Reed called 'back-borrowing', should also be taken into consideration. Sometime toward the end of the twelfth century or early thirteenth century, documentation emerged regarding the existence of two writings dealing with various traditions connected to Metatron: one tradition relates to the alphabet of angels, which consists of various alphabets with stellar characters that will not concern us here.<sup>310</sup> The other tradition is a list of Metatron's 70 names whose medieval interpretations will be discussed in detail in the next two chapters. These two treatises, which were written in my opinion by the same author, R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the Prophet of Erfurt (and in the case of the second treatise there are several versions) and the diverse traditions incorporated in them are, in my opinion, part of what can be called an Enochic/Metatronic trend that gradually gained more and more ground within several elite circles in medieval Judaism. Though this trend has earlier sources,<sup>311</sup> it attracted the opposition of some circles within rabbinic thought while other circles, represented by figures like R. Idith, mentioned above, were more interested in enabling it to resurge and then gradually expand from the late twelfth century in centers of Jewish thought in Europe.<sup>312</sup>

It should be mentioned that the Heikhalot texts dealing with Enoch's ascent and his transformation into an angel are presumably not the only sources that address this topic. It also appears in the late *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*, in the Aramaic Targum Jonathan on Gen. 5.24, and has been seen as a homiletic sort of exegesis of Exod. 23.21, in the Short Commentary on Exodus of R. Abraham ibn Ezra, as well as in several Ashkenazi poems composed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, namely well before the emergence of what I call the written platforms of the kabbalistic literatures. Whether all these treatments of Enoch's ascent actually depend on *3 Enoch* is in my opinion debatable. This is not because some scholars claim that the discussion in *3 Enoch* is a late addition, without any serious analysis of this point: in fact, other scholars allow the possibility of the existence of early themes in this book.<sup>313</sup> My assumption is that more material dealing with Enoch was available to medieval scholars writing on the topic, as we shall see in Chapter 4 and in the Appendix, and there is no need to reduce the emergence of all those treatments to one single passage.

In the next chapter we shall discuss several Ashkenazi examples of discussions of sonship, while in the third chapter we shall deal with an example of a Kabbalist born in Spain but significantly influenced by

Ashkenazi and other traditions that expanded in an experiential and philosophical manner, mainly in writings composed in Italy and Sicily.

Though attempts have been made by some Jewish authorities to marginalize Heikhalot literature or to interpret it as a matter of inner spiritual processes already in the Gaonic period, some of its more concrete elements dealing with the ascent on high were adopted by different circles active in Southern and Central Germany known by the broad term *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*.<sup>314</sup> Via the mediation of the various schools designated by scholars as *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*, and presumably also independent of them, some circles in thirteenth-century Spain became acquainted with the Heikhalot literature and developed mystical systems which incorporated significant apothetic elements. Especially important in this respect is Abraham Abulafia's prophetic or ecstatic Kabbalah, which proliferated beyond Spain to the Byzantine Empire and to Italy, as well as to the Land of Israel at the end of the thirteenth century. Since then, these apothetic elements became integrated to varying extents into the various forms of kabbalistic literature. Especially important is the emergence of a strong apothetic vector in Sabbatean Messianism in the second part of the seventeenth century, and in *Ḥasidism* that flourished in Ukraine and Poland from the mid-eighteenth century. Characteristic of these literatures is the emphasis they put on the importance of techniques that were imagined to ensure the ascent or the elevation of components of the human personality to higher beings.<sup>315</sup> Nevertheless, in all the literatures mentioned above, important theophanic elements also remain visible. Both vectors grew and created new modes of discourse different to the rabbinic ones, and the nature of such discourses will concern us below.

In the context of the emergence of new kinds of complex systems and more explicit discourses since the Middle Ages, we may discern a growing interest in sonship. While straightforward positive discussions of a supernatural Son seem to be absent in early medieval rabbinic sources, since the late twelfth century however, we find a series of texts in which sonship is related either to a redemptive figure or to metaphysical structures. These discussions are found in a variety of Jewish speculative literatures: philosophical, Ashkenazi, kabbalistic, Jewish Renaissance, Christian Kabbalah, Sabbatean, and *Ḥasidic* passages, and they will be surveyed in the following chapters. Needless to say that these comprehensive literatures, still underestimated in various descriptions of Judaism,<sup>316</sup> cannot be perused in a complete manner, especially the manuscript material, and there can be no doubt that more material pertinent to our topic will surface in the aftermath of the publication of this study. Meanwhile, however, before a more comprehensive inspection of texts found only in manuscripts can be completed, the main references to more explicit discussions of sonship

certainly deserve a concentrated analysis, which may illumine aspects of Jewish thought as well as contribute, at least potentially, to a more complex understanding of the ways in which sonship has been conceptualized in religion in general.

In a way, the centripetal tendencies that created the tensions that exploded in the emergence of the variety of literatures that may be described as the 'outskirts of Judaism'<sup>317</sup> have surfaced in the Middle Ages, but this time they have been integrated in the more articulated forms of rabbinic Judaism. This happened around the remnants of those tendencies that persisted within rabbinic Judaism and the Heikhalot literature: the concept of the sharing of the name by the archangel and God, angels like Metatron and Yaho'el, or the importance of the patriarch Enoch as an exemplary figure. These themes, together with some of the biblical verses dealing with the son, served as stable elements that could attract other similar elements, found in less authoritative sources that were either transmitted orally, or reached the medieval Jews from written traditions. A striking example is found in the treatise of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, which will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 2. The list of the 70 names is known already from the Heikhalot literature, while the details of its commentary stem from a variety of traditions. It is not impossible that R. Nehemiah inherited a longer version of this list, which included one gematria added to each of the 70 names, and he added to it many other reflections, but this is an issue that demands further inquiry.

The cultural move that I called the 'great by-pass' of the rabbinic literatures, both Talmudic or Midrashic, brought back some theological elements that existed in Jewish sources in late antiquity, were relegated to the margin by the literary genres and major ways of thought characteristic of rabbinic literature, but made their way back in one way or another, and were accepted by many of the main representatives of rabbinic Judaism.<sup>318</sup> This was not a straightforward return, and older themes were integrated after they had been filtered, and in new circumstances; for example some parts of the Jewish elite adopted much more comprehensive patterns of thought, many of them stemming from Greek and Hellenistic sources and differing from what was known earlier in Judaism.<sup>319</sup> It is as part of this sort of recuperation that the ascent of views of the hypostatic son, and of the apothotic vector in medieval Jewish literatures, should be understood. Far from being a total surprise for the authors we are going to analyze below, there does not seem to be a feeling that these views are audacious or extraordinary and these views, to my best knowledge, were never criticized by other Jewish authorities in a significant manner. The above discussions are intended to serve as background for the following chapters, in which

different theories of sonship are introduced in various treatises that remained, in their vast majority, part of traditional Judaism.

From another point of view, let me clarify that the following discussions are drastically different from an attempt to recuperate the teachings or the personality of Jesus on the bases of the findings in medieval mystical literature. The present book has only a little in common, if at all, with the intellectual projects of some Jewish scholars like Martin Buber, Joseph Klausner, David Flusser, Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Abraham J. Heschel, Jacob Taubes, Chayyim ha-Kohen, or Geza Vermes, who have written scholarly treatments about Jesus: they were essentially concerned with the historical person, the historical events and even more with the Jewish background of Jesus's religious thought. Given the historical events of the parting of the ways, various Jewish traditions have been interpreted in new and different manners in both rabbinic Judaism and in Christianity, and my archeological project, though dealing with the concept of Son, does not attempt to claim the existence of a lost Judaism that is more Christ-oriented. The present research is focused on the topic of sonship. Crucial as Jesus's life, teachings – which I conceive of as expressing ideas and ideals that were part of late antiquity Judaism – and perceptions – sometimes also influenced by Jewish approaches – were for the formulations of this religious category, the central concern of the following discussions is nevertheless different. I attempt to understand the religious category that preceded the perception of Jesus as the Son of God, and how this category has been enriched and how different models emerged, sometimes independently of the specific forms it took in Christianity. By assuming, as is well known by scholars, that Philo's theory of sonship, and more specifically of the double sonship, impacted some forms of sonship in Christianity, and by becoming aware of the importance of sonship in ancient and medieval forms of sacred royalty, as well as in the Roman world, a discussion of medieval Jewish texts becomes different to just a dialogue with the majority Christian culture. Seen from different perspectives, the categories of sonship in Judaism appear differently than just a matter of attraction or 'formative reaction' to one major form that dominated the countries where Jewish mysticism emerged in the Middle Ages. It seems that the authors of some of the following discussions, written since the high Middle Ages, encountered the Greek speculative heritage, in most cases as mediated by other languages, especially Arabic, and these encounters proved to be more fruitful, from the point of view of the Jewish creativity triggered by these encounters, than the impact of Christianity was.<sup>320</sup>

Before turning to the main literary corpora that will be the center of our discussion, let me briefly point out which aspects of the discussions above are more explicit, from the point of view of divine sonship, and could

contribute to the medieval treatments: Abraham's, Enoch's, Hanina ben Dosa's, and Ishm'a'el the high priest's are part and parcel of the heritage that all or most of the authors to be scrutinized below could be acquainted with. All of them, to be sure, deal with individuals, who did not attain a hypostatic status. On the other hand, Metatron's hypostatic sonship is much more oblique, but nevertheless it has been articulated in quite clear terms in a variety of medieval literatures.

### Notes

- 1 Steven M. Wasserstrom, 'Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Muslim Literature, A Bibliographical and Methodological Sketch', in ed., J.C. Reeves, *Tracing the Thread, Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (SBL, Atlanta, 1994), pp. 87–115. See also Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 80–2 and Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels*, passim.
- 2 See above, Introduction note 169.
- 3 See Introduction par. 6.
- 4 See Morray-Jones, *The Transparent Illusion*, pp. 26, 224.
- 5 See Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, 'R. Simeon B. Yoḥai – Wonder Worker and Magician Scholar, *Saddiq and Hasid*', *REJ* 158 (1999), pp. 379–80, and the bibliography adduced there. See more recently Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 77.
- 6 See Schaefer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, pp. 234–49, especially pp. 248–9, and the various reactions to this view in scholarship since especially C.R.A. Morray-Jones, 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12.1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate', *HTR* 86 (1993), pp. 203–15.
- 7 See Moshe Idel, 'On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship', in eds, Yossef Schwartz and Volkhard Krech, *Religious Apologetics – Philosophical Argumentation* (Mohr, Tübingen, 2004), pp. 123–74.
- 8 See the important survey of Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 85–9, who has already analyzed the Maimonidean background of Urbach's theological approach.
- 9 See the methodological statements from the writings of the latter scholars on the topic, as adduced and analyzed in Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 140–5.
- 10 See especially my 'The Concept of the Torah', and 'Il Mondo degli Angeli'.
- 11 See e.g. Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, passim, and above, note 7.
- 12 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38a. See also in the Midrash entitled *Tanna' de-Bei 'Eliyahu Zutta*, ch. 20 (Jerusalem, 1970), fol. 39ab. We should remember that this biblical verse has been interpreted by Philo as referring to the Logos as firstborn Son of God, as it has been pointed out in the Introduction. See also Matthew Black, 'The Origin of the Name Metatron', *VT* 1 (1951), p. 218, who suggested another link between Philo's Logos and Metatron. Thus, Metatron represents, at least theoretically, a parallel to Philo's Logos as the Son of God, when we compare the two interpretations of this verse. For the possible affinity between Philo's Logos and some concepts related to Metatron see Joshua Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism* (G. Bells and Sons, London, 1913), p. 67; Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore*, p. 191;

- Erwin Goodenough, *By Light, Light, The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1935), p. 366; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 114–15; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 72; Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 121; Daniel Abrams, 'The Book of Illumination' of R. Jacob ben Jacob haKohen, *A Synoptic Edition* (Ph.D. Thesis, New York University, New York, 1993), p. 78 (Hebrew); and Wolfson, 'Traces of Philonic Doctrines', pp. 105–6. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 329; Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation*, pp. 280–3, and the discussion below, especially note 61. See, however, the divergences between the rabbinic and in this case also the Heikhalot literature approach to exegesis, and the Alexandrian one, as formulated by Ginzberg, *ibid.*, pp. 127–50, 191. See also below, Chapter 2 note 6.
- 13 See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 50–1, and Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 106. It is important to point out, again following Odeberg, that the distinction between a smaller and Great YHWH is already found in the Gnostic literature, and specifically in the treatise entitled *Pistis Sophia* (see Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, p. 210). For more on the possible affinities between this Gnostic treatise and Heikhalot material, see this chapter as well as the next one.
  - 14 *Tanḥuma'* pericope Mishpatim, par. 18. See also the lengthy discussion in the name of R. Eleazar of Worms, quoted in the thirteenth-century R. Abraham ben Azriel, 'Arugat ha-Bosem, vol. 1, pp. 204–5.
  - 15 *Midrash Tehillim*, on Ps. 17.
  - 16 On this text see 'Transformational Mysticism', p. 19. Compare also to another discussion in BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 75b, where the righteous will be called 'Holy'. Cf. Morray-Jones, *ibid.*, p. 18.
  - 17 See 4Q521 line 5. The context of the quotation has some similarity to a reply of Jesus to John. See Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran Cave 4', in eds, C.A. Evans & P.W. Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997), pp. 96–7. See also 1QIsaiah 26.8: 'O Lord, we await your name' and Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, pp. 42–3.
  - 18 See Chapter 6 below, par. 8.
  - 19 2.16–20. Regarding the possible impact of this passage on Christianity, see M.–E. Boismard, 'Le titre de 'fils de Dieu' dans les evangiles', *Biblica* 72 (1991), p. 445. Compare also to Philo's view in *The Confusion of Languages*, pars 145–7 adduced above in the Introduction, where people who live in the knowledge of the One are called the Sons of God, while others who follow the Logos are children of the image of God as Son. See also Boyarin, *Border Lines*, p. 103.
  - 20 5.11. See also Eisenman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 34 note 64. On righteousness in Samaritan self-perception, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 54. For the theophoric understanding of the name Israel as son of God, see the passages from *Ben Sira'* addressed above, Introduction note 75.
  - 21 46.3, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 34.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, 48.1, 2, 4, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 35 and Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 133–4. See also Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, p. 359.

- 23 See Roy A. Rosenberg, 'Sedeq as Divine Hypostasis in Qumran Texts and Its Link to the Emergence of Christianity', *Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls Offered in the Memory of Hans Burgman*, ed. Burgmann (Enigma Press, Krakow, 1996), pp. 109–27, as well as his *The Veneration of Divine Justice: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity* (Greenwood Press, London, 1995); and Michael Fishbane, 'The 'Measures' of God's Glory in the Ancient Midrash', in eds, Ithamar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked & G.G. Stroumsa, *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1992), pp. 67–8. See also Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 36–7. For the view of justice as a mediating power see the interesting medieval material adduced under the title *Iustitia mediatrix* by Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 107–43.
- 24 See Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 144–7. For a parallel between the view that angels, including Jesus, have been created by the divine mouth and the view that angels have been created by the speech of God, a view adduced by R. Shmuel ben Nahmani in the name of R. Yohanan, see *ibid.*, p. 172. For the possibility that Jesus pronounced the divine name according to early rabbinic sources see Lauterbach, 'Jesus in the Talmud', p. 495 note 66.
- 25 In the original, the Tetragrammaton is found in the verse.
- 26 Jer. 23.6. For more on the attribution of the divine name to the Messiah, see Mopsik, *Le livre Hebreu d'Henoch*, pp. 228–9. For the Midrashic discussion of the seventh-century *Tanḥuma'*, where the shared quality of glory is attributed to Moses, Elijah and the Messiah, while using this biblical verse, see Basser, 'Notions of Glory and Sonship', p. 2 note 6. Basser pointed out that such a Midrash could be a parallel to a discussion in early Christianity that appears in the Synoptic Gospels, where Jesus is described in a similar context, as Son of God. A comparison to the Talmudic passage discussed here may be relevant for an understanding of the possible substratum of our passage.
- 27 Ezek. 48.35.
- 28 This is a pun on *Sham*, 'there', that can be vocalized also as *Shem*, 'name'.
- 29 BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 75b and in the late Midrash '*Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*', ed. Wertheimer; *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, pp. 372–3; and Ms. Sasson 756, p. 186. In *Yalqut Shime'oni*, on Ezek. ch. 48, par. 284, the dictum is adduced in the name of R. Shimeon ben Gamliel. See also the discussion on the name of the Messiah and Jerusalem as Tetragrammaton in *Midrash Tehilim* on Ps. ch. 21 and in a late Yemenite Midrash, first printed in Yehudah Even Shmuel, *Midreshei Ge'ulah* (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1954), pp. 349–50, and translated by Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts – Jewish Legends of Three Thousand Years* (Wayne State, Detroit, Mich., 1979), pp. 140–1. Interestingly enough, R. Shmuel ben Naḥmani is also the author of the dictum on the Prince of the World, elsewhere in the Talmud, BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 16b, which will be discussed immediately below. See also Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 131. It seems that R. Shmuel ben Naḥmani, or even the more important source of his tradition, R. Yohanan, were concerned with traditions that drew from earlier sources and that were more consonant with the category of theophoric mediators. See also the special interest of this figure in matters of divine names in the rabbinic source discussed by Cohon, *Essays*, pp.

- 121–2. On R. Shmuel ben Nahmani see Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, pp. 138–9, 150–1. See more below in the discussion of the passage from *Yebbamot* and its consonance with the Heikhalot literature description of Enoch the righteous. See also the material collected in Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 113–4 and in Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, p. 283 note 5.
- 30 See below the attribution of glory to Abraham, according to a version of the end of *Sefer Yetzirah*. For glory in the context of sonship see Basser, 'Notions of Glory and Sonship'.
- 31 Isa. 43.7.
- 32 BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 75b. Compare also to *Tanḥuma'*, ed. S. Buber, vol. 3, fol. 37b. See also Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, p. 408 note 71.
- 33 See e.g. Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 78–9 note 13, who refers to this passage only in terms of the reception of the divine name by the righteous in the future but not in the past. By doing so, he attempts to preserve some form of 'classical' Rabbinism, which does not involve apotheosis in the past or present. See, however, BT *Mo'ed Qatan*, fol. 16b, and Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 156 note 17, where both rabbinic and Heikhalot passages deal with the righteous that rules over the 'fear of God' as an issue that is taking place in the present. See also the discussion below of Enoch/Metatron as righteous and the following footnote.
- 34 See BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 65b. On this issue see Idel, *Golem*, pp. 27–30. Compare also to an interesting passage found in a mid-thirteenth-century Ashkenazi author, R. Abraham ben Azriel, who adduces a view according to which God will give to the righteous a divine name so that they will be able to create worlds for themselves. Cf. ed. Urbach, *R. Abraham ben Azriel, 'Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 1, p. 129.
- 35 For the understanding of the reception of the divine name by the righteous as the dwelling of some form of glory upon him see the discussion of the Ashkenazi Hasidic passage from MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566 to be discussed in Chapter 2 below.
- 36 See Mt. 5.9–10; 45–46, Lk. 20.36, and the Eisenman's important note, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 34 note 64.
- 37 See *Genesis Rabba'* 26.3, p. 246. See also the important discussion of this matter in Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 187–8, and Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism', p. 19. On the affinity between circumcision and the divine name in the Midrashic traditions see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine', *JQR* 78 (1987), pp. 77–112.
- 38 *Genesis Rabba'* 86.6, p. 1058. For a recent analysis of some themes related to this figure, see Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, 'R. Simeon B. Yoḥai – Wonder Worker and Magician Scholar, *Saddiq and Hasid*', *REJ* 158 (1999), pp. 349–84, especially p. 381, where the author points to a tension between bar Yoḥai's view and the Heikhalot emphasis.
- 39 Ps. 82.6.
- 40 Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 451.
- 41 More on those traditions see Green, *Keter*, pp. 69–77 and Morray-Jones,

- 'Transformational Mysticism', p. 23. It should be added that a tradition found in PT *Ta'anit*, 2.6, fol. 65b, assumes that God gave his name to Israel and that it serves as a key to His palace and connects both by a chain. On this issue, see Goetschel, *Meir ibn Gabbai*, p. 451 and note 278, and Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 161–2.
- 42 Dan. 3.25.
- 43 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 93a. See also Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien*, pp. 163–73. For more on the special powers of the righteous, see the material discussed by Liebes, '*De Natura Dei*', pp. 267–9.
- 44 Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 455.
- 45 *Tanna' de-Bei 'Eliyah Rabba'*, ch. 18, and the commentary of Rashi on BT, *Niddah*, fol. 14a.
- 46 Exod. 33.20.
- 47 Cf. Exod. 3.6 dealing with the burning bush.
- 48 Cf. Exod. 3.6, where Moses hid his face, was afraid and did not look upon God.
- 49 Exod. 34.29–30.
- 50 Exod. 34.30.
- 51 Num. 12.8. To be sure: this verse can be also read that Moses has seen the image of the name.
- 52 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 7a.
- 53 See *Genesis Rabba'* 47.6, 82.6. See also the interpretation offered by *Yalqut Shime'oni*, Gen. ch. 28, par. 119; ch. 41, par. 147 where the preceding statement to the dictum argues that God is sustained by righteous men.
- 54 See respectively, Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 144; Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, p. 20; Fossum, *The Name of God*; Fossum, 'The Magharians'; Segal, 'Ruler of This World'; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 255–6 and the bibliography he adduced there; Deutsch's important discussion in *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 35–47; Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 99–111; and Davila, 'Of Methodology'. See also above, Introduction note 170. For the most important text on this Great Angel see the translated passage from *Shahrastani, Livre des religions et des sectes*, pp. 606–8.
- 55 See, especially, my 'The Concept of the Torah', and 'Il Mondo degli angeli', and note 4 above.
- 56 Exod. 24.1.
- 57 On this formula see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 182 note 43.
- 58 Exod. 23.21.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 Exod. 33.15.
- 61 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b. On this passage, which had a huge impact in the Middle Ages see especially, Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 41, 47, 50–1; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 68; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 377–8; Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 522–3; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 420–1; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 68–73; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 307–8; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 110–11; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 144–5; Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 120–1; Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 128–9; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, p. 95

- note 41; and Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 69–70. See also note 12 above. Let me point out that this passage should be read in the larger context of the discussion in this Talmudic page, which also deals with another problem that haunted some Rabbis: the special status of Adam. I proposed to read the two issues together, as part of a larger myth of Adam/Enoch/Metatron. See my 'Adam and Enoch'.
- 62 For the move to a more hypostatic vision of the face of God and of the angel appointed upon him, see Idel, 'Metatron'. For the view of the hypostatic face as a mediating entity for a transcendent God, see the existence of the form *PNB'L*, the face of Ba'al, which is the Goddess Tinnit, as a hypostasis of the god Ba'al in the Canaanite religion. See Shmuel Ahituv, 'The Countenance of H', in eds, Mordechai Cogan, Barry A. Eichler & Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1997), p. 7 (Hebrew).
- 63 Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 41–2, and Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 129–30. There is also a tradition dealing with 71 names of Metatron, found in *Heikhalot Rabbati*, and in an important parallel found – as my student Alon Ten Ami kindly pointed out to me – in a magical bowl. This means that the tradition of the multiple names of Metatron cannot be much later than the fifth century, when the magical bowls were written.
- 64 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 378; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 107; Liebermann, *Shkiin*, pp. 14–15; Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*, pp. 1–2, 8; and Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation*, p. 282 note 69.
- 65 See note 63 above.
- 66 As for the possibility that a similar phenomenon happened in the case of a statement in *Genesis Rabba'* see below, Appendix.
- 67 There are numerous scholarly analyses of this issue. See, e.g. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 140–1, 234–5; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 60–97; Liebes, *Het'o shel 'Elisha'*, pp. 29–56; and Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 64–104.
- 68 See Van der Horst, 'Moses' Throne', pp. 24–5.
- 69 Schaefer, *Synopsis*, p. 39 par. 76. On the unit from which this quotation is taken see Claudia Rohrbach-Sticker, 'Die Namen Gottes und die Namen Metatrons: Zwei Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur', *Frankfurter Judaistischer Beitrage* 19 (1991/92), pp. 95–168; Tocci, 'Metatron', pp. 87–8; and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 136–42.
- 70 A verb used also in other contexts dealing with conjurations. On the concept of sealing, see above in the Introduction and below in the passage from Origen's description of the Ophites.
- 71 This name recurs in the *Sar ha-Torah* composition. I assume that we have here an example of a theophoric construct: *HYYW*, and a hypothetical root *ShQZ*, whose meaning escapes me. Alternatively, and more plausible in my opinion, is the distinction between the root *HZQ*, to be powerful, and the form *ShYYW*, whose meaning is not clear for me. See, however, the recurrent form

- ShQDHZY, which consists of HZQ and ShDY. See Schaefer, *Synopse*, pars 561, 682. Cf. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, p. 261.
- 72 See Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 119, 121.
- 73 See *ibid.*, pp. 68, 84, 132, 194. On the many angels of the face already in the book of *Jubilee*, cf. VanderKam, 'The Angel of Presence', and in the Qumran literature: *ke-mal'akh panav*. See Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, p. 150 and the 'servants of Face'. See also 4Q400, 1.1, 3-4.
- 74 See Groezinger, 'The Names of God'.
- 75 See Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 243-4.
- 76 *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 118 in the manuscript variants to line 419. See also Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 120.
- 77 See Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 588. See also Groezinger, 'The Names of God', pp. 61, 68 note 48 and Mopsik, *Le livre Hebreu d'Enoch*, p. 352. It is interesting to recall in this context the view found in a version of 3 *Enoch*, Odeberg, p. 65 (Hebrew), that there are 72 names inscribed on the head of God.
- 78 There can be no doubt that there is an affinity between the semantic basis of the name RZ, plausibly Raz, secret, plus the theophoric letters, and the mentioning immediately below of the secrets of creation.
- 79 Isa. 11.4.
- 80 *Merkavah Rabbah*, Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 655. I use the translation of Davila, *Descenders of the Chariot*, p. 191. Here the morphic and nominal elements are strongly identified. See also Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, p. 105. Compare also to the affinity between the name and the image, expressed in terms similar to this passage, in the Magical Papyri, adduced above in the Introduction note 28.
- 81 See his 'The Macrocosmic Temple, Scriptural Exegesis, and the Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice', pp. 12-15. For another possible connection between name and spirit or breath, see Exod. 31.1-2, involving a theophoric name: Bezalel.
- 82 See Schmelowsky, 'A la recherche', p. 43. It is strange that the possible affinities between the New Testament position and the Heikhalot material escaped, to the best of my knowledge, modern scholarship. See Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 316-17.
- 83 'Inquiries in *Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 382. See also Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', p. 23-32. See the material found in Schaefer, *Synopse*, pars 562, 566, 707-9. This understanding does not preclude other functions of the names like the apotropaic one, and they should also be taken into account.
- 84 Marcos, quoted in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereticorum*, 1.14; Idel, 'Il Mondo degli angeli', pp. 2-10; Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 23-42; and Groezinger, 'The Names of God', p. 64 note 2.
- 85 Schaefer, *Synopse*, p. 37, pars 72, 73.
- 86 For more on this issue, see the Introduction and the Appendix.
- 87 For an attempt to differentiate between the youth and Metatron according to some versions in the Heikhalot literature, see Davila, 'Melchizedek', pp. 261-2. However, even if the distinction between the two in some texts is accepted, the youth is related to Enoch, as Davila recognizes, based upon the parallel to 2 *Enoch*, where Enoch is described as a youth. See also Segal, 'The Ruler of the

- World', p. 47 note 12 and Orlov's important study, 'The Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch'. For more on *na'ar* see Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, pp. 82, 188-92, and Abrams, 'The Boundaries', p. 295. As I have attempted to show elsewhere, the term *na'ar*, when occurring in the context of Metatron, should be understood as pointing to a high-ranking official, and thus as closer to the proposal in this chapter that some form of sonship is involved in this title, rather than as referring to the more humble role of a servant, as some modern scholars assume. See Idel, 'Metatron', p. 36. As to the more elevated meaning of *na'ar* in ancient texts, some predating the Enochic literature, see Nahman Avigad, 'The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society', in eds, P.D. Miller, Jr., P.H. Hanson & S.D. McBride, *Ancient Israelite Religion, Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1987), p. 205; Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Scholars Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981), pp. 126-30; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 312-13; David Halperin, 'Hekhalot and Mi'raj: Observations on the Heavenly Journey in Judaism and Islam', in eds, John Collins & Michael Fishbane, *Death, Ecstasy and Otherworldly Journeys* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), pp. 281-2; and Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, pp. 275-6, 280-1.
- 88 Schaefer, *Synopse*, pars 389-90; *Numbers Rabba'* 12.12; and R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, *The Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, cf. *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 13, fol. 2b, par. 43, fol. 6a. See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 49; Liebermann, *Shkiin*, pp. 14, 99; Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 133-4; Elior, *Temple and Chariot*, p. 254; and Abusch, 'Rabbi Ishmael', pp. 339-40. This theory of a double tabernacle may have an echo in the passage from the later layers of the *Zohar*, *Tiqunei Zohar*, where a double Paradise is described, one of which being that of Metatron. See *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 27a and Chapter 4 below. For Metatron as a high priest see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 113-20, who adduced a pertinent bibliography, and Boustani, *From Martyr to Mystic*, pp. 133-9.
- 89 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 7a. See also *Synopse*, par. 597; Elior, *ibid.*, p. 255; Klaus Herrmann, *Massekhet Hekhalot* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1992), pp. 291-2. For the possible priestly background of Enoch in 1 *Enoch* see Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests, Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 28-30, 56-7, and her earlier bibliography on the topic.
- 90 Compare the differing approach of Elior, *Temple and Chariot*, who emphasizes the paramount importance of the priestly origin of the Heikhalot literature.
- 91 See Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', and Farber-Ginnat, 'Inquiries in *Shi'ur Qomah*'.
- 92 See e.g. Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, pp. 79-146; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 43-55; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, *passim*; Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology'; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 118-21; Davila, 'Of Methodology'; Davila, 'Melchizedek'; Idel, 'Metatron'; Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron'.
- 93 This understanding is exemplified by remarks by Joseph Dan, followed and elaborated upon by Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 84-5 notes 27, p. 88, p. 112 note 94. This reading is an example of the application of a sort of logic in a place in which

another logic exists. Compare, however, to the views quoted in the Introduction above from the studies of Kraeling, Borsch, Collins, and immediately below to those of Saul Liebermann and especially Alan Segal, about what is found in the late antiquity texts and the religious categories they believe may explain them. Given this misunderstanding of what is possible in some type of texts, Kaplan's entire project fails. Would he have contemplated the possibility of the existence of an 'office', an idea to which different scholars have adhered as we shall see below, he may have had second thoughts. After all, the reasoning of *Ba'alei ha-Tsafot*, that also inspired so much of Kaplan's reasoning, is not the only form of religious thought available in Judaism. Needless to say I was aware of those 'quandaries', *qushiyyot*, but did not think that I had to address them.

- 94 See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, p. 235, and Van der Horst, 'Moses' Throne', pp. 26–7.
- 95 See his *The Scepter and the Star*, p. 8; Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 154–6; and also Davila, 'Of Methodology', p. 1 note 15.
- 96 Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 180. See also his 'Ruler of the World', p. 245, and the quotation from Segal in Van der Horst, 'Moses' Throne', p. 25.
- 97 Van der Horst, *Essays on the Jewish World of Early Christianity* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1990), p. 82, quoted by Wolfson, 'Metatron and *Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 91 note 152, but without mentioning Segal's view.
- 98 *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 72.
- 99 For discussions of this situation see Wayne A. Meeks, 'Moses as King and God', in ed., Jacob Neusner, *Religions in Antiquity; Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (Brill, Leiden, 1968), pp. 354–71; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 128–9; Collins, 'A Throne in Heaven', pp. 51–2; Fossum, 'The Adorable Adam', p. 536; Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 75; Van der Horst, 'Moses' Throne'; Segal, 'Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism', p. 102; Philip J. Munro III, 'Jesus, Merkavah and Martyrdom, in Early Christian Tradition', *JBL* 121 (2) (2002), p. 313; and Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, p. 155.
- 100 See Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism', pp. 17–21. See also DeConick, 'Becoming God's Body', pp. 32–3. See also Daphna V. Arbel, '“Understanding of the Heart”: Spiritual Transformation and Divine Revelations in the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature', *JSQ* 6 (4) (1999), pp. 320–44.
- 101 *Cosmology and Eschatology*, p. 156.
- 102 See Abu Ma'shar, *Book of Thousands*, ed. David Pingree (Warburg Institute, London, 1968), pp. 4–15.
- 103 Ibn Abī Uṣāibī'a, 'Uyūn al-anbā', pp. 16–17. Cf. Tamara Green, *The City of the Moon God, Religious Traditions of Harran* (Brill, Leiden, 1992), pp. 71, 137; Martin Plessner, 'Hermes Trismegistus and Arab Science', *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), p. 51; and Amar Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Finland, 2002), p. 196. It should be mentioned that in the *Qu'ran*, Sura 19.57–58, Idris is described as a righteous that has been elevated on high,

- presumably because of the impact of pseudepigraphical literature. See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 26–7. See also the later reverberation of the issue of the triple Hermes and the identification of the first with Enoch in the fourteenth-century commentator of an alchemical work, named Aydamur Jaldaki. Cf. Henry Corbin, *Le livre des sept statues* (Le Herne, Paris, 2003), pp. 79, 134 note 30.
- 104 See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism'. On Metatron and Hermes, see Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 110; Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 132, 159 note 118; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 164–7. Let me draw attention to an interesting situation: following the findings of some scholars, especially Mark Philonenko and Pearson, it seems that Enochic material especially as found in *2 Enoch* found its way to the Hermetic corpus, which was better known in the Middle Ages, and could thus mediate elements stemming from Jewish circles. See Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 136–47.
- 105 *Piqqadetiv*. Compare to the parallel verb *Paqadukha*, pointed out by Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 64 in the Mandaean *Ginza Rabba*.
- 106 According to a manuscript reading adduced by Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 66 (Hebrew): 'Eliad meyiḥad.
- 107 *Benei Marom*. As Mopsik, *Le Livre Hébreu d'Hénoch*, p. 375 has sensitively pointed out there is language here that is reminiscent of the election and sonship though the term son has been deliberately avoided.
- 108 *3 Enoch*, ch. 48, pp. 165–6, version K; Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 351, and *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, p. 27. Regarding this paragraph see Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 420–4; Kuyt, *The 'Descent' to the Chariot*, pp. 364–6; Ketterer, *Alphabet of R. Aqiba*, vol. 1, pp. 90–1; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hébreu d'Hénoch*, p. 357; and Alexander, *3 Enoch*, p. 311 note 3. In this note Alexander cites the different interpretations for the verb 'evartiv. According to Alexander, the expression 'the generation of Adam' alludes to the fact that Enoch was still alive at the end of Adam's lifetime; however despite the existence of such a tradition, I am not convinced that this interpretation exhausts the meaning of the expression. This is because nearby Enoch is also described as someone who lived in the flood generation. In my opinion, the anonymous author alludes to the existence of Metatron parallel to Adam. It is possible (cf. the use of the verb 'br in 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqiva; Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 424) that it has the meaning of 'creating', in the context of the mission assigned to Adam: this is so for 'Moses' and for Enoch; cf. *1 Enoch*, ch. 71, in which it is stated to Enoch: 'You are the man who was born for charity', following Erik Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn in Athiopischen Henochbuch* (C.W.K. Gleerup, Lund, 1946), pp. 56, 152. Of special importance is Sjöberg's argument on pp. 173–7, which is based on an essay on Metatron by Odeberg, published in Swedish after he wrote his work on *3 Enoch*. According to Sjöberg, 'evartiv alludes to the prior existence of Metatron as a sort of 'general soul', a conception which undoubtedly was influenced by the Kabbalah, in which Metatron is both the 'Supernal Adam' and the totality of all the souls. It seems, following an early tradition, that Enoch was preordained for a special task. See Erwin Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (Yale

- University Press, New Haven, 1935), p. 330. See also Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore*, p. 192, 193.
- 109 Ps. 104.31.
- 110 Gen. 1.11.
- 111 Fol. 60a. On this passage see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 44, 131; Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 84 note 24; Davila, 'Melchizedek', p. 261 note 20; and Segal, 'The Ruler of this World', pp. 45ff. On the figure of the 'Prince of the World' see the important remarks of Liebes, 'De Natura Dei', pp. 278–80, and Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 235–6 note 8.
- 112 See above, Introduction.
- 113 See Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 152.
- 114 See Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*. Interestingly enough, the author regards expressly, from the very first page of his book, the concept of the double body of the king as pertaining to the realm of mysticism, found 'at the warm twilight of myth and fiction' or to the 'mystic fiction', cf. p. 3.
- 115 Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, the Hebrew on p. 66, for the English translation see *ibid.*, pp. 165–6, and see also his view on p. 83; and Alexander, *3 Enoch, OTP*, vol. 1, p. 311. Their translation has been quoted also by Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 96, and he adopts their understanding of the passage. However, I wonder why Kaplan attributes to me the resort to this variant in my 'Enoch is Metatron', despite the fact that I adopt another version there, one which I quoted some pages above! I refrained there from using that variant, but Kaplan carelessly mixed two different variants, and attributes to me one which I did not actually use.
- 116 See Chapter 4, cf. Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 6 (Hebrew).
- 117 *Yalqut Shimoni*, Bereshit, par. 41.
- 118 Cf. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 165 and note 1.
- 119 See, however, the opinion of Joseph Dan who determines that Metatron could not have taken part in the Creation, since he appeared only after the apotheosis of Enoch: 'Anafiel, Metatron, and the Creator', *Tarbiz* 52 (1983), p. 456. This either/or approach, found also in Kaplan, 'Adam', *passim*, testifies to a simplistic understanding of a religious complexity that differs from the modern logic adopted by these two scholars. See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 49–51.
- 120 See the texts adduced by Abrams, 'The Boundaries', pp. 312–13. For a similar understanding of Metatron see Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 90.
- 121 Anderson, 'Exaltation of Adam', p. 107 describes Enoch as if he is an 'elected Son'.
- 122 See Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 46; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 312–13, note 139; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 65; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 133–6; and Boyarin, *Border Lines*, p. 141 as well as note 227 below.
- 123 *2 En.* 44.1–3; *Le Livre des secrets d'Enoch*, ed. & tr. A. Vaillant (Institute des Etudes slaves, Paris, 1976), pp. 46–7. Also see Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, p. 102.
- 124 Against the background of these traditions, the most interesting aspect of Zoharic theosophy, which presupposes two faces within the divine sphere, 'Arikh 'anppin and Ze'yir 'anppin, can be more easily understood. See Idel,

- Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 134–5 for other sources that influenced the emergence of these two faces. Ze'yir 'Anppin is identified with the sixth *sefirah*, with the six *sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Yessod*, a divine manifestation that is widely symbolized by the son. For more on this issue see Chapter 4 below.
- 125 See *Re'uyyot Ezeqiel*, ed. Gruenwald, pp. 128–9. For the understanding of Daniel as a form of proto-Merkavah description, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 36–7. See also Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 263–4; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 45–6.
- 126 See Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Henoch*, pp. 189–91 and Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 46–7. For Muslim parallels see Schneider, 'Enoch', p. 309 note 83; and Philip Alexander, 'Jewish Tradition in Early Islam: The Case of Enoch/Idrîs', in eds, G.R. Hawting, J.A. Mojaddedi & A. Samely, *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), pp. 11–29.
- 127 Ps. 37.25. It should be pointed out that the emphasis on both being old and young is clear in Mandaic sources dealing with parallels to *3 Enoch*. See the texts adduced by Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 68.
- 128 BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 16b. On this passage see Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 131; Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p. 57; Davila, 'Melchizedek', p. 261 note 20; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 312–13; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 46. See also Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 84 note 24, and p. 111 note 94. Kaplan avoided analyzing this Talmudic statement and opts to refer to other scholars' views or to that of the medieval *Ba'alei ha-Tossafot*. He was apparently unwilling to take a position of his own. Understanding this rabbinic passage in the manner that I propose here, by resorting to the Heikhalot literature and to the background of the full verse from Ps. 37 the content of which was not taken into consideration, cuts the question of a 'classical Rabbinism' espoused by Kaplan, basically following Joseph Dan. I shall return to their vision of 'compact Rabbinism' in my monograph on *Adam, Enoch and Metatron*, currently in preparation.
- 129 'The Titles of Enoch-Metatron', pp. 80–2.
- 130 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–6. Surprisingly enough, Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 94 note 54 and in general pp. 94–5, shows that he was 'impressed' in his reading of *2 Enoch* that Enoch was not accorded a special status in this book. To quote him verbatim: 'The overwhelming general impression one receives from *2 Enoch* is that despite Enoch's being granted this particular boon [knowledge of secrets] he is not accorded any superior angelic status.' I suspect that for Kaplan – the 'one' in the statement – neither the reception of secrets nor the governing of the earth are special boons, and this is the reason why he was not overwhelmed. Orlov apparently was not overwhelmed but compared this governing status of Enoch to the Hebrew material, but it seems that everyone is overwhelmed in different ways by the same material, and Kaplan did not see the difference between Enoch in *2 Enoch* and the other angels. This appears to me simply a matter of subjective taste. Apparently the fact that Enoch was described as the divine scribe is nothing special. Perhaps in the version Kaplan had it is not written that Enoch was brought closer to God than Gabriel. It should be mentioned that the

- similarity between Metatron and Gabriel as both having been punished in the same manner, according to rabbinic sources, may point to an early affinity between the two angelic powers that has something to do with *2 Enoch*.
- 131 'Adam', p. 77, and p. 111 note 94 where he determines that: 'we cannot identify the talmudic Metatron with the transformed Enoch'. As to the major assumption of Kaplan concerning the alleged absence of the 'mystical pattern' according to which 'a righteous individual ascends to heaven during his lifetime and then is transformed into an angelic or angel-like being' (ibid., p. 77), I can express only my huge surprise. What he calls rabbinic 'classical' Judaism in fact amplified the importance of such a figure to the maximum, and it is a wonder that a scholar of the stature of Kaplan can so blatantly ignore this well-known interpretation of Elijah in rabbinic literature. In fact, we have here an interesting case of the theophoric mediator. By his own criterion, Kaplan's 'classical' Rabbinism has dramatically enhanced the mystical pattern whose presence he so categorically denies. I assume that Kaplan may be aware that blessings are addressed by rabbinic Jews daily to Elijah to return. For the inter-penetrability of the human and the divine realms in some rabbinic and other texts see Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 15–16.
- 132 *3 Enoch*, p. 104. See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 44, 48–9, who did not accept this identification. Cf. also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 312–13.
- 133 See Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 94–5 especially note 57, where he adduces the various stands of scholars on this issue. On the possibility that views found in *2 Enoch* had an impact in the Middle Ages, see Chapter 4 below.
- 134 BT *Hagigah*, fol. 14a; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 46. See also Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 140–1.
- 135 His identification between the youth of the Heikhalot and an earlier tradition about Melchizedek as a youth, though suppressing some diverging details is certainly not impossible but it is somewhat tenuous, as the author himself confesses. As is well known Melchizedek played an important role in some forms of Gnosticism, and has been attributed a main role in the emergence of this form of religion by Moritz Friedlaender, *Der vorchristliche juedische Gnosticismus* (Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1989), and Pearson's survey, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 10–28, and his own discussion of this figure in *Gnosticism*, ibid., pp. 108–22.
- 136 See Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', p. 108.
- 137 For the two last figures as youths see Davila, 'Melchizedek', pp. 267–73.
- 138 See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 68–9, 191, and Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 313.
- 139 See Davila, 'Melchizedek', p. 257: 'And the Youth, this is the one who is inscribed with seven voices, with seven letters, with seventy in six by six' points to the fact that there are two spellings of the name of Metatron: one of six letters, without a *Yod*, and one of seven letters, where the *Yod* is added. See also the text from *Shi'ur Qomah*, printed in Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 960, and in his *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 126. For Arabic testimonies regarding these two names as pointing to two forms of Metatron, see Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 135, Peter Schaefer & Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1994),

- vol. 1, pp. 19, 32, 164, 173, and later on in kabbalistic literature, see e.g. Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 202–3 and note 6, and Wolfson, *Through the Speculum*, p. 261; R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, Commentary on the Merkavah, in *Commentaries on the Merkavah by R. Eleazar of Worms and R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen*, eds. A. Farber-Ginnat & D. Abrams (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2004), p. 110. It should be pointed out that in the manuscripts of the Heikhalot literature as it has been preserved in manuscripts both the plain and the deficient spellings are found. See also Liebermann in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, p. 240 note 54, and Chapter 2 note 278 below. For a similar situation when a letter is added to a name of an angel, in this case Tanar'el, specifying the difference in the name of the angel by the numbers of letters, see the Geniza text printed by Schaefer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, pp. 102–3, also discussed from another point of view by Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, p. 286. Also in this case, this is a name of the angel of the face: *TNRD'L*.
- 140 See note 108 above.
- 141 Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 103.
- 142 Cf. Isa. 48.8. Compare to the affinity between beloved and sonship also in the description of the baptism of Jesus in the Arabic source translated by Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, p. 273. See also note 235 below.
- 143 On the issue of the seed and son, see Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, pp. 210–11.
- 144 *Tzedaqah*. For the importance of righteousness in ancient and many medieval perceptions of Enoch, see more below and especially in the Appendix. For the hypostatic status of *Tzedeq* in Qumran, see note 23 above.
- 145 Gen. 15.6.
- 146 Ch. 6.4. See Alison Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yesira, Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 2004), par. 61, pp. 181–6, where most of the manuscripts include this passage. My translation differs on some points from that of Hayman's. See also Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, pp. 169–70; Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 103; and Idel, *Golem*, p. 14. I have found medieval echoes of this formula which include the reference to Abraham as son: see the anonymous Ashkenazi *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, MS. Parma de-Rossi 1390, fol. 82b; R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, printed in *Sodei Razaya* (Jerusalem, 2004), p. 292, and his *Hilkhot Hasidut, Sefer ha-Roqeah* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 19, in R. Abraham Abulafia's 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 1.6, p. 162; we shall return to this issue further on in Chapter 3 below. See also Abulafia's student, R. Natan ben Sa'adya, *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 373–4. Interestingly enough, in a short statement found in MS. British Library 752, fol. 46b, which though copied in the fourteenth century sometimes adduces material that reflects material stemming from early thirteenth-century Ashkenazi esoteric literature, which is quite plausibly written by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, it is said that 'The Holy One, blessed be He, gave *Sefer Yetzirah* to Abraham, His son' – *Abraham Beno*. See also Chapter 2 note 85, for another discussion from this manuscript that deals with Abraham and the figure 52. It is interesting that sonship has been attributed to Abraham, whose name starts with

- 'AB, the consonants of the noun Father. This passage is reminiscent of the ritual of introducing the small children in the study of the alphabet, from several points of view: the matter of the bosom is found in both cases, the relationship between God as father and Adam as a son, and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, including their permutations are mentioned. See Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, pp. 27, 90–1. It is very difficult to establish the precise date of this passage in *Sefer Yetzirah* but in any case it predates Jewish European descriptions of the childhood ritual, and may serve as an important indication as to early Jewish sources for these traditions. In any case it is plausible that this particular version has been known by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. See also below, notes 195 and 314. For a passage of a theosophical-theurgical Kabbalist that implies that Abraham was like a son to God see R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, *Sefer Baddei 'Aron*, MS. Paris BN 840, fol. 10a. I wonder to what extent the view of Abraham in Arabic sources, as the friend of God, which may sometimes parallel the concept of sonship, is connected to our topic here. See Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 120–7. It should be mentioned that another son-figure, Jesus, is described in the context of the bosom of God in Jn 1.18.
- 147 Schaefer, *Synopse*, pp. 9–10. The reason for my rough translation will become clear immediately below.
- 148 Ibid. Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 13.1, pp. 265. In note c to this passage Alexander pointed out the correspondence between the occurrences of the 22 letters in a cosmogonical context here and in another passage in *Sefer Yetzirah*.
- 149 On this text see Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 149. For an interpretation of the verse see *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 1.6.2; 1.7.3 and the discussion of DeConick, 'Heavenly Temple', p. 322.
- 150 *Border Lines*, pp. 129–30.
- 151 Jer. 1.5.
- 152 Cf. 6. See Hayman, *Sefer Yesira*, pp. 181–2; and Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 98–9.
- 153 See Liebes, *ibid.*, p. 69.
- 154 See *Genesis Rabba'* 39.11, and 63.7. For more on Abraham and the concept of Sonship, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–9. On the connection between righteousness and adoptive sonship see the Judeo-Christian material analyzed by Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 122.
- 155 *The Death and Resurrection*, pp. 143–69.
- 156 See, for Enoch, Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, ch. 12, p. 17 (Hebrew).
- 157 See *Jos. Asen.* 14.8–9.
- 158 'Setze dich zu meiner Rechte', p. 154.
- 159 As mentioned above, both forms are found in late antiquity Judaism and a comparison between them is a desideratum.
- 160 Alexander has the elegant phrase 'denizens of the heights' which is lofty English, but the point of the possible implicit sonship disappears.
- 161 See note 108 above.
- 162 Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 5; Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 4.2, p. 258 note 1; Kuyt, *The 'Descent' to the Chariot*, pp. 350–1.

- 163 For the role of the angels in this context, see Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', pp. 104–6.
- 164 Compare to Isa. 42:
1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the nations.
  3. . . . he shall bring forth judgment to truth.
  4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth; and the islands shall wait for his Torah.
  5. Thus said God the Lord, he who created the heavens, and stretched them out; he who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; he who gives breath to the people upon it, and spirit to those who walk in it;
  6. I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light to the nations.
- On the affinity between this chapter and the vision of Jesus, see Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 257–8.
- 165 Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 6.
- 166 It should be pointed out that the term *qaṭan* has been sometimes understood as a designation for the righteous. See BT *Hullin*, fol. 60b, and Liebes, 'De Natura Dei', pp. 283–4. On the affinity between the righteous, *qaṭan*, and Enoch, see the passage from R. Ṭuviah ben Eliezer's *Leqah Tov*, translated below in the Appendix. For the hypostatic Jacob designated as *qaṭan*, see the sources and bibliography mentioned in my study 'Commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shelomo', p. 239 note 610.
- 167 See *ibid.*, par. 3; Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 4.2, p. 258; 4.10, p. 259. This is also the case in *Shi'ur Qomah*. See Davila, 'Melchizedek', p. 256. On references to the youth in Heikhalot literature, see also Kuyt, *The 'Descent'*, pp. 46–7, 308, 350–1, 353, 354, 360.
- 168 See Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 12.2, p. 265: 'And He called me: The lesser YHWH.' Nevertheless, elsewhere in Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 3.2, p. 257, God does call Metatron by the name Youth. See also note 197 below, where *na'ar* is understood in the context of his relationship to God and not to the angels. I assume that in this term two different meanings have been conflated: the son/servant one, related to God, and the ministerial one, related to the higher status of this mediating figure in comparison to the angels. For a survey of this concept and of the paragraphs where the term youth occurs in the Heikhalot literature, see Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 424–7, 491–4. See also Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 128–9, 131–4.
- 169 I cannot enter here into the complex question of the two Metatrons, whose existence was conceived of by Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 112 note 95, as a kabbalistic solution for the problems he believes that the Kabbalists encountered. His attribution of a synthetic approach to the Kabbalists, which gravitates around the allegedly new view of two Metatrons, is presumably wrong since a similar view has been in existence before Kabbalah. See Schneider, 'Enoch', pp. 306, 309 note 83. Thus neither the problems Kaplan imagined to have haunted the

- Kabbalists or the earlier Jewish writers, nor the alleged 'synthetic solution' he imagined they invented in order to solve those 'problems', have anything to do with the texts he adduced. Here we see a scholar dealing with what he conceives to be problems and with what he conceives to be their solutions. Though this is a totally legitimate activity, it must also reflect the texts and their history. The double Metatron is hardly a solution of the Kabbalists since the basic category is paralleled in Muslim texts independent of Kabbalah. See also above note 140. For a much later compilation of several statements related to Metatron as a youth, in a pronounced messianic and Christological context – though sonship is rather marginal in those discussions – see Machado, *The Mirror*, pp. 164–7.
- 170 Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 9. For a slightly different translation, see Alexander, *3 Enoch*, 6.3, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 261. For the concept of faith as related to righteousness, see the occurrence of the expression 'ba'alei 'emunah' in *3 En.* ch. 48 and additional sources adduced by Orlov, *The Enoch/Metatron Tradition*, pp. 296–8.
- 171 On this verse see the discussion further on in this chapter.
- 172 It should be pointed out that in several instances in late antiquity Jewish texts, like the Septuagint, Philo and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, Enoch was described as delighting God. For a similar stand in the Hasidic understanding of the righteous, see Chapter 6 below.
- 173 See Ephrayyim E. Urbach, 'The Traditions about Merkabah Mysticism in the Tannaitic Period', *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 1–27 (Hebrew) and implicitly also in Kaplan, 'Adam'.
- 174 Alexander, *3 Enoch*, 4.2, p. 258 note i. See also Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', p. 104. For a proposal to understand the verb *ziugani* as an encounter with the *alter ego* of Enoch, see Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Enoch*, pp. 225–7. Ingenuous as this proposal is, it seems to me that it reflects a type of thought that is not found in the Heikhalot literature, though it occurs later on in medieval Jewish mysticism.
- 175 As we know from other Midrashic sources this angel revealed himself to Joseph, teaching him 70 languages. See BT *Sotah*, fol. 36a. In a late Lurianic source, to be dealt with below in the Appendix, the beauty of Joseph has been connected to that of Enoch and Adam.
- 176 See 'Otzar ha-Midrashim, ed. Yehuda Eisenstein (Reznik, New York, 1956), vol. 2, p. 439; Schneider, 'Enoch', p. 303 note 58. See also Abusch, 'R. Ishmael', pp. 313–14 note 21. See also above, note 131. Let me mention that R. Abusch, now Ra'anana S. Boustani's book related to issues found in his article reached me too late in order to allow me to fully integrate it in my discussions here. See *From Martyr to Mystic*.
- 177 See Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 583 and Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*, p. 54.
- 178 See Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 147 note 48.
- 179 See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 64, 157: 'but He joined fellowship with Moses'.

- Odeberg's interpretation is, *ibid.* note to par. 7, 'associated Himself with, revealed Himself face to face to'.
- 180 *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 1, ch. 7, pp. 10–12. See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 189; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Enoch*, pp. 227–30; and Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 301–2.
- 181 See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 189–91; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 105; and Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 301–2.
- 182 *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 2, ch. 86, p. 196.
- 183 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, ch. 140, p. 361, 363, 364.
- 184 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, ch. 86, p. 195.
- 185 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, ch. 136, p. 353.
- 186 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 106.
- 187 *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 1, ch. 8, pp. 13–14.
- 188 See above, note 182. On Enoch as prophet in an ancient Jewish book see *Jub.* 4.19, and Najman, *Second Sinai*, p. 121.
- 189 See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 135 and the pertinent footnotes.
- 190 Vol. 1, ch. 61, pp. 120–3.
- 191 See *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.5.2. See Eisenman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 35 note 66, p. 196 note 4.
- 192 *Contra Celsum*, 6.31. See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 198.
- 193 See his *Major Trends*, p. 72. On the veil see also the Gnostic *Untitled Text*, p. 251.
- 194 The Hebrew is awkward: it reads *meshiv*, while the meaning assumes the form *moshiv*.
- 195 The word *be-heiqo* is not full but the recurrence of the phrase in Heikhalot literature makes Davila's translation quite plausible. See also *Heikhalot Rabbati*, in Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 417 and the sources and discussion in Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, p. 297. Interestingly enough, a recurring representation in Christian treatments of Abraham resorts to the theme of Abraham's bosom. See Jerome Baschet, 'Medieval Abraham: Between Fleshly Patriarch and Divine Father', *Modern Language Notes* 108 (1993), pp. 738–58. Thanks are due to Professor Israel Yuval, who drew my attention to this study. See also above note 146.
- 196 Schaefer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 105, lines 15–16, and the note on p. 111 on the occurrence of the theophoric name elsewhere. This passage has been translated in English by Davila, and discussed in 'Melchizedek', pp. 255–9. See also Kuyt, *The 'Descent'*, pp. 46–7 and Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, p. 369.
- 197 Davila, *ibid.*, p. 259. For a theory on seeing in this form an abbreviation of *Zehu 'Eved Yah*, the servant of *Yah*, see Mopsik, *Le livre Hebreu d'Enoch*, p. 230. I am not convinced by this suggestion since it ignores the other theomorphic forms related to the root *ZBD*.
- 198 See especially in *Sar ha-Torah*, cf. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 66, 68, 85, 90–1, as well as the different forms related to this root in *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 56 and the variants for line 17. Also the form *ZBDY'L* is known in this literature as well as in *Sefer ha-Razim*, p. 82. To my best knowledge the recurrence of the theophoric forms related to *ZBD* in the Heikhalot literature passed unnoticed in scholarship. See the passing references in Kuyt, *The 'Descent'*, pp. 45, 47, 54, 56,

- 59, 164, 318, 343, 360, 362; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 377, 378, 381; and Davila, *Descenders of the Chariot*, p. 107, 109. For a theophoric structure in which a Greek word, *trapeza*, table, has been conjugated with the Tetragrammaton in order to create a name for an angel, see Gideon Bohak, 'Remains of Greek Words and Magical Formulae in Heikhalot Literature', *Kabbalah* 6 (2001), p. 124.
- 199 See *Major Trends*, p. 363 note 57. Compare also to Halperin, *ibid.*, p. 377 note 19, who prefers in a certain instance the form *Zekhuni'el* to *Zebudi'el*.
- 200 See Schafer, *Synopse*, par. 682. Compare to Davila's attempt, 'Melchizedek', p. 259, to disassociate between the *Na'ar* which bears the theophoric name, and Metatron. In some other cases, the form *ZBDY'L* is related to *YHWH 'Elohei Israel*. See also Wolfson, 'Yeridah la-Merkavah', pp. 20–1.
- 201 See *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, in Schafer, *Synopse*, par. 583, cf. the translation of Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, p. 281, and see also Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*, p. 54, where the form given is *ZBWZY'L*, and in *Heikhalot Rabbati*, cf. the passage translated in Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 100.
- 202 See Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 259.
- 203 Schafer, *Synopse*, pars 204, 309–10, 678, 682.
- 204 Cf. Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 108. See also *Harba' de-Moshe*, ed. Yuval Harari (Akademon, Jerusalem, 1997), p. 26.
- 205 Ch. 19. This specific form is paralleled by other theophoric syntagms: see *ShBWRV'L* stemming from *ShBR* – to break – plus a W after the second consonant and the suffix Y'L. This is also the case in the syntagm which is found together with it, *RtTzWTzY'L*, which is based on the verb *RTzTz*, 'to shatter'. See *Sar ha-Torah*, Schafer, *Synopse*, par. 219. I wonder if the occurrence of the name *ZBWRV'L* in *Heikhalot Rabbati*, *ibid.*, par. 416, is not a corruption of *ZBWDY'L*, where the *Dalet* has been misunderstood for a *Resh*.
- 206 Ch. 40.
- 207 *Seder Rabba de-Bereshit*, cf. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 1, p. 29.
- 208 Cf. Gen. 30.20. It should be pointed out that the root *ZBD* occurs in a context of the relation between father and son in an Ashkenazi poem written in the eleventh century by the famous poet R. Shime'on bar Yitzhaq: 'The father gave to the son what is needed in order to equip the building.' I translated the form *lehazvid* by 'to equip'. See *Liturgical Poems of R. Shim'on bar Yishaq*, ed. A.M. Haberman (Schocken, Berlin, Jerusalem, 1938), p. 39.
- 209 Other translations are 'gift' or 'endowment'.
- 210 See the material adduced by Menachem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, vol. 5 (American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, New York, 1952), p. 1198 note 66 (Hebrew).
- 211 See *Re'uyyot Ezekiel*, ed. Gruenwald, pp. 128–9 and Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, p. 140; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 46; and Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 66.
- 212 Neh. 11.14.
- 213 See e.g. Ezra 8.6 or Neh. 8.7 etc.
- 214 Ezra 8.8.

- 215 2 Chronicles 17.8.
- 216 2 Kgs 12.22.
- 217 For the possibility that Yohanan the son of Zabdah, a figure mentioned in the Hebrew Oath of the Physician, is no other than Yohanan ben Zebdee, see Shlomo Pines, 'The Oath of Asaph the Physician', *The Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 157–61, 163.
- 218 See *Midrash Aleph Beit*, ed. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 455.
- 219 It should be mentioned that God called many rabbinic figures and some of the mystics who ascend to the Merkavah by using the name 'My son'. See e.g. the *Sar ha-Torah* literature and Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 85. See also below our discussions about R. Hanina ben Dosa'.
- 220 See the text printed by Schaefer, *Hekhalot Studien*, p. 110.
- 221 Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 682.
- 222 On this issue see Idel, *Golem*, pp. 14–15 and compare Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 103–4.
- 223 See the passages analyzed by Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 98–101. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 245–7 and the interesting discussion found in R. Yehudah he-Hasid's *Sefer Gematria'ot*, p. 28. On the fear that Adam would be conceived of as a partner, *shutaf*, to God were he created on the first day, see BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b. See also Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 112.
- 224 See *Genesis Rabba*' 8.5 and *Ruth Rabba*' 2.3. Another interesting resort to the term *shutaf* in rabbinic literature portrays God as one of three partners in creating the child in addition to the two parents. He is conceived of as contributing the more spiritual components of the person. On the entire issue emphasizing the possibility that God was imagined as giving the configuration of the face and the posture of the body, see Idel, 'From Italy to Germany and Back', pp. 61–70.
- 225 See Segal, 'Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism', p. 103. See also Stoyanov, *The Other God*, p. 279. Sometimes Philo describes Moses as a God.
- 226 See Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 46; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 65, 71; and Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, p. 133. For an implicit connection between the Son of God and Metatron see Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p. 62 note 86; Corbin, 'Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth', p. 109 note 94; Green, *Keter*, pp. 24–5; and the remark of Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, p. CI note 196. See also note 122 above.
- 227 See, however, the magical treatise *Havdalah de-Rabbi Aqivah*, in ed. Scholem, *Devils*, p. 160 note 33 and p. 171 and footnote 100 in that text.
- 228 Cf. Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham*, p. 175 note 20 interprets this expression as dealing with the bosom of God, and adduces expressions related to the 'bosom of Abraham' from the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud. The *Sefer Yetzirah* passage is, however, a much better parallel.
- 229 Ch. 20, Delcor, *ibid.*, p. 171. In pseudepigraphic literature also Enoch has been taken into the Paradise. See *Jub.* 4.23, discussed by Najman, *Second Sinai*, pp. 121–2.

- 230 See *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 63–5 and see also Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, p. 238.
- 231 *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 105–6, and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 155–6, where he also adduced references to Jesus as the face of God. See also DeConick, 'Becoming God's Body', p. 26. See also Chapter 4 below and the discussion of the Lesser Countenance in the esoteric theosophy of the *Zohar* as the son of the Greater Countenance.
- 232 'The Exaltation of Adam', pp. 107–10.
- 233 See also above, the passage on Abraham and Glory.
- 234 Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, ch. 48.7,9, version C, p. 169, Hebrew p. 68. This version has not been translated in Alexander. I did not find any significant attempt to address the content of this version in his translation. See the occasional reference of Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, p. 439, and his conclusion that 'This conception is clearly not Jewish in origin.' It seems that Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 82, where he claims that the expression *YHWH Qatan* 'evidently reflects Gnostic ideas', influenced him. See also *ibid.*, p. 85. However, as mentioned above in the Introduction, this assumption of an angel that has the name of God is well documented in Philo of Alexandria, and there is therefore no necessity to assume a Gnostic source. Let me point out the existence in the Qumran literature of a reconstructed statement – a reconstruction that seems quite plausible – to the effect that God relates to Mahalalel or to Enoch, 'as a father to [his] s[on],' and later on in the same document 'and your good judgements you explained to [. . .] in eternal light, and you made him for you a first-bo[rn] son.' See 4Q369 1.2.10, 1.2.5–6 respectively. See the literature on these lines in Jackson, *Enochic Judaism*, p. 111 and Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 196–7. Though these lines may be reminiscent of the biblical verses in Ps. 89.27–8, and 2 Sam. 7.14, here, to believe scholars in the field, it is Enoch that is addressed, and thus we have some form of parallel to the *3 Enoch* passage under scrutiny. For the Hebrew Bible's imagery of the love of God as father to his sons see D.J. McCarthy, 'Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father–Son Relationship between Yahweh and Israel', *CBQ* 27 (1965), pp. 144–7.
- 235 It should be mentioned that in the critique of the rabbinic and Heikhalot anthropomorphisms by the Karaite author Salomon ben Yeruḥim, Enoch is always described as loved by God but not as a son. Interestingly enough, in one case he describes the patriarch as 'youth of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and he is Enoch ben Yared, His beloved', see *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*, ed. Yoseph el-Gamil (Tifereth Yoseph, Ramlah, 2000), p. 147. See also note 142 above where beloved is related to sonship and Jesus.
- 236 For another instance in which Metatron points to Moses by his finger, see *Sifrei* on Deut. 32.49, and Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 91–2.
- 237 In Hebrew *li-veno*, in the singular, and Alexander translated it correctly as 'his son', *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 296. In other manuscript versions there is also the variant *le-vanav*, 'to his sons'.
- 238 Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, ch. 45.2, p. 141, Hebrew p. 58. On the more general context

- of this passage, see Margaret Barker, 'Beyond the Veil of the Temple', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 (1998), p. 7, and the description of God teaching Abraham the letters according to a certain version of *Sefer Yetzirah* adduced above. According to early Jewish sources it is incumbent on the father to teach his son. See Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, pp. 14, 35, 41, 44. For the phrase '*Ke-'av li-veno*' – like a father to his son – see the Qumran *Prayer of Enosh* (4Q369), translated and discussed by Garcia Martinez, 'Divine Sonship at Qumran', p. 128.
- 239 Alexander, *3 Enoch, OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 236–7. For more on the text of Origen, see Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 50–1.
- 240 *Contra Celsum* 6.31. Compare also the Ophitic prayer to the archon in 6.26, adduced above, in which son and father are again mentioned. On the seal in ancient Christianity, see W.H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit, A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (SPCK, London, 1951), pp. 162–70. Various seals are mentioned in Heikhalot literature. See Kuyt, '*The 'Descendent' to the Chariot*', Index, under 'seal'; and Klaus Herrmann, *Massekhet Heikhalot* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1992), pp. 324–5. It should be remarked that ambiguities related to the terms *pais*, youth and son, are found in some Greek sources, as pointed out by Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 62–3 note 86.
- 241 Gen. 22.12, and also *ibid.* 21.12 insofar as Ishmael is concerned.
- 242 See e.g. the view of Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p. 126 that the sealer is the mystagogue and the sealed is the neophyte.
- 243 See also the *Theod.* 22.5, discussed shortly in DeConick, 'Becoming God's Body', p. 32, where unction is related to the divine name and entrance into a sacred place. See also Lampe, *The Seal and the Spirit*, *passim*, and Michael E. Stone, 'The Angelic Prediction in the Primary Adam Books', in *Literature on Adam and Eve*, pp. 118–19, 120, 125–7.
- 244 6.31.
- 245 *3 Enoch*, p. 68. See also Odeberg's remark *ibid.*, p. 191 dealing with youth and the little Iao in *Pistis Sophia*, which will be addressed in the next chapter. See also Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 313.
- 246 *Leqah Tov*, vol. 1, Genesis, fol. 16b.
- 247 *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 43–63.
- 248 *Ibid.*, p. 57. Let me add a further affinity between discussions on the name of Jesus and a Heikhalot theme. According to the same Gnostic text used by Stroumsa to make the above point, the name of Jesus amounts in gematria to 888 and is related to the Ogdoad. See the passage from Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereticorum*, vol. 1, 13, 1–21, translated in Foester, *Gnosis*, vol. 1, p. 209. See also *ibid.*, p. 211. In the Heikhalot literature the name '*Azbogah*' is constituted by three units of two letters '*AZ, BW* and '*GH*', which each amounts to 8, namely 8 + 8 + 8. See e.g. *Heikhalot Rabbati*, Schaefer, *Synopsis*, pars 416–17. This name is '*Shem ha-Shminiyyut*', the name of the Ogdoad, and it is sometimes described as the name of the Dynamis, *Gevurah*, a divine name. On this name see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 65–71 and Joseph Dan, '*Shem shel Shemiyyut*', in eds, M. Idel, D. Dimant & S. Rosenberg, *Tribute to Sara: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and*

- Kabbalah Presented to Professor Sara O. Heller Wilensky* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 119–34 (Hebrew).
- 249 Stroumsa, *ibid.*, p. 62 note 86. See also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 185ff.
- 250 See note 67 above.
- 251 See Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, p. 331 and Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, tr. Judah Goldin (Schocken Books, New York, 1969), p. 106. For another instance in which an early Midrashic stand has been preserved in this Midrash see below, Appendix. For a more general and interesting discussion of the sonship of God in rabbinic literature see Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham', pp. 70–8.
- 252 This is the Satan, who appeared to Abraham as an old man.
- 253 *Dioqanekha*. This is a Greek term stemming from icon. See Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 331–5, and especially p. 331 note 176, where he adduced some pertinent rabbinic sources resorting to the term *Yikonin*, icon, in order to describe a filial relationship.
- 254 *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis, p. 347.
- 255 See more on the root 'TzM and sonship in Chapter 6 below. Let me point out that in rabbinic literature there is at least one main theory of metaphorical sonship, namely a view that conceives a student or a disciple as the son of the master. See the widespread dictum in the somewhat later rabbinic literature 'Talmidim niqra'im banim', namely the students that are called sons. For a similar view in the Roman and the Latin West see Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, pp. 32–3.
- 256 PT *Ta'anit* 2.1, fol. 9a. See also Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, p. 349; Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 130–1; and Manns, 'Col. 1, 15–20', p. 109, and more recently Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, p. 131. On R. Abbahu as part of a tradition related to the divine name and its transmission see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 182–3, 185–6, 188–9; and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 160–1. On the affinity between the beauty of this master and that of R. Ishmael as described in a composition related to the Heikhalot Literature, see Abusch, 'R. Ishmael', pp. 333–4. I hope to return to the issue of the head or countenance elsewhere, especially in the context of some interpretations of the Teraphim and of the skull of Orpheus. See, for the time being, Moshe Idel, 'Panim – On Facial Re-Presentations in Jewish Thought: Some Correlational Instances', in ed., Nurit Yaari, *On Interpretation in the Arts* (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2000), pp. 21–56 and the bibliography referred there. On this master see Lee I. Levine, 'R. Abbahu of Caesarea', in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Brill, Leiden, 1975), pp. 56–76, and now the interesting study of Meir bar Ilan, 'The Chain of Tradition in Hekhalot Literature', *Daat* 56 (2005), pp. 4–37 (Hebrew), especially p. 7.
- 257 See Segal, *The Powers in Heaven*, pp. 213–14 note 87 and Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 132–3 and the bibliography he mentions.
- 258 Ps. 2.6.

- 259 Exod. 4.22. On this verse and sonship, see Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*, pp. 216–17.
- 260 Isa. 52.13.
- 261 *Ibid.*, 42.1.
- 262 Ps. 110.1. I cannot enter here the complexity related to the vocalization of the biblical term 'Adoni, understood in Christian exegesis as 'Adonai, and translated in Greek as 'my Lord' who sits beside God on a throne. In any case, see *Midrash Alpha Betot*, Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 438, where the figure sitting on the right side of God is described as Efraim, the firstborn of God. This passage reflects a certain sort of sonship, though it is not clear whether it is individual or related to a representation of this figure as a corporate personality. For the resort to this Psalm in ancient sources: Qumran and early Christianity, see Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 186–92 and Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, pp. 51, 160–5, 242–3, 307–8. See also below, Concluding Remarks, Section 3, for additional late Midrashic material on Efrayim as the son of God.
- 263 Ps. 2.7.
- 264 Dan. 7.13. See the use of this verse in Mk 13.26, Lk. 21.27 and Mt. 24.30.
- 265 This last sentence is in Aramaic. On the two forms of relationship in early Christianity – Gregory of Nyssa – see Daniélou, *Platonisme & Théologie Mystique*, pp. 110–21, who discusses the concepts of *parthesia* and *douleia theou*. The second term seems to reflect the impact of Philo, though according to Daniélou's claim, in Gregory of Nyssa worshipping God as a servant is no more the highest virtue, as it was in Philo, but that of serving Him as a son, all this following the Greek Bible. See, *ibid.*, pp. 117–18. It should be mentioned however that in numerous Hebrew sources, worship as a son is conceived of as superior to that of a servant, and plenty of examples may be adduced. This issue requires special investigation: if this change in the Greek Bible is true, it would mean that trends of similar discussions in Jewish sources are in debt to a Christian theory of sonship. However, such an inquiry cannot be made here. See however, Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 172–4, and below note 277. See especially BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 10a, where some affinity between sonship and worship is quite explicit.
- 266 Ps. 2.7.
- 267 *Midrash Tehilim*, ch. 2, ed. Shlomo Buber (Vilna, 1891), fol. 14b. This passage was used by Machado, *The Mirror*, pp. 160–2.
- 268 See also *Midrash Zuta'* on the Song of Songs, vol. 1; *Tanna' de-Bei 'Eliyahou Rabba'*, ch. 18.
- 269 BT *Babba' Metzia'*, fol. 59b. See also the interesting declaration attributed to God, that whoever possesses the *mysterion* of God – which is the *Mishmah* – is the son of God, *beniy*, according to *Pesiqta' Rabbati*, ch. 5, Meir Friedmann (Wien, 1880), fol. 14b; Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, p. 69; Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham', pp. 72–3 note 250; and Raphael Loewe, 'The Divine Garment and Shi'ur Qomah', *HTR* 58 (1965), p. 156 note 22. This passage recurs in the plural form *banay* in several other instances, like *Midrash Tanhuma'*. See the discussion of Urbach, *The Sages*, vol. 1, p. 305, who pointed out the polemic dimension

- against the Christian version of *Verus Israel*. For more on sonship in rabbinic sources see Bassar, 'Notions of Glory and Sonship'.
- 270 The bibliography on this story is huge. See e.g. the updated analyses of Menahem Fish, *Rational Rabbis* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, London, 1997), pp. 78–88; Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 34–63; and Danny Statman, 'Autonomy and Authority in "the Oven of Akhnai"', in *The Posen Research Forum for Jewish European and Israeli Political Thought* (University of Haifa, Faculty of Law, ND), pp. 1–21 (Hebrew).
- 271 See Chapter 6, Sections 3 and 8 below.
- 272 Isa. 46.12.
- 273 The righteous.
- 274 This structure is found also elsewhere in rabbinic literature. See 'Avot 6.2, and see the discussion of this issue in Chapter 6 below.
- 275 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 17b; BT *Ta'anit*, fol. 24b; BT *Hullin*, fol. 86a. See also Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 201, and Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 206–10; Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 117–18; Aharon Agus, *The Binding of Isaac & Messiah, Law, Martyrdom, and Deliverance in Early Rabbinic Religiosity* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), pp. 89–114; Shmuel Safrai, 'The Teaching of the Pietists in Mishnaic Literature', *JJS* 16 (1965), pp. 15–33; Baruch M. Bokser, 'Wonder-working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Hanina ben Dosa', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 16 (1) (1985), pp. 42–92; Bokser, 'Hanina ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature', *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 8 (3) (1982), pp. 1–6; Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism', p. 20; Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 42 note 85; Chana Safrai, 'Rabbinic Holy Men', in eds, Poorthuis & Schwartz, *Saints and Role Models*, pp. 59–78; Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 113–18; and Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham', p. 75. On Jewish charismatics in this period, see William S. Green, 'Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2 19 (2) (1979), pp. 619–47; and Richard Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Brown Judaic Series, Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1994), p. 158. For a recent analysis of one of the legends related to R. Hanina and its similarity to another legend in late Hasidism, see Admiel Kosman, 'The "Extended" Hand and the Pilgrim "Foot": On Individual, Authentic Sacrifice and "Seeing God's Face" in an Ancient Story from Palestine and in a Late Hasidic Story', *Kabbalah* 10 (2004), pp. 227–47 (Hebrew), where additional bibliographic sources on R. Hanina are found, and see Gruenwald's article referred to below, Chapter 6 note 10. On R. Hanina ben Dosa' as the pseudepigraphic author of a magical text in Aramaic see Tocci, 'Metatron'. The conclusions of the author as to the impact of Gnostic sources on the Aramaic text he published seem to me, however, quite questionable.
- 276 *Ibid.*, fol. 34b.
- 277 See the prayer of the Mussaf of New Year. See however, above, note 265.
- 278 Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 58–82, Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 42.
- 279 *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, pp. 263–6. See the critique of Bruce Chilton, 'Jesus within Judaism', in Chilton-Evans, *Jesus in Context*, pp. 181–4. I shall return to

- this critique at the beginning of Chapter 6, below. See also John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1992), pp. 142–56.
- 280 I am indebted to my wife Shoshanah for the connection between Honen and righteousness.
- 281 I shall return to the role played by Hanina ben Dosa', conceived of as a paradigmatic righteous figure according to many discussions in sixteenth-century Kabbalah and in eighteenth-century Hasidism, in Chapters 4 and 6 respectively below.
- 282 *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 202.
- 283 *Ibid.*, p. 191, translating BT *Ta'anit*, fols 24b–25a.
- 284 BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12a. On this cosmic understanding of the righteous see Idel, *Ascensions on High*, Chapter 2. See also BT *Berakhot*, fol. 17b. See more in Chapter 4 below.
- 285 On this issue see Paul Fenton, 'La "Tete entre les genoux"', contribution a l'etude d'une posture meditative dans la mystique juive et islamique', *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 72 (1992), pp. 413–26; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 50, 60; Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 182; and Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 78–9, 89.
- 286 See Vermes, *ibid.*, pp. 202–3, and more recently his *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, pp. 244–55, 257–63; and Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 149. On the ecstatic prayer in R. Hanina, see the seminal study of Naeh, 'Creates the Fruits of Lips'. The coexistence of a mystical technique, an ecstatic prayer and a magical understanding of the activity of this master, demonstrates the complexity of the ancient phenomena, which will be reiterated in later instances.
- 287 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 98b.
- 288 Cf. however, Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, p. 32.
- 289 See BT *Hullin*, fol. 7a and BT *Ta'anit*, fol. 24a.
- 290 BT *Sabbath*, fol. 112b.
- 291 Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*; Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, pp. 36–42.
- 292 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 7a. Compare also to the other dicta found *ibid.*, fol. 35b, where the blessing after a meal is directed to the father and mother, the Holy One, Blessed be He, and Knesset Israel. For the connection between the two dicta see R. Joseph Al-Ashqar, *Sefer Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, ed. M. Idel (Misgav Yerushalayim, Jerusalem, 1991), fol. 17a. For more on this Talmudic sentence see below Chapter 4. For the attribution of the term 'My son' to R. Meir, an important second-century rabbinic figure, see BT *Hagigah*, fol. 15b. Interestingly enough, R. Meir was the disciple of Aher, 'Elisha ben 'Abuyyah, the figure who is related to Metatron in the Talmudic passage about its punishment. For some affinity between sonship and worship see also BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 10a. On this passage see the important discussion of Shlomo Naeh, 'The Attribute of Judgment and the Attribute of Mercy in Rabbinic Thought', *Mahanayyim* 5, pp. 66–7 (Hebrew).
- 293 See e.g. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 356 note 3; Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 333; Liebes, 'De Natura Dei', pp. 252–3; Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 163–4; Idel,

- Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 164–5 and *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 167–8. See also now Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, pp. 103–4 and the additional bibliography he adduced there, especially note 14.
- 294 See his *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 204, 210, his *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, pp. 254–6, and Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 114–15. More recently, an attempt has been made to bring even closer the figure of *Hony ha-me'aggel* to the concept of the righteous ones and to early Christianity. See Judah Goldin, 'Honi the Circlemaker', *HTR* 56 (1963), pp. 233–7; Hirshman, 'Changing Centers of Holiness', and Eisenman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, especially, pp. 12–13 note 6. The story of Hanan's making the rain to descend is quite interesting since he was asked by small children to bring rain, by addressing him as 'Abba', father. See BT *Ta'anit*, fol. 23b, where the prayer of Hanan is as follows 'Ruler of the Universe, do this for the sake of those [children] who cannot distinguish between the father who can give rain and a father who cannot.' From the material we have, Hanan was not described as Son of God as was the case with Hanina and Honi, who were not addressed in the sources as 'Abba'. I wonder whether a combination of the two designations, that of the Son of God and that of the father of those who ask for a miracle, is found in an ancient source, since this will constitute one more instance of what I call double sonship. In any case, the existence of two kinds of fatherhood is evident in this passage. See also Hirshman, 'Changing Centers of Holiness', pp. 116–17. For the reverberations of some themes related to Honi in European folklore see Moses Gaster, 'Beitraege zur vergleichenden Sagen – and Maerchenkunde, *Choni hamé'egel*', *MGWJ* 30 (1881), pp. 78–82, 130–8, 413–23.
- 295 See e.g. *Mishnah Ta'anit*, ch. 3. For the special status of Honi as the son of the house that comes in lieu of the house, namely the temple, see Hirshman, 'Changing Centers of Holiness'. See also Chapter 4 note 277 below.
- 296 For another description that emphasizes the centrality of the divine transcendence for the importance of the mediating structures and their designation by divine names, see Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God'.
- 297 For the categories of inclusive and exclusive theologies, see John Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism, A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology* (University Press of New England, Hanover, 1991). See also my resort to these categories from time to time in *Kabbalah & Eros*. See also Idel, 'Il mondo degli angeli', pp. 9–10.
- 298 See e.g. R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, printed as *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 1a, to be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
- 299 This is a medieval interpretation of the statement found in BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b, which will be discussed also in some of the following chapters. It is hard to know when this gematria emerged but it is used by Rashi in his commentary on Exod. 23.21.
- 300 See Daniel Abrams, 'Sefer ha-Shakud by R. Samuel ben R. Kalonymus and the Doctrine of the *Kavod* of the Student of R. Eleazar of Worms', *Assufot* 14 (2002), p. 238 twice (Hebrew).
- 301 On Yaho'el see the bibliography adduced in Chapter 2 note 69 below.
- 302 See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 45, 85–92; John J. Collins, 'Messianism in the Maccabean Period', in eds, J. Neusner, W. Green & E.S. Frerichs, *Judaisms*

- and *Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), pp. 98–103; H.A. Wolfson, 'The Pre-Existent Angel of the Magharians and al-Nahawandi', *JQR* (NS) 51 (1960–1), pp. 89–106; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 18, 329–32, 337; Fossum, 'The Magharians'; Couliano, *Experiences de l'extase*, pp. 70–1; Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, p. 54; Daniélou, *Téologie du Judeo-Christianisme*, pp. 205–7; Phillip Alexander, 'The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch', *JJS* 28 (1977), p. 161; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 211–12; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 35–7; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, pp. 5–7, 82–3; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, and Introduction, note 52 above.
- 303 *The Image of God*, passim. See also his 'Imago Dei – Imitatio Dei'.
- 304 See Abusch, 'R. Ishmael', and Schneider, 'Enoch', p. 303 note 58.
- 305 See e.g. Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 250. This issue needs a separate treatment. See meanwhile Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 94–6.
- 306 See the views of R. Abraham ibn Ezra and R. Abraham ben David (Rabad), as discussed in Elliot Wolfson, 'God, the Demiurgy and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word *Kol* in Abraham ibn Ezra', *REJ* 149 (1990), pp. 93–101. The view of Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 79–82, especially that in note 19, p. 111 and note 94, that this is a rabbinic stand that assumes that Adam was created in the image of Metatron, is an extraordinary, audacious and in my opinion totally unwarranted interpretation, unparalleled in modern scholarship, and still waiting for a thread of rabbinic texts to confirm it. I hope that Kaplan will find the necessary time to attempt to prove it. Compare, however, to Lorberbaum's discussions of this topic in *The Image of God*, which never resorts to the view attributed by Kaplan to the Rabbis and to Metatron as the image in which man has been created. There is a possible parallel between Rabad's view that Adam was created in the image of Metatron and the view that Adam was created in the image of the Son. See the view of the fifth-century Jacob of Sarug, cf. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite*, p. 113.
- 307 See BT *Niddah*, fol. 71a, and the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 2, p. 237. See also my discussion of a certain theme related to the reproduction of divine features in man, which may betray a rabbinic-censored view in 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 71–80. See also my *Kabbalah & Eros*, p. 259 note 50.
- 308 For other hierarchical triples found in the Hasidei Ashkenaz literature regarding faces, as well as other issues see below Chapter 2 and the Appendix.
- 309 *Mekhilta' de-Rabbi Simon b. Yohai*, ed. David Hoffmann, (Frankfurt am Main 1905), p. 48, and *Pesiqta' de-Rabbi Kahana*, ed. D. Mandelbaum (JTS of America, New York, 1962), vol. 1, p. 87. On brotherhood see also Chapter 2 note 52 below in one of the quotes from R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*.
- 310 See the occurrence of some references to Metatron in Israel Weinstock, 'The Alphabet of Metatron and Its Interpretation', *Temirin*, ed. Yisrael Weinstock (Merkaz ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1982), vol. 2, pp. 51–76 (Hebrew) or in the magical treatise *Havdalah de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*, reprinted in ed. Scholem, *Devils*, p.

171. For more on Enochian literature and Metatron in magical literature, see Jonas C. Greenfield, 'Notes on Some Aramaic and Mandaic Magic Bowls', *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973), pp. 150–6 and note 140 above.
- 311 See James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Catholic Biblical Association, Washington, 1984); his *Enoch, a Man for All Generations* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1996); Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, passim; and Devorah Dimant, 'The Biography of Enoch and the Books of Enoch', *VT* 33 (1) (1983), pp. 14–29; as well as the more recent collection of articles edited by Gabriele Boccacini, *Enoch, The Origin of Enochic Judaism* (Silvio Zamorani, Torino, 2002); J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976); Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1989); and her *The Great Angel*; Andrei A. Orlov, 'Ex 33 on God's Face: A Lesson from the Enochic Tradition', *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting 2000* (Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 2000), pp. 130–47; his 'Secrets of Creation', where some suggestions for parallels between this version of the book of Enoch and the book of the *Zohar* have been suggested; as well as his 'Titles of Enoch/Metatron in 2 Enoch' and "'Without Measure and Without Analogy': The Tradition of the Divine Body in 2 (Slavonic) Enoch', *JJS* 56 (2) (2005), pp. 224–44. See also J.C. Greenfield, *Prolegomenon to Odeberg's 3 Enoch*, pp. xvi–xxiii; and Jonah C. Greenfield & Michael E. Stone, 'The Books of Enoch and the Traditions of Enoch', *Numen* 26 (1979), pp. 98–102.
- 312 See Idel, 'Enoch, The Mystical Cobbler'. My approach to the role and place of binitarian theologoumena in Rabbinism is that they were not suppressed in a total manner, as seems to be Boyarin's view. In my opinion, no theological orthodoxy was in existence in Judaism before Rabbinism, and very few forms of such orthodoxy emerged later. This more open approach to late antiquity and to medieval forms of Judaism is vindicated by the surge of binitarianism in medieval Kabbalah in quite traditionalist circles, as we shall see in many details in the following chapters. They are, from my point of view, not quite as surprising phenomena as they are for Boyarin, but part of a possible development in Judaism. Just as binitarianism was not a shared theology in Judaism before Christianity, it was not suppressed so much later, and in any case it remained part of some forms of orthodoxies since the Middle Ages. See my *Kabbalah & Eros*, passim, on the core-formula in the main school of Kabbalah, where the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His female counterpart, appears thousands of times as the ultimate goal of Jewish worship.
- 313 For the possibility that the Enoch/Metatron passage is an ancient theme, see Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 188, or Pedaya, *Vision and Speech*, p. 75. Compare to note 150 in the Introduction. For more on this issue see the Appendix below.
- 314 Also *Sefer Yetzirah*, a main source for many speculations and practices of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, had been studied seriously in southern Germany for at least a century and a half before the emergence of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz there, an issue to which I hope to devote a separate study. See also above, note 146.

- 315 For this line of development, see especially my *Enchanted Chains*, and *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*.
- 316 See above, Introduction note 189.
- 317 See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 265. I prefer to understand this term as referring not so much to the theological marginalization as to the linguistic shifts of the different schools that emerged from the tensions within Second Temple forms of Judaism when they encountered other ways of thought, and other languages other than Hebrew and Aramaic.
- 318 To a certain extent, this description is consonant with Gershom Scholem's view concerning the repression of ancient Jewish myths by the Rabbis, their return in the Middle Ages and their integration in Kabbalah; see e.g. *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, pp. 96–7. However, there are some basic differences between my explanation here and Scholem's. In my opinion, Rabbinism is not anti-mythical in essence, as he assumed, and thus the alleged repression, or perhaps even better, the process of marginalization has to do – in the cases related to our topics – not with myth, but with much more precise elements related to the Great Angel. On Rabbinism and myth see Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*; and Idel, 'Rabbinism versus Kabbalism; on G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 281–96; and 'Leviathan and Its Consort'. On the other hand, the return of the older elements should not be seen in mythical terms, as a 'revenge', or the return of the repressed, but as part of a renaissance that took place in Judaism in Europe. See, Idel, 'On European Cultural Renaissances'.
- 319 See Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'.
- 320 For more see Chapter 4 and the end of the Concluding Remarks.

## CHAPTER 2 The Son (of God) in Ashkenazi Forms of Esotericism

### 1. Introduction

Most of the material surveyed in the Introduction was written in the Near East in late antiquity. In its vast majority it existed in languages unknown to the medieval authors who we are going to discuss in the following chapters. Nevertheless, at least a part of it reflects ideas found in books that have been originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, though these original treatises are by now lost. The unearthing of the few Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* and of the *Testament of Naphtali* in a Qumran cave is, for the time being, an exception to the rule. However, though most of the Hebrew originals are lost, the circulation of various versions of some of the late antiquity material in the Middle Ages in a variety of other languages is undeniable, as the studies of Moses Gaster, Nicolae Cartoian and Émile Turdeanu, for example, demonstrated. What seems to me necessary is that scholars of Jewish mysticism, dealing with the emergence of vast literatures since the end of the twelfth century, become aware of the possibilities opened by those and other related studies, for exploring new avenues for understanding the genesis of the Jewish mystical literatures in the Middle Ages in a more complex manner, as we have pointed out in the Introduction. Though we may assume that the trajectories by which Jewish material written in Hebrew and Aramaic arrived in Europe do not have to overlap with the transmission of material in the Byzantine Empire, in Greek, and then Slavonic and other Slavic languages, and then Romanian, the assumption of a total separation between the arrival of the early Jewish material in Europe and the rebirth of Jewish mystical literatures in the Middle Ages, will not be, in my opinion, a felicitous approach.

However, most of the material dealt with in Chapter 1 is quite different. The greatest part of it, written mainly in Hebrew, was available almost in its entirety, at least in principle, to medieval Jewish authors, and it became part of their reservoir of associations. As mentioned above, the problem of its transmission is quite a complicated historical problem. We have no precise historical descriptions of the channels by which the Heikhalot literature reached Western Europe, independent of the genealogy related to the legend connected to the ninth-century R. Abu Aharon ben Samuel of Baghdad, who arrived to Italy and brought esoteric material

there. However, while there can be no doubt as to the availability of most of the treatises from the Heikhalot literature to both the Italian and Ashkenazi masters, and to a lesser extent to those active in Provence and Spain, the situation is much more complex with regard to the pseudepigraphic traditions mentioned above, most of which are not extant in Hebrew in any late antiquity composition that reached Europe. This problem is especially acute with regard to late antiquity traditions concerning sonship that while absent in the Heikhalot literature in an explicit manner, reappear *mutatis mutandis* in Ashkenazi material in the Middle Ages. The Ashkenazi thinkers could, in principle, read the material dealt with in Chapter 1 as I did, and draw the same conclusion, but this seems to explain only part of the problem. This 'great by-pass' of late antiquity theories of sonship not extant in Hebrew over early medieval rabbinic literatures and their surge in later medieval bodies of literature, as we shall see in the next chapters, is not only an important question in the history of sonship-traditions in Judaism but, in my view, is part of the much more comprehensive problem of the transmission of late antiquity esoterica to early forms of Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages in Europe.

Attempts at solving this problem with regard to Jewish mystical traditions have basically taken one major form: scholars, especially Gershom Scholem and his followers, assume that it was the Gnostic themes that bridged the temporary and geographical gap between ancient mythologoumena and medieval bodies of literature.<sup>1</sup> This Gnostic filiation proved, however, to be quite tenuous insofar as the early Kabbalah in Provence and Catalonia is concerned, and unconvincing as an explanation for the emergence of the Ashkenazi material. A related theory, which attempts to explain the emergence of the feminine *Shekhinah* in early Kabbalah, does not address the problematic issue of transmission but rather attributes the 'innovation' represented in this development to a vague Christian influence exercised by the ascent of the cult of Mary in the Latin West.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of transmission of older material from the late antiquity period in the East to the medieval period in the West also applies to other forms of Jewish material. For example, it is not known how or when the Midrashic and Talmudic treatises arrived in the West from the land of Israel, and afterwards from Babylonia, whether directly or via intermediaries like the Byzantine center perhaps in its branch in southern Italy. The same question exists with regard to the Heikhalot literature that, though written in the Near East, in its vast majority reached Western Europe. There is no reliable account as to the channels of transmission or even as to in what period these mystical-magical traditions and other later Midrashim made their way to Italy, Germany, France or Spain. Though the Byzantine Empire, southern Italy and even the Slavic regions might have served as

stations on the way of these various forms of Jewish esoterica to medieval Jewish thinkers, hard evidence for such an explanation for their transmission is, for the time being, rather scant, though it is not non-existent. Equally problematic are questions related to the emergence of the kabbalistic literature in Western Europe since the later part of the twelfth century.

Ashkenaz, especially the provinces of southern and central Germany and some parts of central and southern France, are regions where some Jewish esoteric traditions were known before the emergence of the various kabbalistic schools in Spain. For example, substantial testimony exists from the eighth century according to which the episcopo Agobard of Lyon refers to some form of esotericism known among the Jews of the city.<sup>3</sup> Ashkenazi authors in particular quote numerous Midrashim, conceived in scholarship to be late Midrashim that differ conceptually from the classical ones, and some of these authors suggest that they were the transmitters of older esoteric traditions originating in Babylonia that reached them via Italy or from other sources.<sup>4</sup>

My assumption is that some ancient theologoumena related to various concepts dealt with in the Introduction did in fact reach the Ashkenazi masters. In other words, the trajectory of esoterica that links Italy with the Orient and culminates in the Ashkenazi commitment of such esoterica to writing, the invention of some and the elaboration on others, should be conceived as a critical process in the case of the vast literature dealing with divine names that permeates the esoteric theology of the main streams of Ashkenazi Hasidism in both southern and central provinces of Germany. However, we may assume that before the arrival of some esoteric material via the Bagdhadian-Italian trajectory, other mythologoumena were already known in both Ashkenaz and France, as demonstrated by Agobard of Lyon's passage, thus suggesting the existence of at least two channels of transmission of Jewish esoterica from the East to the Ashkenazi regions. In the case of southern France, it is clear that Jewish ancient material not referenced in rabbinic literature was known and discussed in late Midrashic Hebrew compositions originating there no later than the eleventh century.<sup>5</sup> Especially important in this context is *Midrash Tadeshe'*, a text presumably composed in Provence in the eleventh century, from which time some Philonian themes are detectable.<sup>6</sup> More recently, in a general survey of the reverberations of late antiquity pseudepigrapha, John C. Reeves indicates the possibility that more pseudepigraphic material was available in the early Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> Such traditions could have been the sources of some of the later developments that generated what I propose to call the 'literary platforms' of the early types of Kabbalah<sup>8</sup> and of the various groups belonging to Hasidei Ashkenaz.<sup>9</sup> Though formulated in writings belonging to the rabbinic elites of the first Ashkenazi masters and first Kabbalists,

renewed interest in much older esoterica is neither a revolution nor a rebellion against the establishment, nor a full-fledged return of the repressed. Rather, in many cases those Jewish mystics were themselves the establishment. This is the reason why their writings should be understood as a variety of combinations of rabbinic material representing theologoumena stemming from other Jewish circles, with a variety of themes from various philosophies to magic and astrology, most of them mediated by Arabic books and adaptations of Greek and Hellenistic sources, with some marginal acquaintance with Christian customs and theological speculations.<sup>10</sup>

In the following we shall deal with texts written in Germany, basically southern and central parts of modern Germany, in a relatively short period of time, between roughly speaking 1200 to 1290. The material reflects a variety of different approaches to the Hebrew term *Ben*, and the recurrence of this term points to a special preoccupation with this concept, interpreted as it was in different manners. However, this term is embedded in a literature that is gravitating around elements described above in the context of sonship: a profound interest in the divine names, angelologies and Heikhalot literature. Thus, we should understand the return of interest in sonship as part of a more comprehensive revival of earlier elements, though no doubt not only a development of earlier material but also of significant evolution beyond what has been inherent in the late antiquity discussions.

## 2. R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet's Commentary on the 70 names of Metatron

Of the many treatments of Enoch and Metatron available in scholarship, the Ashkenazi material written in the early thirteenth century is the most neglected one. With some few exceptions, the rich material in the writings of the Ashkenazi masters has been relatively forgotten by scholars of late antiquity and is only recently beginning to attract attention due to studies of scholars of the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> One possible reason for the absence of appropriate scholarly treatments of the apothotic theme is the fact that much of this literature is still found only in manuscript form. A second reason that the Ashkenazi material is relatively excluded from discussions on the Enoch/Metatron issue is the difficulty entailed in studying these texts, even when printed. Often dense, allusive and associative, these texts resist simple analysis and necessitate detailed inspection of sources, extensive elaborations concerning content, and sometimes even complex numerical calculations, as we shall see in some instances below. Based on multiple forms of associations and correspondences between different words, phrases and even bigger parts of the Bible, the discourse in the main school of Hasidei Ashkenaz is complex, and demands acquaintance with the reservoir

of associations that were characteristic of rabbinic Judaism and of the inheritors of many esoteric traditions concerning divine names, their views of prayer and their particular angelology. The complexity of the Ashkenazi material is the main reason for the very detailed analysis that will be offered below, including the decoding of numerical calculations that underlie those discussions, without which any accurate understanding of the main themes is practically impossible. Those decodings and distinctions, which are strictly necessary for elucidating aspects of those texts, are carried out in many cases for the first time here, and they have a major share in the discussions below. By entering the minutiae of the Ashkenazi texts, I hope to distinguish much more than previously in scholarship between different trends in Ashkenazi esoteric literatures. However, let me emphasize that in the case of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the author who is going to be addressed in the first part of this chapter, esotericism is not the game he claims to play, and the following texts are representative of many other discussions in his writings.

Let me begin the discussion with a medieval text possibly composed in Erfurt, in southern Germany, either very late in the twelfth century or, what seems to be more plausible now, in the early decades of the thirteenth century, dealing with the meanings of the names of Metatron, entitled *Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, authored in my opinion by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet.<sup>12</sup> The concept that Metatron has 70 names and even a list of such names existed earlier, as it appears in the Heikhalot literature as seen in Chapter 1. Some modest beginnings to this tradition are detectable in the so-called *Re'uyyot Yehezqel*, a visionary-Midrashic book close to the Heikhalot literature,<sup>13</sup> in the late *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*,<sup>14</sup> and in a modest way even in the Talmud, where some of the names attributed later to Metatron are found in reference to God.<sup>15</sup> However, it seems that it is only later on that this general concept was fleshed out as a literary platform, in an Ashkenazi book existing in different versions, at least one of which was authored, I believe, by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet.<sup>16</sup> This is a figure that has been rather ignored in scholarship in terms of the culture of the thirteenth-century Ashkenazi Jews. Known also as R. Troestlin the Prophet, this author's floruit seems to be the 1220s and 1230s.

While two main versions of his *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* exist, there was at least one more version that is of critical importance for our topic.<sup>17</sup> This third version of the seminal passage to be analyzed will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.<sup>18</sup> In still another manuscript we have what seems to be another variant of the material found in this book, which is a list of the 70 names arranged according to the alphabetical order of the mysterious names, a version that may be a late rearrangement of an earlier treatise.<sup>19</sup> The Commentary is

quite an eclectic composition in which magic, speculations on divine names, angelology, and demonology combine to explain rather succinctly the meaning of the often incomprehensible formulas presented as names of Metatron. The book is quite repetitive and presents no systematic theology or anthropology since, so I assume, the author, R. Nehemiah, brought together a variety of traditions connected to Metatron's names, joining them by means of numerical calculations known as gematria. The heavy reliance on this exegetical technique demonstrates the Ashkenazi background of the author beyond any doubt. It is in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century schools that flourished in southern Germany that systematic resort to gematria as a main exegetical device became conspicuous. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, unlike in other Hasidic-Ashkenazi writings, in this book and in those close to it there is no substantial trace of either philosophical terminology or the centrality of theories about the Glory of God that permeate the other forms of Ashkenazi mystical literatures contemporary to this book. It seems plausible that the author was a certain visionary figure named R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet of Erfurt, who is mentioned as someone in whose writings there are discussions of the 70 names of Metatron.<sup>20</sup>

Let me first adduce the most important passage that will concern us at length in the following discussions, found in one of the two versions of the commentary as part of the discussion of the 59th name of Metatron:

[A] [a1] YHWH WHYH, [b1] in gematria *Ben* [=Son] [c1] because he was a [or the] son of man, [namely] Enoch ben Yared. [a2] *Yaho'el* [b2] in gematria *ba-Yam* [by the sea], [c2] because it is written<sup>21</sup> 'before it [*Nikheho*] shall you encamp by the sea,' and from *Nikheho* emerges [by anagramming the consonants] *Hanokh*, [b3] [Enoch] [c3] because he revealed himself by the sea.<sup>22</sup> [b4] And in gematria *ba-kol*<sup>23</sup>, [c4] because he bears the entire world<sup>24</sup>, and he is relying on the finger of God.<sup>25</sup> And the Tetragrammaton is hinted at two times twenty-six and also the gematria of *'Eliyahu*, [is 52] also *Yaho'el*, also *Ke-Lev*, [namely, like a heart] because it is the heart of the world, and all the [divine] names are hinted at, because it is appointed on the Torah, and the Torah commences with *Bet* and ends with *Lamed*<sup>26</sup> . . . and it is the prince of the world, and in gematria it is *'Ana*', because it is the High Priest, and when the High Priest was pronouncing *'Ana*',<sup>27</sup> he was first<sup>28</sup> calling to the Prince of the Face, and this is the meaning of *'Ana*' and only then he prays to the supreme Name.<sup>29</sup>

This is quite a compact and cryptic passage that combines several diverging themes that should be analyzed separately, as they reflect different traditions.

In order to present as much material as possible before embarking on our analysis, I will translate another version of this passage found in a manuscript:

[B] [aɪ] Yaho'el [bɪ] are the letters of 'Eliyahu and *ve-'Elohiy*, [cɪ] because to whomever 'Eliyahu reveals himself, it is by the virtue of *Yaho'el*. And know that *Yaho'el* is a judge<sup>30</sup> in the firmament higher than all the servant angels, and he is ruling after the Holy One, Blessed be He. And if you start with the middle of *Yaho'el* and will give it to Y of the prince of the face, you will find 'Eliyahu. And if you start at the middle of 'Eliyahu, you will find *Yaho'el*. And it is in gematria *Ben*, because he was a son of man, *Enoch ben Yered*. *Yaho'el* in gematria *Ba-Yam*, as it is written 'before it [*Nikheho*] shall you encamp by the sea,' and from *Nikheho*, emerges [by permuting the consonants] *Hanocho*, because he revealed himself together<sup>31</sup> with the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel on the sea . . . *Yaho'el* in gematria 'Ana', because when Israel shouted at the sea the prince of the face was a messenger to help them. *Yaho'el* in gematria *YHWH W-HYH*, and it is a noble prince appointed upon the women that have hardship to give birth, the prince of the face sends<sup>32</sup> to save her.<sup>33</sup>

The variations between these two versions consist in rearrangements of some elements and small divergences, while others remain basically identical. However, the second version is not a mere *réchauffé* of themes but preserves the permutations between the theophoric names that are evident elsewhere in this Ashkenazi circle, though missing from the first version. Let me point out that in both versions, as is the case in the entire treatise, the impact of philosophical terms or concepts is minimal, an issue that will preoccupy us more in the next chapter when we shall discuss a third version of the material cited above, found in the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia. The absence of philosophical elements may point to a development that took place basically within close Jewish circles – close to Heikhalot literature, especially to its magical aspects – that were either resistant to philosophical thought, or indifferent to it.

First let us pay attention to some of the themes shared by these two versions. From our point of view here, the most important overlapping is the occurrence of the term *Ben* in the two versions. From a broader perspective, let me point out that this occurrence takes place together with the strikingly positive evaluation of Enoch as a righteous, as we shall see below, coupled by a strong interest in Metatron, and what is more rare, in the role played by the archangel Yaho'el. Likewise, the theophoric elements are quite conspicuous here. We may see in these two versions a compendium of mythologoumena, which combines elements discussed in

the previous chapters. Since these versions were known in the Middle Ages, as we shall see in the following chapter, they serve as an important conduit for earlier elements to the Jewish culture in Europe.

Apotheotic motifs from the biblical and Heikhalot literature are brought together in a dense and rather cryptic discussion. Enoch and Elijah, together with Metatron in an implicit manner – the entire text deals with commentaries on the name of Metatron – constitute the core of the earlier discussions about apotheosis. The discussion of Enoch's two phases of his career is clearly pointing in this direction. On the other hand, the occurrence of Yaho'el together with other discussions of Metatron in this treatise point to a strong interest in theophany. In a way, the key figure for the two vectors is, according to these passages, Enoch, though he is a man become an angel, and it is his name that is mentioned explicitly as revealing himself in the crucial moment of redemption on the Red Sea. Thus we may perceive a combination between the two vectors we discussed in the Introduction, in the very same seminal passage, whose content will preoccupy us very much in the following discussions.

Let me begin the detailed analysis of the passage by pointing out the cultic aspects occurring at the end of the first version of the text. The first passage assumes that the high priest was pronouncing the word 'Ana' as part of a liturgical move which started with turning to the Prince of the Face, himself described as a high priest as seen below, and then advancing toward the second phase which constitutes a prayer to the Tetragrammaton, namely to God. While in many cases Metatron and other angels are described in the literature written by R. Nehemiah as elevating prayers to the higher realm, like the supernal curtain, and inscribing them there,<sup>34</sup> here the situation is different as the prayer is addressed to the angel. This is a conspicuously binitarian type of cult, which implies worship of Metatron as part of the worship performed by the human high priest. Such a view is also evident in a series of other independent texts from both earlier and somewhat later periods, which we shall deal with in more detail in the Appendix.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, though not quite directly, the above passage also presumes some form of cult addressed to an angel that is described in the same passage also as 'son'.

Let me address now the possible significance of the double Tetragrammaton. It seems plausible that the very form of the 'name' that is addressed here, *YHWH WHYH*, implies a special message. The second unit of four consonants can be understood not only as a Tetragrammaton, but as meaning: *W-HYH*, which means in Hebrew 'and he was', presumably referring to the fact that Enoch was a man. The first unit, which is the Tetragrammaton in the ordinary spelling of the sequence of the letters, may have been understood as pointing to what Metatron then

became, namely to his angelic/divine status. In par. 20, the expression ‘*we-hayah ben Yared*’, namely ‘He was ben Yared’, occurs, and in par. 41 ‘*we-hayah na‘ar*’, ‘He was a youth’, is expressly related to Enoch. Therefore, it is evident that the main discussion in which the syntagm *YHWH W-HYH* appears, includes also a reference to Enoch, and we decode it as pointing to the two different moments in the biography of the patriarch: the human and angelic phases in the career of Enoch. It should be pointed out that the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in the context of this angel should be understood sometimes in the writings of R. Nehemiah as having this name engraved on his heart.

Let me address now the more complex issue of the structure of the above passages. The inner structure of each of the 70 paragraphs of this small book is related to a certain number that organizes the different terms that are related to one of the names of Metatron. The consonants of each of the 70 names have a numerical value, and other topics amounting to this value are adduced in the context of this name and related to it in some more conceptual manner. According to R. Nehemiah, the double Tetragrammaton is one of Metatron’s 70 names: In gematria the consonants *YHWH WHYH* amount to 52.<sup>36</sup> The two Tetragrammata do not leave any doubt as to the divine nature of the entities referenced here. According to the first line, this double name points to two stages in Metatron’s life: that in which he was human, made of flesh and blood and called Enoch ben Yared, and that in which he was quasi-divine, an angel that received many aspects of the divine regalia. In this context let me refer to the Talmudic passage adduced above in Chapter 1, though not quoted in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, dealing with the Tetragrammaton as attributed to two types of humans: ‘three are [entities] designated by the Name of the Holy One Blessed be He: the righteous, the Messiah, and Jerusalem’.<sup>37</sup> Thus the righteous (and Enoch has been designated several times as such in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*<sup>38</sup>), was implicitly designated by the Tetragrammaton and this seems to fit the view of the Ashkenazi author regarding Enoch. As to the reference by the Tetragrammaton to the Messiah, it may have something to do with the eschatological function of Metatron or Yaho’el, as we shall see below. If our conjecture is correct that the two Tetragrammata are to be attributed to the righteous Enoch and to his apotheotic status as Metatron, all this in the context of a discussion of the term *Ben*, we may assume that we have some form of double sonship implied here: this means that Metatron is a Son of God and Enoch too, and this double sonship theory is expressly theophoric. It should be mentioned that the double sonship as found in this book is not only a matter of double theophorism, but also of the coherence between the anthropomorphic descriptions of both Metatron and God – who are considered to be brothers,

as we shall see below – and thus resembles Enoch’s human image, though tremendously bigger. Also the vision of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* as a book of magic, as seen in the quotations above, has much to do not only with the powers of the magician or the reader, but also with those of Metatron, the redeeming figure as depicted above.

Though the passage above is part of a book that deals with the various names of the angelic power Metatron, it is obvious that Enoch is one of the main subjects of the quotation. The centrality of the figure of Enoch is however even more evident elsewhere in the same book, where we read the following about his elevation:

he had two likenesses [*shtei demuyyot*]: at the beginning he had the likeness of a man<sup>39</sup> and, at the end, the likeness of an angel<sup>40</sup> . . . so that when He has chosen a prophet<sup>41</sup> in order to worship him<sup>42</sup> He will elevate him<sup>43</sup> by means of the radiance of the glory [*Zohar ha-kavod*], [to sit] upon the seat of glory.<sup>44</sup>

In some Ashkenazi sources the phrase *demut* appears in connection to the theory of Glory.<sup>45</sup> I wonder whether the term *demut* does not retain the meaning of a counterpart of an earthly being in the ideal world, as E.S. Drower described the term *demuta* in Mandaeism.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, in R. Eleazar of Worms’ *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, it is said that when God wants to elevate a soul to be stored under the throne of Glory, ‘He shows her the splendor of His Glory’ which then attracts the soul as a magnet,<sup>47</sup> while in another major book of the same author, *Sodei Razayya*,<sup>48</sup> the recipient of the secrets of the *Merkavah* is enthroned like Adam and the process of angelification is explicitly mentioned.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, according to an anonymous Ashkenazi manuscript, the archetype of a man is found on high and is described as the *demut* of the lower man, and they share the same name and appearance.<sup>50</sup>

Let me now address another important passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. In Section 30, the name ‘*Uzah*’ is mentioned as one of the names of the archangel. Its numerical value is calculated as 19 and it is identical with *Havah*, namely Eve, since Enoch was the offspring of Adam and Eve as any child of flesh and blood. Then the author adduces another name ‘*AHiY*’, which means ‘my brother’, which also amounts to 19. The meaning of ‘my brother’ is described as follows: ‘because he [Enoch] became as a brother to the Holy One, blessed be He, because he judges in the firmament after the Holy One, blessed be He’.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Metatron is not only the adopted Son of God, as I shall try to elaborate below, but also an entity similar to his brother.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, some strong form of ditheism that retains a loose element of subordination, through the mentioning of the flesh and blood as a starting point, permeates this discussion.

Against the background of the possibility of seeing Metatron as a

brother of God, let me turn to the use of the consonants *BN* in the above passage, which I translate as ‘Son’. These consonants appear in all the versions of this composition and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity in the Ashkenazi text. One may contend, however, that those consonants do not point to the concept of sonship, but rather to the numerical value of the two divine names that appear beforehand. On such a reading, the entire argument for sonship disappears from the text. Yet this is an implausible reading for two distinct reasons. First, if the author were only interested in gematria, he would have chosen the ordinary form *NB* to refer to 52 rather than *BN*. Moreover, comparing this passage to the way in which the discourse is constructed in most of the other paragraphs reveals that the words that occur as gematrias after the ‘name’ also have a semantic and not just a numeric function. Thus, for example, we read in one of the paragraphs that:

[a1] *Davavyah*, [b1] is in gematria *Zakh* [pure], [c1a] because he is the High priest<sup>53</sup>, [c1b] because the Holy One, blessed be He, anointed by a pure unction,<sup>54</sup> which is from the sweat of the holy beasts, which is also for the unction of the king Messiah. [b2] *Ve-’Eheyeh*, [c2] because in all the missions<sup>55</sup> he performs, the Holy One Blessed be He, is with him.<sup>56</sup>

It is obvious that the word *Zakh*, which amounts in gematria to 27, serves a semantic function through its plain meaning of ‘pure’ [b] and the phrase that follows [c] clarifies the larger context of the concept of purity. This is also the case with the form *Ve-’Eheyeh*: the word amounts to 27, but the gematria is much less important or even understandable without the subsequent explanation of the presence of God with the angel. Therefore, the consonants *BN* should be understood, from the structural point of view, as significant both in terms of their gematria and as pointing to the concept of son. Indeed, this is explicated by the phrase ‘because he was the son of man’.<sup>57</sup> *En passant*, the affinity between Metatron and Messianism is hinted at here indirectly, and we shall discuss this issue further in the next chapter. Let me point out that it is possible that the units found in the position of [b], namely the first gematrias in each of the sections, had been inherited by R. Nehemiah from an earlier source, or in any case preceded the fuller versions of the commentary, and it was he who added much of the material following unit [b].

To return once again to our main topic, there is an even more interesting issue related to the term *Ben*. The Hebrew words *Ben* ‘Adam are translated above as the Son of Man. The meaning of the term ‘Son of Man’ is qualified immediately afterwards by the appearance of the name of Enoch, the son of Yared. One way to read this sequence *Ben* – Son of Man – Enoch

son of Yared, would be to emphasize the mortality of the entity which later evolves into an archangel.<sup>58</sup> In this interpretation, no special angelic meaning is attributed to the expression ‘Son of Man’. However, this *prima facie* possible reading may not be the most plausible one. It depends upon the assumption of homogeneity of discourse in R. Nehemiah’s *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. However, as pointed out above, there is no such homogeneity in this book. My assumption is that the author collected different traditions that reached him from different sources and linked them loosely. In the course of the edition of the earlier material some older and more mythical views have been attenuated. In my opinion, this attenuation takes place in the third phase of the discourse. If the incomprehensible names constitute the first part, and the unit that amounts to it in gematria is the semantic unit that constitutes the second phase, the attenuation takes place sometimes on the level of the explanation of the second unit, in what constitutes the third phase.<sup>59</sup> My claim, therefore, is that the explanation does not always fit the message intended in the second unit, and this discrepancy flows from modification of elements that were conceived of as problematic or embarrassing. Let me provide one such example:

[a] ‘*Yitmon*, [b] in gematria is *YHWH Melekh*<sup>60</sup> [the Tetragrammaton is the king] [c] because he commands to angels to praise the king of Glory and he is [doing so] together with them . . . And do not guess in your heart that because his power is great and very forceful the angel of the face is ‘*Eloha* [a deity]. But H<sup>61</sup> He is the king, and he was also called by the name of his master, as it is said: ‘provoke him not . . . for my name is in him’<sup>62</sup> namely ‘do not exchange Me for him, from the term change for him [temurah bo] because he is called by My name,<sup>63</sup> and he has no power to do anything but by [the dint of] His great name.’<sup>64</sup>

I find that the discussion in [c] offers an artificial explanation of [b], even contradicting it in a certain way. While in some cases, as seen in the passage quoted above in par. 59, there is a type of prayer addressed to the angel, here such an address is considered problematic as the angel has no power of his own. Thus, I assume that unit [b] *YHWH Melekh* was indeed one of the 70 names of Metatron,<sup>65</sup> but that it was explained awkwardly by the medieval interpreter. In the same vein, while *Ben* has served hypothetically as a name of the angel<sup>66</sup> and functions as phase [b], its meaning has been attenuated by R. Nehemiah’s reference to Enoch’s initial mortality in [c]. The sign for this explanation is the term ‘because’. This is part of the encounter between earlier, more mythological conceptions found in late antiquity Judaism and some medieval approaches, which in most cases attempted to soften, if not obliterate, various aspects of earlier mythologoumena. In fact, R. Nehemiah

can be seen as one of the masters who did the minimum in this direction by softening much less the mythologoumena he inherited than the main school of the Kalonymite Ashkenazi thinkers did.

Metatron, the main subject described in this quotation, is referred to in the first passage quoted above by the angelic theophoric name Yaho'el. This name appears, as seen above in the Introduction and in Chapter 1, in other instances in the literature related to our treatise<sup>67</sup> as well as in ancient texts of Jewish origins. This angel represents another major form of theophanic-theophoric mediator. His is one of the most understandable theophoric names, as it is composed of the *Yao*, or *Yaho*, a shorter form of the Tetragrammaton, and 'El. This is a double theophoric linguistic unit, and it appears several times in Heikhalot literature as part of a long list of names.<sup>68</sup> This particular name drew the attention of many scholars, who have pointed out its Jewish origins and the affinities between it and the Tetragrammaton.<sup>69</sup> Special attention is paid to this angel in an important article of Maddalena Scopello, who collected the available Gnostic references to this angel and compared his attributes to those of Metatron and Yaho'el in Jewish literatures, including ancient and some medieval ones.<sup>70</sup> According to Scopello's analysis, in many cases the angel designated as Youel shares attributes with Barbelo, a higher power whom he represents and whose secrets he reveals to the initiand.<sup>71</sup> Scopello compares this resemblance between Barbelo and Youel, quite convincingly in my opinion, to the relationship between God and Metatron.<sup>72</sup> She comes to the conclusion that the sources of the Gnostic discussions are Jewish concepts describing Yaho'el that had been described in various late antiquity sources in the context of Metatron as well as sometimes independently of this angel.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, she makes use of some thirteenth-century Ashkenazi texts found in a discussion by Scholem of the Gnostic name Youel.<sup>74</sup> Though in principle I have no problem with resorting to later texts in order to reconstruct earlier sources or identify affinities between ancient and medieval sources, I nevertheless believe that Scopello's thesis regarding the relevance of the feminine or androgynic nature of the Gnostic Youel to understanding the nature of Yaho'el in the Ashkenazi texts, essentially all related to R. Nehemiah, is scant, as I feel that she somehow misreads Scholem, who himself conflated in one discussion two different trends in Ashkenazi esoteric traditions. This minor error notwithstanding, Scopello's methodological conclusion seems well taken and is worth quoting: 'Par l'étude de ces textes de Nag Hammadi, il est peut-être possible de reconstruire une filière et une tradition de pensée qui s'est poursuivie jusqu'au Moyen Âge.'<sup>75</sup> Let me attempt to resort to such a reconstructionist proposal in order to compare the Ashkenazi tradition to an ancient Gnostic one.

In the famous Gnostic treatise *Pistis Sophia* there is a passage that attracted the attention of Hugo Odeberg, who compared it quite insightfully to the late antiquity Metatron traditions. However, it seems to me that a better object of comparison is version [b] of the passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* translated above. Regarding the special type of conception of John the Baptist, Jesus is reported in this Gnostic treatise to have said:

But they thought that I was the Angel Gabriel. Now it happened that when I came into the midst of the archons of the aeons, I looked down at the world of mankind, at the command of the First Mystery. I found Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, before she had conceived him and I cast into her a power which I had received from the Little Jao, the Good, who is in the Midst, so that he should be able to preach before me, and prepare my way and baptise with water of forgiveness. Now that power was in the body of John. And again, in place of the soul of the archons which he was due to receive, I found the soul of the prophet Elias in the aeons of the sphere; and I took it in and I took his soul again;<sup>76</sup> I brought it to the Virgin of the Light, and she gave it to her paralemptors. They brought it to the sphere of the archons, and they cast it into the womb of Elisabeth. But the power of the Little Jao, he of the Midst, and the soul of the prophet Elias were bound in the body of John the Baptist.<sup>77</sup>

The underlying assumption of this passage is that two different spirits were infused in John's mother's womb: one issuing from the little Iao and the other related to Elijah. As I understand this quite obscure passage, these spirits deal with the birth of a son, John, who has a reasonably theophoric name, Yohanan in Hebrew, just as is the case of the Hebrew form that underlies the name Elisabeth, 'Elisheva'. As such, the names Elijah and Jonathan are certainly related to Iao, at least in a Hebrew-speaking community. In any case, some synergy between the Iao and Elijah is envisioned as causing the birth of an extraordinary son. Now, these two names are quite similar to Yaho'el and 'Eliyah in R. Nehemiah passage above. However, what is even more surprising is the expression 'Iao, he of the middle', which seems to be parallel to 'the middle of Yaho'el' found in the Ashkenazi text quoted above. Though in the Hebrew passage the meaning is quite transparent – the middle of *Yaho'el* is the beginning of 'Eliyah, while in the *Pistis Sophia* passage it may point to a more ontological situation – I find it hard to assume that the similarity is merely a coincidence, given that two nearly identical names are dealt with in a context related to the concept of the Son. Moreover, the angelic status of

Elijah is pervasive in rabbinic and kabbalistic literature, and it has to do with the view that is developed in the book of the *Zohar*, that Elijah lives forever.

Let me attempt to decode the meaning of the power that issues from the little Iao and cooperates with the soul of Elijah within John the Baptist. In several ancient texts, Elijah is described as a harbinger of Jesus's redemption, together with Enoch, and they constitute a special category.<sup>78</sup> The affinity between the Little Iao and Enoch, who became Metatron, is well known. Moreover in *Pistis Sophia*, Yeu, the parallel to Iao, reveals himself to Enoch and dictates books to him, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 4 below. If indeed the power of the Little Iao is related to a figure parallel to Enoch, we have then the earliest documented affinity between Enoch and Little Iao, from sometime at the beginning of the third century at the latest.

Let us have a look at Chapter 8 of *Pistis Sophia*: there the supernal Jesus describes his insemination of Mary through reference to a power he received from Barbelo and a soul he received from the Great Sabaoth. I assume that Barbelo is higher than the Little Iao, as the Great Sabaoth is higher than Elijah. In our specific context, Scopello's view regarding the interchangeability of Youel and Barbelo may be important. The meaning of the name and the nature of his power are quite obscure,<sup>79</sup> but according to one source, he is described as sitting to the right of the supernal power called 'Father'. Yet it is rather difficult to identify Barbelo with a son, as this same power or glory is described at times in feminine terms. It seems, however, that in *Pistis Sophia* he may indeed be related to Yahoel.<sup>80</sup>

Let us return to R. Nehemiah's material. As pointed out by Scholem, in a manuscript that belongs to Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and, I assume, was part of a writing of R. Nehemiah, it is written in the context of the famous passage from BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b that:

*Yaho'el* – because he was the mentor of our forefather Abraham and he taught to Abraham the entire Torah as it is said 'began Moses to declare this Torah'<sup>81</sup> [*hoy'il Mosheh be'er*]. *Ho'yil* are the [permutated] letters of *Yaho'el*, [while] *Mosheh Be'er* are the letters of [the Hebrew locution] '*she-'Avraham*' 'that Abraham', because our forefather Abraham was at the age of fifty-two when he received the Torah ... and fifty-two are the gematria of *Yaho'el* ... *Yaho'el* is the angel that called to our master Moses to ascend to heaven in the treatise *Sanhedrin* 'and to Moses he said ascend to *YHWH*'<sup>82</sup> to me is said, but [he should] ascend to that angel whose name is like the name of his master, 'to *YHWH*',<sup>83</sup> whose letters are *Yaho'el*.<sup>84</sup>

As Scholem insisted, correctly in my opinion, this view reflects a much earlier tradition that is paralleled by the late antiquity *Apocalypse of Abraham*.<sup>85</sup> It seems indeed that the Ashkenazi writer intuited or received a tradition that Metatron, the protagonist in the Talmudic discussion in its common version, is actually *Yaho'el* and the resort to the formula 'his name is like that of his master' fits *Yaho'el* better than Metatron. According to the last quotation, the role played by this angel is paramount: he introduced Abraham to the entire Torah and it is he too who spoke with Moses, thus fulfilling important functions that are somehow reminiscent of the Magharians' description of the Great Angel. The gematria of 52 in the context of *Yaho'el* demonstrates that the material found on this page is indeed related to R. Nehemiah's discussions adduced above. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the affinity between the concept of sonship and the verse from Exod. 23.21, evident in Philo as we have seen in the Introduction, is paralleled by the vision of *Yaho'el*, the ancient angel that has been superseded by Metatron, insofar as his name amounts to 52, namely *Ben*, Son. Moreover, the affinity between this verse and the name of the theophoric name of '*Eliyahu*', may have also something to do with the structural parallelism between the Exodus verse on the one hand, and two verses in Malac. 3.1,8, where God sends also his angel, according to v. 1, and then to Elijah in v. 8, on the other hand. The anonymous angel of Exod. 23.21, cf. 3.1 in the book of Malachi, and the name 'Elijah the prophet' in v. 8 in the same chapter, were considered to be complementary:

'because My name is within him', the names of the Holy One, blessed be He, are '*El Yah*, and they are like the name '*Eliyahu*.  
'My Name is in him', [*shemi Bo*] in gematria *Mashiyah*, who will be called in the future by the name of God, as it is written: 'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord.'<sup>86</sup>

Therefore the same biblical verse, Exod. 23.21, where the Philonic exegesis discovered the Logos as Son and firstborn, and in some Christian sources also Jesus, as seen above in the Introduction, is understood here as related to on the one hand '*Eliyahu*', which amounts in gematria to *Ben*, Son, and on the other hand to the Messiah. Let me point out that the phrase used in order to derive the figure for *Mashiyah*, 368, namely *Shemiy bo* is not found in the biblical verse, but was contrived by the exegete in an artificial manner, which means in my opinion that he wanted to introduce in this verse the concept of Messiah. As we know, there is a certain affinity between Elijah and the Messiah, as the former was conceived of as being the harbinger of the latter.

Let me return to *Yaho'el*: the nexus between *Yaho'el* and Abraham recurs in the Middle Ages as we learn, for example, from a passage found in

R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon's commentary on the Pentateuch (a mid-thirteenth-century composition), where the term *ba-kol* was interpreted by means of gematria, just as in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, as pointing to Yaho'el, described as a magical name that belongs to the 72 names of the Prince of the Face.<sup>87</sup> The salvific nature of this angel is hinted at by its revelation on the sea, the most salvific moment in the whole Pentateuch. There can be no doubt that Metatron-Yaho'el reflects the divine redemptive intervention in the guise of an angel that bears the divine name.<sup>88</sup> In general, scholars have already drawn attention to the affinities between some ancient views regarding Jesus and Yaho'el.<sup>89</sup> Gedalyahu G. Stroumsa has pointed out the possibility that the name of *IHCOYC*, constituted by six letters, is analogous to Metatron, a name consisting of six consonants.<sup>90</sup> It should be mentioned that scholars pointed out in detail the significance of this angel within earlier Jewish traditions.<sup>91</sup> Fossum suggests that the name Yao was used at times as a name for Jesus, relating to a savior figure.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the affinities between the concept of Son and All are quite ancient, discernible in the Greek Bible and in various Gnostic sources.<sup>93</sup> According to another passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, this angel is not only the angel of the presence but also the angel who stands at the right hand of God on the throne.<sup>94</sup> While this is part of the synthronic status of Metatron mentioned by Saul Lieberman,<sup>95</sup> I was not able to find earlier instances in which the right-hand position is mentioned. Again, this may reflect another affinity between some forms of Christian or Judeo-Christian traditions and earlier Jewish material.

Indeed a redemptive role in the main angelic manifestation is evident in other Ashkenazi texts. According to an anonymous alphabetical description of angels found in a manuscript that contains material stemming from Ashkenazi Hasidism, Yaho'el is 'the prince of the Torah and very important in God's eyes, and very good for rescue [*hatzalah*]'.<sup>96</sup> When dealing with the redemption from Egypt in the context of the verse in Exod. 12.42: 'It is a night of watchfulness to *YHWH*, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt', an anonymous Ashkenazi author writes that the verb *le-hotziy'am*, 'for bringing them out', is numerically equivalent to *ve-zeh hayah Yaho'el mal'akh*, because, the Holy One, blessed be He, has sent Yaho'el, the Prince of the Face, to bring them out, as it is said,<sup>97</sup> 'and the Angel of his Face had rescued them'.<sup>98</sup> These passages represent examples of reverberations of R. Nehemiah's theophoric understanding of the mediator.

We may conclude that the biblical verses dealing with the redemption from Egypt and involving the intervention of angels had been conceived of as redemptive in a typological manner that points to the future redemption, as learned from fragmented discussions by Ashkenazi writers, especially those of R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon. The Ashkenazi literature should

therefore be conceived of as an intermediary corpus that preserves and transmits fragmented traditions concerning the role of the ancient angel Yaho'el as being instrumental in the redemption of the people of Israel, even if such traditions diverge dramatically from the view perpetuated in the common versions of the Passover Haggadah, which conspicuously opposes the redemptive role attributed to angels and messengers in the Exodus from Egypt. The development of the hypostatical interpretations of the Exodus verses, as demonstrated by Fossum, served as major proof-texts for ancient Jewish and Jewish-Christian speculations.<sup>99</sup> This is also the case regarding the reverberations of ancient views in medieval Judaism. For example, there are several instances in Ashkenazi literature where the anonymous angel mentioned in Exodus is explicitly identified with Metatron.<sup>100</sup>

It is important to compare the above description of Metatron as both Son and High Priest with a Philonic description of the Logos conceived of in precisely these terms.<sup>101</sup> In general, some of the more general characteristics of the Logos are reminiscent of Metatron, as their basic function is reminiscent of a hypostatization of God.<sup>102</sup> Yet, the salvific nature of the union with the Logos<sup>103</sup> is also found in a variety of other Jewish traditions in connection with Metatron.<sup>104</sup> Like this Great Angel, the Logos is also described as the ruler of the world and the angel of the divine face. Last but not least from the point of view of our topic, is the possible identification of the Logos with a messianic figure, at least according to some scholars, that parallels the redemptive role played by Enoch/Metatron in the above passage.<sup>105</sup>

Another theme that reinforces the salvific valence of the passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* is the appearance of the name Elijah,<sup>106</sup> the consonants of which amount again to 52 like *Ben*. The juxtaposition of the prophet and the patriarch in the same paragraph informed by the two Tetragrammata is interesting, as these are the two apotheotic figures *par excellence* in the Bible. As pointed out by James Tabor, according to Josephus Flavius, Enoch's ascent is described as a return to the divinity.<sup>107</sup> A similar type of divinization seems to be implied also in the Ashkenazi text.

Let me address another detail in the passage on Yaho'el as a name of Metatron: it is described as appointed over the Torah. This is an ancient concept that is connected in a magical treatise named *Shimmushei Torah* with the angel Yefeyfayah, as well as with Metatron and Elijah:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, has immediately called Yefeyfayah, the prince of the Torah, and he [the latter] gave him [to Moses] the Torah, 'arranged in its proper order in every detail and keep'<sup>108</sup> and all the servant angels become his lovers and each and

every one of them gave him a remedy and the secret of the names, which emerge from each and every pericope, and all their [magical] uses . . . and this is the [magical] use given to him by the angels, by means of Yefeyfiah, the prince of the Torah, and by Metatron, the Prince of the [divine] Face. And Moses has transmitted it to Eleazar, and Eleazar to his son Phinehas – who is [identical to] Elijah, – the High and Respectable Priest.<sup>109</sup>

Beyond the more general issue of the Prince of the Torah, a concept that has a long career in Judaism,<sup>110</sup> it is interesting to point out the priestly tone found in the two magical treatises. It is similarly interesting to note that Elijah is included in these two passages. In a way, the affinity between R. Nehemiah's view and that found in *Shimmushei Torah* is evident though I would not include this text in the writings emanating from the Ashkenazi circle.

Last but not least, I would like to point out that the entire passage discussed above from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* deals with different terms which amount to the numerical value of 52. However, there is also another type of discussion related to Yaho'el and 'Eliyah: According to another passage found in the context of the above quotation, 'Eliyah points to a man and Yaho'el to an angel, while another permutation of the same consonants *we-'Elohiy* points to the divine realm.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the affinity between 'Eliyah and Yaho'el has a further dimension: both reflect a subordinate level of a higher divine plane. In such a context, the resort to the term 'son' may be even more salient: The lower entities are the sons of the higher. As pointed out by Liebes in a passage related to the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* and printed as a sort of introduction to it, the syntagm *Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim*, namely Jeshua, the Prince of the Face that appears therein can perhaps be identified as the permutation *we-'Elohiy*.<sup>112</sup> This would mean that there is a descending hierarchy between Yeshu'a-Jesus, Yaho'el and Elijah. Such a reading may be true, though I assume that equally plausible is the view that Metatron, Yaho'el and Yeshu'a, all three of whom are described as the Prince of the Face, are of the same angelic rank, that of a sort of ruler over the world.<sup>113</sup> On this interpretation, Jesus was conceived of as an angel, reflecting an ancient angelic vision that has been subsequently eliminated from the various forms of Christian theologies.<sup>114</sup>

In the same vein, I would like to point out the importance of another of Liebes's observations, which drew attention to affinities between Jesus as a representative of the divine name, and the use of the term *we-'Elohiy*.<sup>115</sup> While I shall have more to say about this topic in the next section of this chapter, I would propose the following hierarchy: (a) first, the divine realm

is represented by the Tetragrammaton and by the permutation of letters *we-'Elohiy*; (b) second, the angelic level, which is the main concern of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, is represented by angels like Yaho'el, Metatron and Yeshu'a, as well as by many other designations mentioned in the passages adduced above; and (c) third, in this context Elijah and Enoch appear, as humans, and the combination of letters is 'Eliyah. This threefold categorization notwithstanding, it is important to point out the strong connections between the three realms. This is particularly clear in the case of the process of apotheosis, that allows beings found on level (c) to move up to level (b). A connection between levels (b) and (a) also exists. According to an explicit statement in this book, Metatron does whatever he does by dint of the presence of the divine name within him.<sup>116</sup> As we have seen above in this literature, Metatron may even be perceived as being the brother of God. According to another set of images, the three levels are as follows: the finger of God, the angel depending upon this finger and then the world that depends upon the angel. These levels are dynamically related to each other.

Thus we may speak about a dynamic hierarchy, rather than one that is informed by rigid categorizations, and this observation relates to the significance of the term 'son' in this context. The term seems to stand in this passage not for a metaphorical use or a theory of adoption which is closer to apotheosis, but for a much more organic relationship between son and divine as father, or in other words, a form of doxophany. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest the existence of another triadic hierarchy: Enoch the mortal is the lowest, Metatron is the second in rank and God is the third and highest among the three levels. It should be pointed out that the concept of a son, which relates to an individual being rather than the people of Israel, is quite ancient in Judaism.<sup>117</sup>

Here, however, I am concerned solely with those themes that are relevant for the texts adduced above. Thus, in *3 Enoch* God describes His relationship with the translated Enoch as that of a father.<sup>118</sup> Such a characterization finds corroboration in the earlier view found in *1 En. 70.1, 14* and *71.5* where the patriarch describes a heavenly entity called 'Son of Man',<sup>119</sup> which is also the eschatological judge of the world,<sup>120</sup> a function further found in the Ashkenazi text.<sup>121</sup> I am inclined to see the type of sonship present in our text as reflecting both the theophany of the hypostatic Metatron, and the apotheosis of the righteous Enoch. If this assumption is correct, then the Ashkenazi material preserves a much earlier tradition regarding Enoch's ascent and transformation, which emphasizes the righteousness of this figure in a manner that reflects some ancient descriptions of the patriarch.

I discuss these Ashkenazi texts in great detail in order to illustrate how

almost all of their themes are identifiable independently and apparently earlier than the very last years of the twelfth century, which is the earliest plausible date for the composition of this treatise. I would say that R. Nehemiah the Prophet joined several motifs that he found in a variety of disparate written sources or perhaps even oral traditions that did not reach us. However, the comparison between some of the views above to themes found in the closest spiritual environment to that of R. Nehemiah may help determine whether some of these views have independent parallels. This I will try to do below. However, it should be noted here that though there are several versions in print and manuscripts of the first passage dealt with in this paragraph, it seems that there was at least one additional version available in Italy not later than the 1270s, and this important version will be analyzed in the next chapter.

At the centre of two of the above-cited passages from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* appears a double usage of the Tetragrammaton and of the term *demut*. Images, likenesses, sons, and names are different articulations designating the extensions of the divine realm into lower levels. There can be no doubt that R. Nehemiah is the author who emphasizes the theophoric nature of the mediators, more than any other thinker in the Middle Ages, especially by his numerous references to the divine name of 42 letters being inscribed on angels, found in treatises he wrote but still extant only in manuscripts. The most obvious nexus is that between the images and the son: this is an affinity that is not specifically theological, as resemblance between a son and the image of his father is sometimes a natural and visible phenomenon. Moreover, as pointed out by Yair Lorberbaum, such a nexus is emphasized in rabbinic literature.<sup>122</sup> I wonder whether the occurrence of the two Tetragrammata and the double *demut* in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* is not better understood as part of a more comprehensive theory found in the vicinity of R. Nehemiah the Prophet.

Let me first mention that, according to some traditions, the divine name is described as having been inscribed upon tablets found on the breast of angels.<sup>123</sup> This view has something to do with the assumption that angels are extensions of the divine, who is present within the angelic beings by means of the divine name. This may explain the theophoric structure of so many names of angels including Yaho'el, and the rabbinic understanding that Metatron has a name that is like that of his master.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps this theory, which creates a continuum between the divine and the angels, may also explain the double occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in the above citation from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. In any case, in the circle of the Ashkenazi master that generated this composition, we

find instances in which the visual aspects of letters of the divine names are seen as part of some sort of an angelic revelation.<sup>125</sup>

Let me turn to another and more exegetical aspect of the first passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names*. In the two versions of the passage, R. Nehemiah interprets the verse from Exod. 14.2 as dealing with the two aspects of Enoch: *ba-Yam* amounts to 52 and thus to Yaho'el, while *Nikheho*, in front of it, amounts to 84, namely to Enoch. Thus, he creates what I propose to call an Enochic interpretation of the verse, the meaning of which has nothing to do with Enoch. This Enochic exegesis points to the depth of the Enoch-traditions that become some form of exegetical code. Moreover, in a *Commentary on the Name of Forty-Two Letters*, in my opinion also written by R. Nehemiah, we find a description of the Prince of the Face floating alone with God in the clouds of Glory, after which the following short sentence appears: 'And it is said: "walk in his uprightness,"<sup>126</sup> whose letters are *Hanokh*'.<sup>127</sup> The Hebrew term translated as 'his uprightness' is *Nikheho*, in a deficient spelling, the same biblical term used in Exod. 14.2, which has been interpreted as dealing with Enoch in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. Thus, we have a perfect parallel between the forms of exegesis in the two books: in both cases the Prince of the Face is mentioned in the immediate vicinity of Enoch. In my opinion, this interpretation reflects much more than an awareness of the constellation of ideas dealing with the theophanic/apotheotic theophoric mediator. It reflects the importance of righteousness in this context. While someone can dismiss the relevance of such a modest and artificial device as the permutation of the letters, *Nikheho* into *Hanoch*, to an awareness of such a constellation of ideas, such a dismissal may be premature. Let me quote the two verses from Isa. 57, the end of which has been interpreted by the Ashkenazi author:

1. The righteous perish, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.
2. He enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in his uprightness.

The righteous – *Tzaddiq* – mentioned in v. 1 is anonymous. What we know about him is that he is taken away before evil arrives. The evil itself is not described in the Bible. This enigmatic statement, speaking presumably not about a particular righteous individual but about the general situation of all the righteous in the immoral world the prophet portrays to his listeners, has been understood as dealing with a specific righteous person, one whose identity is imagined to be 'hinted at' at the end of the second verse, namely *Hanoch*. This nexus between Enoch and righteousness is well known in the

Enochic tradition,<sup>128</sup> but even more so in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the parallelism between the *Tzaddiq* in the first verse and Enoch, hinted at towards the end of the second verse, presumes the righteousness of the biblical patriarch. In this case, like in the interpretation of Exod. 14.2, Enoch is not only discovered in obscure places in the Bible, but also situated in the context of his apotheotic status as the great vice-regent angel. A comparison to other interpretations of Isa. 57.2 from the Middle Ages reveals that despite the fact that most authors describe the death as positive and preemptive, this does not mean that it is also apotheotic, as in the Ashkenazi traditions mentioned here. It should be emphasized that throughout the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* as well as in some of the writings belonging to its circle, the word 'righteous' appears in many gematria'ot, often in combination with other terms. Indubitably, this points to the fact that R. Nehemiah took this word as a basis for his numerological calculations and then added other words.<sup>130</sup> Thus, we may speak about an Enochic exegesis that is corroborated by an emphatic role played by righteousness.

The Enochic exegesis is referenced in the way some Ashkenazi authors interpret the verse from Job 16.19: 'Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my testimony is on high.' The term 'my witness' – '*Ediy*' – is interpreted as amounting to 84 like *Hanoach*, understood to be in heaven, while 'my testimony', *ve-sahadiy*, is interpreted as referring to 'this is Metatron'.<sup>131</sup> I wonder to what extent this interpretation is based upon association with the description of Enoch's elevation on high, by resorting to the phrase '*Netalani mi-beineihem lihyot 'ed 'aleihem bi-shemei marom*.' 'He took me from among them in order to be a witness for them in the heavens of heights.'<sup>132</sup> The words: *Shamayim*, '*ed*, *marom*, occur in both 3 *Enoch* and in the verse from Job. The question is whether this is a coincidence, whether the biblical verse did not play a role in the formulation of the *Hebrew Enoch*. If indeed this is the case, the Enochic interpretation of the verse is quite an interesting reinterpretation of the 3 *Enoch* text that inspires the passage. This is a fascinating example of the importance of the reservoir of associations active in Jewish culture for understanding the emergence of Ashkenazi thought.

In an interesting example of Enochic interpretation based upon these two equations, R. Jacob ben Asher, the most influential Ashkenazi interpreter of the Pentateuch, writes that:

'The Holy One, blessed be He, took one [person] before the flood and one after the flood, namely Enoch before the flood and Phinehas after the flood, because Metatron in *A'T B'Sh* amounts to Phinehas, together with the four letters of Phinehas.<sup>133</sup> And he

elevated them to heaven in order to testify for Him. And He chose Enoch because he was the seventh generation, because the Holy One, Blessed be He, desires the heptades. And this is also the case of Moses that he was the seventh from the forefathers, and it is written in this context: 'and Moses ascended to the Lord'.<sup>134, 135</sup>

The manner in which this verse is interpreted, namely finding two words in a verse which point to Enoch and to his hypostatic transformation into an angel, is reminiscent of the way in which Abraham Abulafia interprets another verse, as we shall see in the next chapter. Less ingenuous, though still pointing in the same direction, are the interpretations of verses in which the term *na'ar*, a major appellation for Metatron, are found.<sup>136</sup> The amplitude of this return in two different Ashkenazi scholars, as we are going to see also below, and the complex structure of this exegesis militate against an explanation of the basic move as a matter of 'back-borrowing' though such a phenomena might have happened insofar as details are concerned.

We witness an interesting insertion of importance attributed to a figure that was marginal in the economy of the biblical and rabbinic literature into new material that is totally void of such references. This is part of the movement of Enochic elements toward the center of a Jewish form of mystical religiosity, and we shall have more to say about this topic in relation to Ashkenazi material in the Appendix. In principle, we witness here a strong type of hermeneutic that inserts views found in a certain corpus of ideas within another one. From this point of view those interpretations, radical and artificial as they are, are not essentially different from the exegetical radicalism of the Christo-centric interpretations abundant in Christian literature, the exegetical approaches of Abraham Abulafia discussed in the next chapter, or of the kabbalistic theosophical-theurgical ones that are addressed below in Chapter 4. However, while the Christological and the theosophical interpretations represent the imposition of post-biblical codes upon the Hebrew Bible, the Enochic exegesis represents an imposition of a pre-biblical or contemporary axiology upon the texts of the Hebrew Bible. If we accept scholars' assumption that the Enochic movement was regarded with tension and even opposition by the elites who authored the Hebrew Bible, then the dynamics created by the ascent of the Enochic exegesis can be defined as some form of return of the repressed. According to the narrative of the emergence and the reception of Christianity proposed by Margaret Barker in some of her books, the Enochic model was instrumental in providing themes and shaping an audience that was open and receptive toward the apotheotic and theophanic elements found in Judaism, which generated Christianity.<sup>137</sup>

The existence of strong interpretations of biblical verses as discussed

above testifies to the strength of the two elements involved in the process: both the sacrosanct status of the Bible, and the desire to insert within it the Enochic problematic and ideals. A book, especially an ancient one that is not misunderstood, is perhaps an obsolete one. Furthermore, beliefs that do not lead to misinterpretation of canonical texts are apparently not worth maintaining.

Let me address this from another angle: what are the sources of the theory of a son that is also an angelic power, and eventually called Yeshu'a, the angel of the face? As Liebes pointed out, it is plausible that this is an echo of an earlier tradition that may stem from late antiquity. This is related no doubt to the name of Yeshu'a. However, the very assumption that a son-figure may possess a hypostatic role that is adumbrated in rabbinic and Heikhalot literature as discussed in Chapter 1 the situation complicates since it may point to a tradition that may be independent of Christianity. In any case, it seems to me quite implausible that such a stand has been innovated by a medieval figure, active in the Ashkenazi ambiance that suffered so much from the persecution of the Christians.

Another topic that occurs in the above passage and should be brought to the fore is the emergence of a certain consonance between different ontological levels mentioned by R. Nehemiah. The three permutations of the letters 'LHWY refer to the divine realm, the angelic one and Elijah. Different as they are, these combinations are also similar in their constituents. This is also the case with the letters YHWH and W-HYH. I assume that these affinities are related also to the anthropomorphic resemblances between the human Enoch and his counterpart Metatron, and between Metatron and God, both being described as brothers. This similarity is reminiscent of both the Philonic and Christian double sonship. In the case of the former the Logos is the father of the son that is a sage, both being intellectual beings, and so of the affinity between Logos as God; in any case we have here two sons of a father. The affinity between Jesus and the supernal realm on the one hand, and humans on the other hand, is evident in several late antiquity theologies. This type of coherence between the different parts of the double sonship will recur also in the next chapter.

### 3. Images, Tetragrammata and son in R. Eleazar of Worms and pseudo-Eleazar of Worms

Let me now turn to another sort of Ashkenazi esoteric material that, presumably, originates in the vicinity of the author of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*: the so-called esoteric literature of the main group of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz connected to the Kalonymus family. I shall concentrate here on the writings of R. Eleazar of Worms, the most prolific author, who

claims that he preserved much earlier traditions, and on writings attributed to him. To the best of my knowledge, this prolific author never uses the name Yaho'el, though he is well acquainted with the Heikhalot literature in most of its literary manifestations.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, he is further acquainted with affinities between the Tetragrammaton and the concept of *tzelem*, image, which are connected in some cases with the number 52. While the various concepts of *tzelem* in the Middle Ages receive ample treatment in modern scholarship through the analyses of Scholem,<sup>139</sup> Tishby,<sup>140</sup> Dan,<sup>141</sup> and Lorberbaum,<sup>142</sup> as well as my own,<sup>143</sup> it seems that the view of *tzelem* as related to the divine name is ignored, and I would like to address here precisely this neglected meaning of the term. As we saw above, in rabbinic texts the presence of the divine name in a righteous entity is conceived of not only as a matter of the future, but also of the present. R. Eleazar of Worms speaks explicitly about the theophoric nature of the name Israel as well as of many other names, claiming that the addition of theophoric suffixes like *-el* and *-yah* ensures the life of sons, and this is an esoteric tradition.<sup>144</sup> We may assume that the presence of the divine name has, at least, a prophylactic function, though as we shall see more below, there is also another function in the presence of the full-fledged Tetragrammaton in man.

However, the precise nature of this presence is not explicated in these sources. It seems that an attempt to explain this type of presence is found in a text, which contains material related to R. Eleazar of Worms mixed with material stemming from other Ashkenazi sources. In *Sefer ha-Ḥokhmah*, the most important hermeneutical treatise whose material emanated from this circle, we read in a concise manner as follows:

'Let us make Adam in Our Image and Likeness'<sup>145</sup> to those are three inversed [letters of] *Num*, correspond to the verse<sup>146</sup> 'but teach them to your sons, and to the sons of your sons.' Since the Holy One blessed Be He said: 'Let make Adam' and I shall give to him the fifty gates of understanding'. There are fifty-two gates and this is what has been said<sup>147</sup> 'A wise son [*ben ḥakham*] will cause the rejoice of a father.' He [God] gave fifty gates to Adam, according to the account of *ha-'Adam*<sup>148</sup> but two more of them amount to *YWD HH VV HH*<sup>149</sup> and this has been written in Psalm<sup>150</sup> 'thou hast made him a little lower than 'Elohim' as it is written<sup>151</sup>: 'Yismehu ha-shamayim we-tage'el ha-'aretz' the acronym is *YHWH* and the last letters [of the verse] are *TzaLMW*, and this [the meaning of] what is written<sup>152</sup> 'because He made Adam in the image of 'Elohim' and gave to him the gates of understanding

which amounts to *ha-'adam*. This is the reason why the *Nun* is [written] inverse.<sup>153</sup>

This passage and its variant versions in the same treatise constitute the sole evidence for an interest in the concept of son in the connection of the double divine name. Before analyzing the details of this passage, however, it is proper to mention that *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* in general and this passage in particular were recently deemed to be the fabrication of a certain R. Azriel ben Eliezer, a mid-sixteenth-century copyist, who paraphrased some lengthy passages from an original book of R. Eleazar of Worms entitled *Sodei Razei Semukhim* and then added views of his own. This theory, proposed in some detail by David Segal, constitutes a sustained effort to prove that this book is not one originally written by R. Eleazar, but rather a later distortion, sometimes ironical, of the Ashkenazi master's views.<sup>154</sup> If his argument is correct, our discussions below do not reflect early thirteenth-century but mid-sixteenth-century views. Given the seriousness of his arguments in relation to other discussions found in *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, Segal's view deserves substantial analysis that cannot be undertaken here. Yet I am not convinced by all his arguments. In any case, a serious scholarly study of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* should take a closer look at the material being analyzed, and this is the reason why I dwell here so much on the different aspects of the text under consideration. I shall restrict my discussions here to establishing R. Eleazar of Worms's authorship of this specific quotation.

Segal's main salient claim in our context is that the occurrence of the 52 gates of understanding, which is so closely related to *Ben*, is not the traditional amount and not found in R. Eleazar of Worms's writings, and is problematic. It is true that in many cases mentioned below the traditional number of the gates of understanding, namely 50, appears in R. Eleazar's writings. However, there is an important exception, namely a passage that could not have been seen by the sixteenth-century copyist, in which a view is attributed to R. Eleazar that is very close to the passage cited above: a passage written by R. Abraham ben Azriel, who writes around 1234, in a text neither known nor printed before the mid-twentieth century and not mentioned by Segal. In my opinion, the mid-sixteenth-century copyist did not have access to this passage, and has not been inspired by it. The fact that the inverted letters of *Nun* are included in this passage is proven by the quotation found in *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, in which this issue is found together with the double Tetragrammaton which amounts to 52, in the context of the verse from Psalm 96. In this context too, the 52 gates of understanding were given to Adam.<sup>155</sup> A quite plausible reading of this text can demonstrate that 52 gates of understanding were implied, thus invalidating one of Segal's most important arguments. Moreover, in the

commentary of R. Eleazar of Worms on Ecclesiastes, another salient parallel to a part of the above passage quoted from *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* is found. Discussing the greatness of Adam he writes 'N'B because he is *Ben Hakham*.'<sup>156</sup> Thus, all the most relevant themes in the passage above, pertinent to the topics discussed in this section, are found in authentic texts authored by R. Eleazar.

Let me begin with a discussion of the three inverted letters of *Nun*. Occurring in the Genesis account in 1.26, these letters constitute the plural forms in all three cases. Removing the three letters we have a perfect sentence in the singular and quite an elegant solution to the theological 'problems' created by the biblical formulation in the plural.<sup>157</sup> This operation of removal is mentioned explicitly earlier in this treatise, and it constitutes one of the boldest approaches to interpretation in traditional Judaism ever.<sup>158</sup> For our discussion below, let me exemplify it by the shift from 'be-Tzalmenu' – 'in our form' – to 'be-Tzalmo', which means 'in his form'. This exclusion of the three letters of *Nun* solves the 'quandaries' posed by the emphatic plural in the verse. Thus, the remaining *TzaLMW* is the 'original' version as it is 'demonstrated' by the correspondence between *TzaLMW* and *YHWH* at the beginning and end of the words of the verse from Ps. 96.

One of the main gematria that explicates the passage is that of 52: it stands for *Ben*, the son, and two times 26, the gematria of the letters of the Tetragrammaton and, what is more evident, the 52 gates of understanding. The son represents quite plausibly the Son of God, since there is a clear parallelism between the mentioning of the son and his father in the verse from Proverbs adduced as a proof-text, and God and his creature, man, in the main discussion. Moreover, the term wisdom occurs in both cases, reinforcing their relationship. Here the term *Ben* has a double meaning: a numerical one, 52, and a semantic one, the offspring of the father; this double function is reminiscent of what we found in our analysis of R. Nehemiah's *Commentary of the Seventy Names of Metatron* above. In a passage parallel to the above quotation either R. Eleazar, or pseudo-R. Eleazar, formulates the relationship between the two elements as follows: 'A wise son will cause the rejoice of a father to tell you that whoever knows how to understand the fifty-two gates, is called the "wise *Ben*". And "will rejoice a father" this is the Holy One, blessed be He, because *YWD HH WW HH*, amounts in gematria to 52.'<sup>159</sup>

Unlike the widespread theory about the 50 gates of understanding related to Moses,<sup>160</sup> the theory about 52 gates of understanding is unknown before R. Eleazar of Worms and after him. Perhaps there is a certain connection between the manner in which the number is represented in Hebrew by the two consonants *BN*, and the word *BiNaH*, understanding. It

is further possible that there is a connection between the 52 gates of understanding represented by the term *Ben*, son, and that Adam may have something to do with the expression *Ben 'Adam*, the son of Adam, which appears in the verse from Ps. 8.4 whose continuation is quoted in the above passage. Emphasis of the importance of the number 52 may be a reference to the fact, as pointed out explicitly by R. Eleazar, that the expression 'They have placed My name there' occurs 52 times in the Pentateuch, as does the word 'cloud'.<sup>161</sup> In any case, several times this master mentions the transmission of or the intention to transmit 50 gates of understanding to Adam,<sup>162</sup> an opinion that differs from the rabbinic tradition about the transmission of 49 gates of understanding to Moses.<sup>163</sup>

Crucial to understanding this passage is the connection the author creates between the image, the *tzelem*, what I call the morphic aspect, and the Tetragrammaton, i.e. the nominal aspect. As we shall see below in further discussions, these two elements are closely related in R. Eleazar's thought and they may reflect the category I called morphonominalism, or an instance of linguistic iconism. I would not exclude the possibility that the Tetragrammaton is a higher form of the *tzelem* that stands, as I suggested in the previous section, for a more formal aspect of the human. After all, it is not the image of Adam that is denied, but rather some aspects of the 52 gates of understanding. Or to put it in numerical terms: the image of God is related to 52 gates, but man, *ha-'adam*, whose gematria is smaller and stands at only 50, receives a corresponding number of gates and this is the reason why he is less than *'Elohim*, with the latter related to the 52 gates and two times the Tetragrammaton.

In another passage whose precise authorship is not known but is agreed to belong to the early stage of Hasidei Ashkenaz literature, the reception of the divine name is restricted to the righteous in a manner reminiscent of the rabbinic discussions cited in Chapter 1 above:

The righteous receive the face of the *Shekhinah*<sup>164</sup>. It is written: 'We extol the name of Your splendor.'<sup>165</sup> 'The Name of Your Glory' [*le-shem Tifartekha*] is numerically equivalent to 'the four-letter name' [*le-shem ben ha-'arba' 'otiyot*]<sup>166</sup> The nine times [in Scripture that the expression] 'to place His name' [*la-sum Shemo*] [is employed] and [the nine times that the expression] 'to cause His name to dwell' [*le-shaken Shemo*] [is employed] correspond to the nine visions that come over the righteous. Corresponding to this are three times [that the splendor of the Presence is mentioned] 'the glory of the Lord has shone upon you,'<sup>167</sup> 'Upon you the Lord will shine, and His Glory will be seen over you.'<sup>168</sup> These [three] correspond to 'the name of splendor'

[*Shem Tiferet*]<sup>169</sup> 'the name of His holiness' [*Shem qodesho*]<sup>170</sup> 'the name of His glory' [*shem kevodo*].<sup>171, 172</sup>

It is obvious that the dwelling of the name is not related to a future event, but rather reflects a more sustained attempt to flesh out the rabbinic view concerning the righteous's reception of the divine name. The dwelling of the name corresponds to the dwelling of the glory, some sort of parallel to the image in the above passages from R. Eleazar of Worms. While the biblical texts are sometimes related to the tabernacle and the Temple, in the Ashkenazi anonymous text it is the righteous that is the main recipient of those descending theophanies in which the dwelling of the divine name plays such an important role. Thus, we may discern in this medieval literature a development which started in late antiquity, but will reach its peak in eighteenth-century Hasidism, where the righteous as a mediator of the divinity moves to the center of a mystical version of Judaism.

I would say that just as there is a parallel between the two Tetragrammata and twice the equivalence of *demut* in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, a connection is presented in *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* between twice the equivalence of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton and *Ben*, on the one hand, and the importance of the image, *tzelem*, on the other hand. I would say that another difference is implied in the different treatments of the concepts related to *Ben*, the son: In R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* the main figure that looms prominently is Enoch, while in the traditions of R. Eleazar that figure is Adam. This basic discrepancy complicates the assumption that one of these two literatures influenced the other.

Indeed, the passage above deals mainly with Adam and the concept of his creation as well as the nature of his image. However, the proof-text from Prov. 10.1 or 15.20 hardly mentions Adam and God but, according to its plain sense, refers to everyman as father and son. Nevertheless, according to several interpretations concerning this verse found in *Midrash Mishlei*, Rashi and *Yalqut Shim'eoni* ad locum, the father that is gladdened by his son's wisdom is none other than God, and such an understanding also appears elsewhere in the same book, as we shall see below. Thus a certain reading of the verse is less prosaic, as it sees the father as God and implicitly, with a son who may not be a regular son. The main rabbinic discussions identified the son with different figures in Jewish tradition, a move that may have some polemic overtones, taking issue with a Christological understanding of the verse. How, however, does R. Eleazar understand the verse? He adopts the identification of the father in the verse with God, but transforms the son into a gematria of 52 gates. Both interpretations are quite artificial and their occurrence cannot be understood as a natural elaboration on the linguistic

material in the biblical verse, but rather as the application of a mode of thought that was articulated independently of this verse.

From this source as from other parallels it is difficult to understand the nature of the gates of understanding. They are hardly identical with rabbinic modes of understanding the Torah. They may have something to do with a deeper understanding of the Torah, but nothing more specific is indicated in these discussions.<sup>173</sup> However, the concept of transmission and the *gematria* of the two Tetragrammata may hint at an esoteric lore related, inter alia, to the divine names. Though the son in those verses is calculated in terms of *gematria*, I would not say that because of this the very concept of sonship has been eliminated; first and foremost because God still explicitly functions as a father who transmits his image, *Tzalmo*, as a divine name. Moreover, I would say that the connection between *Ben* in the verse, the 52 gates, divine names and *Tzelem* certainly does not preclude a significant concept of sonship in R. Eleazar's thought and we shall return to the discussion of the sons and the sons of sons below. Like in the cases of the completion of deficient anthropoidic forms discussed in the preceding section by means of the descent or the acceptance of the divine name, Adam was not conceived of as totally complete since he did not receive the 52 gates that are related to the double occurrence of the Tetragrammaton. The connection between the image and the Tetragrammaton is also conspicuous elsewhere, in a better-known treatise of R. Eleazar, in which the author wrote that:

When the soul departs from the body, it has no shadow;<sup>174</sup> this despite the fact that the animal, the beast and the chicken do have a shadow in the night of *Hosha'ana' Rabbah* and nevertheless they are slaughtered.<sup>175</sup> However, a man who will [imminently] die, has no shadow, as it is written<sup>176</sup> 'YHWH upon them – [then] they will live.' This is why it is written<sup>177</sup> 'Yismehū ha-shamayim we-tagef ha-'aretz' the acronym [of the first letters] is YHWH and of the last letters [of the verse] are TzaLMW. When the [divine] name<sup>178</sup> is on their head,<sup>179</sup> then TzaLMW exists, as it is written<sup>180</sup> 'YHWH sar me-'aleikha' and it is [also] written<sup>181</sup>: 'Sar tzilam me-'aleihem ve-YHWH 'itanu'. This is conspicuous in the night of *Hosha'ana' Rabbah*, when it is decided on the [future supply of] water.<sup>182</sup>

The shadow mentioned here is not a regular one; there is a qualitative difference between the shadow of an animal, to be slaughtered the next day, and that of men, since it is only the latter whose shadow is affected by the imminence of death. The uniqueness of the human shadow consists, according to this last quotation, in its nexus to the concept of *tzelem*, the image of man, which is apparently connected not only to his shadowy shape

but also to the divine name. In any case, the affinity between the morphic element, the *tzelem*, and the nominal, the Tetragrammaton is quite evident.

The nexus between protection and the presence of the divine name is quite evident in R. Eleazar's *Hilekhot Nevu'ah* which indicates that:

Just as the name [of God] is [found] on the angel,<sup>183</sup> so also the *tefillin* [are found] on the hand and, likewise, on the head; [as it is written] 'And with the shadow of my hands I have covered you.'<sup>184</sup> He safeguards the righteous,<sup>185</sup> so that the prophet sees, so that he may know who was upon me,<sup>186</sup> and who safeguards by means of the shadow of his hand.<sup>187</sup> This is just as it is now, in the night of *Hosha'na' Rabbah*: whoever has [then] a shadow, will live, but whoever has no shadow, and his head is small, without a neck, he will die within the same year, since He then decides in relation to water. And<sup>188</sup> the prophet sees the glory that has been created in order that he will see in accordance to the divine will.<sup>189</sup>

R. Eleazar expresses a view according to which the name found on the angel is parallel to the *tefillin* that a Jew should don as part of a ritual of daily prayer. This seems to be an interpretation of the Aramaic Targum on Deut. 28.10, known as Targum Jonathan ben 'Uzziel, in which the biblical verse is interpreted as dealing with the name that is found on man as long as the phylacteries are on him. Thus, we have here some form of angelomorphic understanding of the aim of the ritual, which involves also a nominal dimension. This angelomorphism has some apotropaic valence, and parallels a process of angelification found in the writings of the same author, to be discussed immediately below.

However in the last quotation from R. Eleazar, the connection between the name and the image is much more conspicuous. Indeed, the extrapolation of the connection between *tzalmo* and the Tetragrammaton, by means of the first and last letters of various words in a verse from Ps. 96, is not incidental or ad hoc, merely in order to strengthen the link between the *tzelem* and the divine name; it even recurs elsewhere in R. Eleazar's book. In his book *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*<sup>190</sup> he resorts again to the same verse from Psalms in order to point out the hovering of the divine name above the *tzelem*, which is found now not on the head of man but in the supernal world, together with all the other archetypal images of existent beings. The removal of the protective shadow, which is conceived as possessing a shape, is understood in the above passage as indicated by the verse 'sar tzilam me-'aleihem'. While in the original biblical Hebrew the term *tzilam* means, in this context, protection<sup>191</sup> – and this is the way in which it is still understood in some of the texts dealing with the ritual of *Hosha'ana' Rabbah* – nevertheless another meaning is added in the passage above to this verse: it is the removal

of the divine image, the *tzelem*, that causes, or at least adumbrates, the death of the person. Thus, the construed form *tzilam*, meaning 'shadow', *tsel*, plus the third plural possessive suffix *m*, which together mean 'their protection', has been understood, by using another vocalization of the same three consonants, as the noun *tzelem*. This intended misreading or misinterpretation may point to the possibility that the *tzelem* was already conceived as a removable aspect of the human person. Thus, the divine presence within someone constitutes his image and is removed at the moment of death. This presence is understood in terms of the dwelling of the Tetragrammaton upon the living human body. In another anonymous Ashkenazi writing from the same period, and written in my opinion by R. Nehemiah, it is said that the *Shekhinah* possesses an anthropomorphic shape that is the *demut* of the divine and constitutes 'the shadow of His stature'.<sup>192, 193</sup> Thus, the Tetragrammaton as divine presence and as image has two aspects: an embodied one, and one that emerges *post-mortem*. The connection between the Tetragrammaton and the human image is also found in another treatise, the Ashkenazi book printed as *Sefer ha-Navon* – very close conceptually, in my opinion, to both the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* and the *Commentary on the Haftarah* mentioned above and, thus, a composition of R. Nehemiah. There we read that: 'the name of the four letters changes and turns about in different ways . . . and likewise the name of God in its letters resembles [namely reveals itself] to the angels and the prophets in many forms and brilliances and has the likeness of human appearance'.<sup>194</sup> This text assumes that the letters of the divine name takes the anthropomorphic form when revealing themselves to angels and prophets. This is a clear example of accommodation and amounts to linguistic iconism. This conception of the prophets seeing forms of the Tetragrammaton may be related to the assumption that the author was a prophet. Interestingly enough, such a view differs from the apotheotic description of another Ashkenazi author who disputed the various conceptions of the Glory or *Kavod*: 'the face [of the glory] which turns to the creatures, is [tantamount to] the prophets and the angels and those who ascended to their secret'.<sup>195</sup> Here we have some form of assimilation of the prophet by ascent on high, to the higher entity.

As seen in the Introduction, an affinity between name/s and image is found in some Valentinian Gnostic sources. In short, my point is that the presence of the image/name/shadow on man constitutes a kind of higher soul, which turns man into a facsimile though not an incarnation of God, and this element represents some form of filial relationship between God and man. Is it possible to assume that the normal existence of man is ensured by the presence of the letters of the divine name, while the double Tetragrammaton is related to the special status of the possessor, who is a son?

I do not find such a specification in the Ashkenazi literature, and I propose that this is a speculation requiring confirmation.

The nexus between name and image reverberates from the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz in the writings of one of their followers, an author who was essentially a Kabbalist. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, perhaps a descendant of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, an influential author active in some different regions of Europe wrote:

Know that anyone who believes in corporeality, or any type of corporeality concerning the '*Illat ha-Illo*', denies the supreme ruler, blessed be His name and the Prophets . . . understand this and remain silent. The philosophers said that the verse 'Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad'<sup>196</sup> can be understood acronymically. The first letters of each word spell *YHWH* while the last letters of each word spell *TzLMW*. This you must understand as well.<sup>197</sup>

There can be no doubt that R. Joseph polemicizes against a trend found in the writings that nevertheless influence him. In this case, as in other instances, he attributes to philosophers numerical types of exegesis characteristic of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.

Last but not least in this context, according to Ashkenazi texts, which have earlier sources in Italy, the presence of the letters of the divine name within an anthropoidic figure ensures its vitality, as is the case in the concept of the Golem.<sup>198</sup> The name is therefore conceived of as some form of power instilled in a corporeal form and constituting its soul. In *Sefer Tagi*, a rather neglected treatise belonging to the main stream of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz,<sup>199</sup> God speaks as follows:

When I desire – then man is 'in the image of 'Elohim',<sup>200</sup> [but] when I desire [otherwise] – [then] 'Their image should be despised in the town.'<sup>201</sup> When I shall desire – I shall revive him in our likeness, this is Samson in his strength, and the inverse at the end namely when he did transgress my will, 'He took his strength'. Likewise is Adam when he did perform His will *Gilgul ha-'Olam*<sup>202</sup> and was not stricken and his stature is great; and when he transgressed, He removed him from his stature. 'In our likeness', complete like it is above, having richness and honor and wisdom. But when he transgressed He removed Adam from all these [qualities]<sup>203</sup> and this is the reason why [the letter] *N[un]* is inverted. And He wanted to give fifty gates of understanding to Adam,<sup>204</sup> but since He has foreseen that they will sin He took from them a little bit. In his image [means] the skin of the face of

Moses, like in our likeness. In<sup>205</sup> the future, the righteous will cause the resurrection of the dead, [like] Elijah, Elisha [and] Ezekiel as it is written<sup>206</sup> 'The seal [*Hotam*] will be changed into clay'. This is the rationale for the inverted *n[un]* in [the word] *Na'aseh*. Why is it not written *Ma'aseh* [deed]? Because it [the verse] hints at the righteous<sup>207</sup> who knows how to create by means of the combination of letters, and they created a man by means of *Sefer Yetzirah* but he was not similar to the man created by God in His wisdom, and this is the reason for [the inverted] *Nun*. This is the reason why if he will sin, he [apparently the Golem] will return to the dust, namely the inversion of *Na'aseh*.<sup>208</sup>

The entire passage is based upon a theory of inversion of letters in the Hebrew Bible, a process conceived to be related to human sins and divine response to such sins. This theory is imagined to be corroborated by linguistic aspects of the Hebrew Bible. At the center of this discussion is the special inverse spelling of the letter *Nun* in the word *Na'aseh*, 'let us do' in connection to Adam. This inverse spelling is not documented in the traditional manner whereby the word appears in the Masoretic text of the Bible, though it is invoked by some medieval Ashkenazi sources.<sup>209</sup> However, this claim recurs in the writings of Ḥasidei Ashkenazi, where it is assumed that there are three inverted letters in *Nun* in the creation story insofar as Adam is involved explaining why the first three generations – Adam, Seth, Enosh – had Adam's image and the likeness, *Tzelem* and *demut*.<sup>210</sup> The Ashkenazi masters combine the view of the three generations who possess the image<sup>211</sup> with the assumption that there is a connection between the Hebrew letter *Nun* and the image, discussed above. Thus, a strong connection is created between the letter *Nun*, the 50 gates of understanding, the image and Adam. There is no doubt that such a view also relates to the fact that the consonants of *ha-'Adam* amount to 50, like *Nun*.

The inverted *Nun* is understood as hinting at the divine possibility of changing the direction of creation, namely, through destruction or diminishment. This is the reason why the tradition of the Golem is adduced: the righteous men, who are the magicians, are capable, like God, of both creating and destroying. The Hebrew verb in the biblical verse that is translated as 'will be changed' is *tithapekh*, a grammatical form stemming from *HPhKh*. In many texts, *hippukh* stands for the changing of the order of the letters of a certain word, metathesis, which is often the meaning of combinations of letters, *tzerufei 'otiyot*, as we shall see in the next chapter. Therefore the resurrection of dead bodies, performed by Elijah and Elisha, was envisioned by the Ashkenazi figure as having been achieved by combinations of letters. It should be pointed out that the deficiency of

Adam, who received only 50 out of the 52 gates, is also reminiscent of the deficiency of the artificial man created by the righteous. In any case, the above passage is one of the few cases in the Middle Ages when the creation of man and the righteous's creation of the Golem are brought together.

Special attention should be drawn to the recurrence of the term 'righteous' in this literature. This is part of a vision of the righteous as possessing supernatural power, as seen in the Introduction. The connection between righteousness and such powers appears in a Talmudic discussion in the immediate vicinity of the Golem story, where the righteous and the anthropoid are expressly connected. Moreover, in an interesting discussion, R. Eleazar views the righteous as capable of enhancing and causing the elevation of the Glory of God, a view that I called 'theurgy' and that recurs in his writings.<sup>212</sup>

In the Midrash and the Talmud, a connection can be found between sonship and a process related to the Golem; according to Rava, if the *Soṭah* undergoes the test positively, her compensation will be 'a son who will be like Abraham, on whom it is written 'I, [who am] dust and ashes'.<sup>213</sup> If she did not gain [the test] she will return to her dust.'<sup>214</sup> The two alternatives, to give birth to a son or to return to the dust, are similar to the two acts of the magical operator, to create the Golem and to return him to the dust. Interestingly, the Amora who formulated this explanation of the ritual of the *Soṭah*, Rava, is the same person who is the hero of the creation of the first Golem in the famous passage in *Sanhedrin*.

Let me draw attention to another tradition involving a practice similar to the creation of the Golem, but culminating in the birth of a son. According to a discussion of the *Soṭah* attributed to R. Meir, a second-century Tanna, the *Soṭah* is tested by dust because 'out of it Adam was created, and this is the reason why she is given to drink from it, since if she is pure, she conceives and gives birth to a son in his image'.<sup>215</sup> If the attribution of this statement to R. Meir is correct, then the statement of Rava has some polemical implications in preferring Abraham over Adam, who may be a less heroic figure.

According to a tradition found in a commentary of R. Eleazar of Worms, knowledge of the divine name coupled with upright behavior causes someone to be 'like one of the ministering angels, and he is received from camp to camp, for he is like an angel and his soul is bound to the high and exalted throne'.<sup>216</sup> This process of angelification is especially interesting from our point of view since it may be understood as an apotheosis achieved by knowing or perhaps also reciting the divine name, which is received and internalized. In the next chapter we will see a similar stand in Abraham Abulafia's description of the mystical experience.

Similar to the previous text, in the passage dealing with the ascent of

the chosen prophet adduced from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, we read in an important text by R. Eleazar:

Do not speak so loudly [*gavoah gavoah*]<sup>217</sup> but in a whisper<sup>218</sup> because the glory<sup>219</sup> of God [cons]is[its in] hiding the thing<sup>220</sup> and what is written<sup>221</sup> ‘as the appearance of man on the seat.’ And the book of [*Shi’ur*] *Qomah* ‘*ve-rav koah*’.<sup>222</sup> This is not [to be] transmitted but in a whisper. And if someone does so, He will make him sit on the seat of Glory, like Adam the first [man]. This is the reason why the end letters of the words<sup>223</sup> ‘*ve-kisse*’ *kavod yanhilem*’ form [the consonants of the word] ‘*adam*’.<sup>224</sup>

This passage presents another nice portrayal of the apothotic themes found in the main school of speculations active in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz. It is consonant with the importance of transmitting esoteric information, especially the divine name, in a ritualistic manner, and relates also to cosmological issues, like the mysterious source of the primordial light.<sup>225</sup> I read R. Eleazar’s passage as follows: by properly hiding various topics, someone brings about his reception of the Glory of God, which consists of the initiate’s being enthroned. The five topics mentioned in the text: the Glory, the throne, the appearance of man on the seat, the divine name, and *Shi’ur Qomah*, are among the most esoteric topics in Jewish mysticism. The person capable of transmitting them in a whisper is imagined as gaining a seat of glory similar to that of Adam.<sup>226</sup> In the vein of the quotation from *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, it seems that it is an Adam-like ideal that stands at the centre of R. Eleazar’s understanding of perfection. I assume that the proper keeping and transmission of esoteric traditions may elevate a mystic to the status of Adam. I wonder whether the last quotes from the Hasidei Ashkenaz should not be read together: the reception of the 50 gates by Adam constitutes his image, and since this image was lost it is possible to retrieve it by the esoteric tradition which is reminiscent of the traditions of the divine name. In any case, it seems that in this main school of Ashkenazi esotericism, there is a concept according to which the image, *tzelem*, may be found on three levels: God, angels and man.<sup>227</sup> The mystic is returning to the lost status of Adam rather than imitating Enoch or the prophets as in R. Nehemiah’s *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. Thus, it seems that the two alternatives reflect two different and possibly contemporaneous schools active in the broader Ashkenazi region. In different ways, these two schools in Hasidei Ashkenaz by-passed the gist of rabbinic literature and returned to and enhanced the importance of themes found in late antiquity literatures.

Let me compare the general structure of the quotation from MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566, to that which we adduced from *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*.

There are many issues shared by these sources: the reflections on the inverted letter *Nun*, the theme of the gates, the creation of Adam, and the diminution of his perfection. Nevertheless, there are two elements that appear only in one of the two passages: in *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* the theme of the sons and of the sons of sons occurs, while in lieu of them in the manuscript passage the creation of the Golem and its destruction are mentioned. Different as these topics are from each other, they have something in common: both involve the reproduction of man, either by sons or by creation of an artificial anthropoid. In the first case, the structure of the word *BeN* is crucial: continuation is not only a matter of corporeal reproduction but of teaching one’s sons and grandsons. After the quoted passage the author of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* writes:

If man gains the understanding of the fifty gates of understanding the hip [of the letter *Nun*] are aligned, and if not, I shall admonish him by its closed hip, this is the reason why the three [letters of] Nuns are corresponding to those Nuns: *le-vaNeikha u-li-vNei vaNeikha*.<sup>228</sup> Since if they will teach their sons and they will be preoccupied with the Torah, he will open to them fifty gates of understanding,<sup>229</sup> and if not this will be inverted. Another interpretation: this is the reason why the Nuns are inverted, the sages said<sup>230</sup>: ‘Every Rabbinic scholar whose son and grandson are Rabbinic scholars the Torah does not cease from him.’<sup>231</sup>

Also, in the pseudo-R. Eleazar’s *Commentary on the Torah* the assumption is that whoever teaches his sons and his sons’ sons will merit the 50 gates of understanding, again a non-traditional position.<sup>232</sup> Continuity is related here either to a mystical understanding of the 50 gates or, alternatively, to rabbinic studies. In any case, the sons and the grandsons are mentioned very conspicuously. If they do not become scholars some form of inversion is assumed, just as with the destruction of the Golem in *Sefer ha-Tagi*.

Here, at the end of this discussion let me address a legend adduced in this context:

The *Nuns* are inverted, because when<sup>233</sup> the Holy One, Blessed be He said: ‘Let us create Adam’, and I shall give him fifty gates of understanding, Hazah and Hazael<sup>234</sup> stood and said: ‘What is man that you mention him [the son of man that you take thought of him].’<sup>235</sup> By fifty<sup>236</sup> gates of understanding. ‘They are a generation of perversion [*dor tahappuhot*]<sup>237</sup> ‘*Hemah*’ [they] amount [in gematria] to fifty, and they<sup>238</sup> inverted [*hippkhu*] the words of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Then the Holy One, Blessed be He,

extended his finger among them, inverted them and burned them up.<sup>239</sup>

This interpretation of this rabbinic legend, with some Enochic overtones implicit in the occurrence of the names of the fallen angels, is based on the principles seen above: creation of Adam, revelation of the fifty gates, inversion of *Nun*, and destruction. The word *BeN*, belonging to the construct 'Ben 'Adam' – Son of Man, is interpreted as 'By N, by fifty.' This is quite a drastic 'deconstruction' of sonship.<sup>240</sup> I assume that the introduction of the names of the angels related to the generation of the flood, or perhaps their existence in a variant of the legend that is doctored in the Talmudic version, is related to the evil 'generation' that is mentioned and which reflects that of the flood. I am not aware of a rabbinic or other form of legend that parallels this particular version of the protest of angels against the revelation of the gates of understanding. Nevertheless, I am confident that the use of this theme is not an innovation of a mid-sixteenth-century author, as David Segal, for example, would claim. In a manuscript from the 1270s, which already contains the writings of R. Moses Azriel, it is written, following R. Eleazar of Worms or the author of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*:

Our sages said that when the Holy One wanted to reveal to Solomon all the fifty gates of understanding, all the angels assembled together and said: 'What is man that you mention him, the son of man that you take thought of him?'<sup>241</sup> And the Holy One went and gave him forty-nine gates but the fiftieth gate He did not reveal, in order to fulfill 'and He reduced him a little bit from God.' This is the reason why if someone creates a creature by means of *Sefer Yetzirah*, he has the power to create everything with the exception of one thing.<sup>242, 243</sup>

There is evident similarity between this quotation and various elements in several of the earlier passages mentioned, especially in the references to the issue of the Golem and the rebellion of the angels. Now, the attribution of the transmission is not to Adam but to King Solomon. R. Eleazar of Worms writes explicitly that 'Solomon has been given fifty gates of understanding.'<sup>244</sup> This variant differs from the traditional position both in terms of the identity of the recipient, Solomon instead of Moses, and in terms of the number of gates that have been given *de facto*, 50 and not 49. This means that we have at least two different versions of the tradition displayed in two Talmudic discussions of the topic: in the latter sources it was Moses who was described as the recipient of the gates, while in medieval sources two additional figures are mentioned in this context: in the writings of R. Eleazar of Worms, which are considered authentic, and in R. Efrayim ben

Shimshon, it is Adam that receives the 50 gates, while in R. Yehudah he-Hasid, R. Eleazar and in some other texts, including that of R. Moshe Azriel, it is King Solomon that is the recipient of those gates. Therefore, before the end of the thirteenth century, traditions that differ from the rabbinic views were known, and David Segal's argument that R. Eleazar would not diverge from the Talmudic standard is a problematic assumption.<sup>245</sup> If R. Eleazar can shift his view of the recipient from Moses to Adam, and elsewhere to Solomon, and if he can in some cases indicate that 50 and not 49 gates are given to the mortals, then we can ask in the context of D. Segal's argument of conservatism why the figure of these gates could not shift from 50 to 52. Or to draw on another example, in 3 *Enoch*, 300 gates of understanding are mentioned.<sup>246</sup>

Another aspect of the above-quoted text to mention is the creation by means of *Sefer Yetzirah*. In a short discussion belonging to the so-called Ashkenazi school designated as the 'Circle of the Special Cherub', I located the following discussion in an anonymous manuscript:

'On the river of Kevar':<sup>247</sup> The sages call [it] the Special Cherub [*Keruv ha-Meyuḥad*] and this is [the meaning of] Kevar [according to the] secret of *Bekhor* [Firstborn] of his mouth; it is a hint at a wondrous issue. And because he said 'In the midst of the Golah' he said [spelled] *Kevar* using a [elliptic] spelling without the letter of *V[av]*, and this is sufficient for someone who understands. This is the meaning of the verse 'Great is our Lord and full of might',<sup>248</sup> which are the 231 gates in the wheel,<sup>249</sup> and all are conferred to him, and whosoever is acquainted with [the technique of] their pronunciation, and to combine them and to turn them together with their five syllables [*havarah*], will create a creature as Rava did.<sup>250</sup>

As I pointed out elsewhere, this passage is reminiscent of R. Moshe Azriel ben Eliezer ha-Darshan's views.<sup>251</sup> This is clear from the identification of the *Shi'ur Qomah* dimensions with the Special Cherub, which is again described in an anthropomorphic manner and related to the figure 236.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, the author hints several times at a gematria of 'zeh keruv' as if it too amounts to 236, though it is not clear how this figure fits those consonants.<sup>253</sup> Here, however, I am interested in the parallel between this passage and the one quoted before it. In both cases the issue of the creation by combination of letters is mentioned, and in both cases the artificial anthropoid known later as Golem is implied. I assume that the mentioning of the mouth in this passage has to do with the recitation of the combinations of letters and their vocalization, which are part of the creation of the Golem. The author suggests a connection between 231, the number

of the gates, namely the combinations of two letters plus the five syllables which amount to 236, and the size of the *Shi'ur Qomah* according to the gematria of *rav koah*, full of might.<sup>254</sup> Yet what is the secret, the wondrous issue, mentioned here immediately after the *Bekhor*, the firstborn? There can be no doubt that the Ashkenazi author hints at various combinations of three consonants: *KBR*, the name of the river Kevar; *BKR*, namely *Bekhor*, the firstborn, and last but not least: *KRB*, namely *Kerub*, cherub. However, what is the meaning of the elliptical spelling of *KBR*? I assume that it amounts to 222 and further amounts to 236 if we add 14, which in Hebrew is reflected by the consonants *YD*, which are vocalized as *Yad*, hand. As we shall see below, the hand of God occurs in the context of a similar discussion, to be translated immediately below. Let's mention the possibility that in addition to the reference to sonship by means of the firstborn, *bekhor*, the anonymous Ashkenazi author could, in principle, understand the word *kevar* as *ke-Bar*, namely 'as a son', but I did not find any hint in this direction.

An older contemporary of R. Moshe Azriel, R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, a Castilian Kabbalist well acquainted with Ashkenazi material, writes in his mid-thirteenth-century *Commentary on the Account of Merkavah*:

'The face of the cherub' – is the face of the Messiah, the son of Efrayyim, the son of Joseph, blessed be his memory. And 'the face of the lion' – is Messiah ben David . . . and Raphael is the prince of the face of the ox or of the face of cherub, in order to heal the break of Efrayyim, the son of Joseph . . . when Israel sins, the Holy One looks at the face of the cherub and has mercy on them, and extends His patience like a father that has mercy on his son, who is yet a youth [*na'ar*] . . . as it is said: 'Israel, you are my firstborn son.'<sup>255</sup> And it is also written 'Israel is a youth.'<sup>256</sup> Change [the order of letters] and read *Bekhor* – *Keruv*, [Cherub], as it is written 'The firstborn of his ox is his splendor,'<sup>257</sup> and change *Bekhor* and read Cherub . . . and change and read Cherub – *Banukh*, since the Holy One looks to the face of the cherub and emanates His blessing [*birkekato*] upon Israel.<sup>258</sup>

Here we have a series of concepts that are potentially identical: the face of the cherub, Messiah ben Efrayyim, Firstborn, Israel, Youth, Son, and perhaps also the angel Raphael. I assume that such an understanding illuminates the view of R. Moshe Azriel in which the concept of the firstborn is presented as having some form of secret meaning, related to sonship. I wonder whether this secret of the son is part of a theory found already in the Special Cherub school, which presumably flourished in Spain in the second third of the thirteenth century, or whether it was inserted in theories stemming from this school by authors belonging to the last third of

the thirteenth century.<sup>259</sup> In any case, unlike the afore-mentioned Ashkenazi master, the youth is explicitly identified here as a son, not as a servant, and we shall revert to this issue in the next section.

Dealing with the father-son dialogue, an event that is central to the Passover Seder, Abraham Abulafia mentions the inversions related to themes found in the verses describing the slavery in Egypt and the redemption. Capitalizing on the verse 'You should redeem all the firstborn of man'<sup>260</sup> Abulafia claims that whoever did not free himself from Egypt is still a slave there, toiling for the Pharaoh. This means that redemption, the spiritual one to be sure, is a process that occurs repeatedly and is independent of the ancient historical 'event'. Each person has to transcend the labor of materiality and become spiritual. The transformation of one form of existence into another is described in this context as the change from *Bekhor* to Cherub, from *Levenim* to *le-vanim*, namely sons, from *Homer*, the matter, to *Rehem*, the womb, understood here as mercy. Thus also in his speculation there is an interesting correspondence between the Cherub, son, and mercy, all of which express the spiritual mode of life, in a context where the pun *Bekhor/Cherub* is found, reminiscent of R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen's passage.<sup>261</sup> Abulafia's discussion is less centered on the supernal hypostasis and more concerned with the importance of the inner transformation and the inner 'ascent on high'. The *Bekhor*, the firstborn, is explicitly in this context, the human intellect,<sup>262</sup> and in several other contexts, the intellect is referred to as the son.<sup>263</sup> Therefore, we can see that during the last third of the thirteenth century, explicit reference to sonship in the context of the firstborn and *Cherub* is shared by three different Kabbalists, all of them having some form of connection to Ashkenazi culture.<sup>264</sup>

Given the two contemporary parallels to R. Moshe Azriel's discussion of *Bekhor/Cherub*, we may plausibly surmise that also in his case, the secret is related to *Bekhor* and has something to do with a concept of sonship. If so, we may also see this Ashkenazi figure as interested in an issue we discussed above in the context of two earlier authors from the same geographical area who had a significant impact on his thought.

It is clear from one of the quotations above that this firstborn emerges by means of recitation: 'his mouth'. Thus it parallels the creation of the Golem, which was based according to some recipes on pronunciation of letters of divine names, but without mentioning any material that may serve as the corpus for the Golem. Indeed, it is implicitly related to some form of revelation, hinted at in the verse from Ezekiel, though a defective one, due to the exile. In any case, the anthropoids mentioned in the two passages are closely connected. Let me turn to another passage from the writings of the same kabbalistic author, in which another anthropoid is mentioned: Jesus.

#### 4. The youth and Jesus

Many scholars have pointed out the possible affinities between conceptualizations of Jesus and themes related to Metatron, and it would be a task in itself to enumerate all those who did so. Most recently, Boyarin,<sup>265</sup> Abrams,<sup>266</sup> Deutsch,<sup>267</sup> Davila,<sup>268</sup> and G.G. Stroumsa,<sup>269</sup> who adduced the earlier scholarly literature on the topic, have discussed some of these possible affinities. Nevertheless, interesting discussions found in additional texts that point in the direction of a connection between the two figures of vice-regent still await detailed analysis, and some of this desideratum will be dealt with below. One such text, written by an anonymous student of Abraham Abulafia's, the author of *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*, will be analyzed in the next chapter. Here, however, let me address an Ashkenazi contemporary treatment of the topic. In a text found in a manuscript dated to the end of the thirteenth century, and identified by Scholem as authored by R. Moshe Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, a descendant of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, we find an interesting discussion that brings together many of the topics addressed in some of the analyses above:

Behold, there are here nine *sefirot* and the tenth *sefirah* is the [letter] *Yod*,<sup>270</sup> and she is emanating upon the youth, as it is said that the hand of the Holy One, He, is found upon the head of his Servant, whose name is Metatron, and the youth comes and prostrates before the Holy One. From here there is a proof and a response to those who say that the youth is the *Shekhinah*. And how is it possible that the *Shekhinah* is prostrating before the Holy One? And, God forbid, there is here a separation of the plants. Woe to them that they took it from Ishmael and this is what has been said by the nations of the world, and on this issue Edom<sup>271</sup> erred and said about the Father, and the Son and the Holy [the Spirit] and all this was taken from the virtue of this. And this is the first thing that the Holy One warned Moses: 'Do not replace Me',<sup>272</sup> do not think on him that he is a Deity [*Eloha*]. And all the philosophers are descending<sup>273</sup> to this issue and all erred. And by the virtue of this they say that all the ten *sefirot* come from the virtue of the nations of the world.<sup>274</sup> But God forbid, this is not so. And it has been demonstrated that the *sefirot* are called Metatron. Let us return to the first issue. And the youth enters beneath the throne of Glory, [and] the Holy one, strengthens him by the light of face.<sup>275</sup> Also here there is a proof that he is not the *Shekhinah* since he needs strengthening, but the *Shekhinah* needs no strengthening but to emanate. And he serves in the interior [of the Holy of the Holiest] because he is a high priest.<sup>276</sup> And his

name is spelled with six letters namely Metatron, and by seven letters mentioned in *Sefer ha-Yuun*<sup>277</sup> and in other books<sup>278</sup>, and twenty-two letters, because it is comprised by twenty-two letters, because his name is *YHWH* the Lesser, and in [the letters of] *YHWH* all the twenty-two letters are included. And he also interprets the seven letters [the consonants of *YHWH Qaṭaṅ*] indeed because from *YHWH* the Lesser, the name of twenty-two letters emerges.<sup>279</sup>

This is a seminal passage for understanding the synthesis between several conceptual traditions related to the son, as discussed above. Three different groups that misunderstood something from a theological point of view are mentioned here: Muslims, Christians and philosophers. In fact, some Jews also, at least implicitly, made a similar form of mistake, when they claimed that the doctrine of *sefirot* constitutes an external influence as it is conveyed by the expression 'from the virtue of the nations'.

As Scholem points out, the distinction between the *Shekhinah* as a created entity, and the view of it as the divine presence, which is not separated from the Divinity, is at stake here.<sup>280</sup> A trend in Ashkenazi esoteric thought, represented by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, does not draw a strong distinction between a divine *Shekhinah* and Metatron as a high priest.<sup>281</sup> In his *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, Metatron was sent to strengthen someone who studies Torah, and this action is described by the same verb used in the above passage to describe God's strengthening of Metatron.<sup>282</sup> As seen above, according to R. Nehemiah God accompanies Metatron in his missions. Yet the main school of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, the Kalonymite one, identifies Metatron as *Shekhinah* though the latter is understood much more than in Nehemiah's writings, as a created entity.<sup>283</sup> R. Moshe Azriel and his father R. Eleazar are direct descendants of the leaders of this school.<sup>284</sup> Moreover, this identification is a tradition that was known to and accepted by contemporary Catalan Kabbalists, R. Joseph ben Shmuel and Nahmanides, active around 1235.<sup>285</sup>

Thus, R. Moshe Azriel claims that he adopts the distinction between Metatron and the *Shekhinah* found in his opinion in the book, which he expressly mentions, namely the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, and indeed a version of R. Nehemiah's commentary is found in the same manuscript in which R. Moshe Azriel's writings are also preserved. It seems that R. Moshe Azriel distanced himself from a family tradition, which identified the two entities, and this may be the possible reason why he does not explicitly mention the identity of those he opposes among the Jews. Here, however, we are concerned more with the assumption that there is some misunderstanding in Christianity that is related to the Metatron-

*Shekhinah* quandary. In order to understand the ‘mistake’ of the Christians, we must identify the parallels the author imagined existed between the topics he discusses here and the elements of the Trinity. In fact, there are only two possibilities: either the youth is the Son, or he is the Holy Spirit. Given the anthropomorphic representations of the Son in many Christian denominations, I assume that this is the intention of the Ashkenazi Kabbalist: do not mistake the Son as a divinity, though he has a distinct hypostatic nature. It seems that this is, to resort to a late antiquity category, a sort of non-self-subsistent type of hypostasis.<sup>286</sup> In other words, the author draws a parallel between the *Na‘ar*, Metatron, in his way of thought, and what he believes would be a correct understanding of the Son in Christianity. Or, in other words, the Christian Trinitarian view in the way it was understood by the Nicene Creed is conceived of as being a theological mistake, while a more Arian understanding of the Christ would have been much more consonant with R. Moses Azriel’s view. In any case, the emphasis on the view that the youth is a servant counteracts the possibility that he is a son. In any case, such a view would see the Christian understanding of the role of the son as no more than a servant angel, as indeed we learn from a treatment found in one of R. Nehemiah’s writings, where *Yeshu‘a Sar ha-Panim* – Jeshua the Prince of the Face – is mentioned, according to Liebes’s interesting reconstruction.<sup>287</sup> Thus, according to the Ashkenazi author, a ‘correct’ understanding of the youth should assume his clear subordination to as well as ontological distinction from the last *sefirah*. This subordination is described in the above text as the higher entity putting the hand – *yad* – on the head of the lower.

What is the possible meaning of this gesture? It should be mentioned that exactly the same expression is found elsewhere in the writings of the same author. In a context quite similar to the above quotation, concerning the youth as Metatron upon which the Tetragrammaton is found, we find the warning not to worship him after which it is written ‘and the cherub puts his hand on him’,<sup>288</sup> some lines later it is again written that the cherub ‘puts his hand on the youth’.<sup>289</sup> This therefore is some form of fixed expression of the subordination between two very similar figures which are designated by the divine name: the cherub and the angel of the face, as well as the ten *sefirot*.<sup>290</sup> J. Dan, who read some of the material pertinent to this issue, suggests that it is the Cherub that is blessing the angel of the face.<sup>291</sup> Much closer to the image found above, however, are two other interpretations. The first one is a recurring theme found in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s writings, which certainly impacted the later Ashkenazi author. So, for example, we read in one of those texts that:

*ve-‘Akhy’el* in gematria *’Ofan*, and in gematria *Yuppiy’el*<sup>292</sup> and this

is the name of the Prince of the Face<sup>293</sup> and this is the meaning of the statement that there is an *’Ofan* on high and the arm of Metatron is linked to the *’Ofan*, and it seizes the world. And the storm is going from the *’Ofan* to the arm of the Holy one,<sup>294</sup> blessed be He, as it is said: ‘and under the arms [of God], the world [is found]’.<sup>295, 296</sup>

Elsewhere in this book *Ve-‘Akhy’el* is a mystical name of the right hand of God.<sup>297</sup> The affinities between three levels of the universe linked by hands are found elsewhere in an anonymous text authored again by R. Nehemiah.<sup>298</sup> Therefore, relations of linkage and subordination are represented by this image related to the gesture of the hand, which also has some earlier sources.<sup>299</sup>

However, I assume that there is one more important connotation for the gesture of putting the hand on the head, which is pertinent for our topic. In Ps. 80.18: ‘Let thy hand be upon man of thy right, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.’ This verse may be read intertextually with what is found earlier in Ps. 80.16: translated as ‘On the son that thou madest strong for thyself.’ Therefore, the Ashkenazi text dealing with putting the hand on an anthropomorphic figure may refer also to some concept of adopted son as the meaning of the ‘youth’ in the Ashkenazi passage. In fact, the themes of ‘adopting’ and of ‘making strong’ are expressed by the same root in Hebrew, *’MTz*. Moreover, both meanings make sense in the Ashkenazi text: sonship is mentioned obliquely when Christianity is mentioned, and strength is implied in the picture of the continuous picture of the world, found in R. Nehemiah and echoed in R. Moshe Azriel’s passage.

The Christian theological error is labeled in the previous passage as a separation of the plants, similar to the description of Elisha ben Abbuya’s mistake or Adam’s sin in the earlier, late antiquity traditions. How did the Ashkenazi Kabbalist understand what he called the Christian theological error? In my opinion, it has to do with the assumption he found in Jewish sources, apparently in his very family, that the youth, or Metatron, is a divine figure. He was, perhaps, afraid that this linkage between a *homo assumptus* and a divine figure may be too close to Christianity as understood in his time. Instead, he proposed the view that the Cherub is the mediating figure between the divine and the lower levels. Less related to the human realm, this understanding of the figure of the Cherub is much more traditional and less prone to foster a Christological misunderstanding among his readers.<sup>300</sup>

### 5. Some methodological remarks

A question that should be addressed here, though succinctly, is the nature of the theology that informs some of the Ashkenazi material discussed above. Since I assume that the biblical terms *tzelem* and *demut* point to corporeal shapes insofar as the human beings are concerned, by acting as lower reverberations of higher beings they reflect the nature of those beings here below. However, it would be too simple an inference to assume that all Ashkenazi theology is simply anthropomorphic. As is the case with many earlier instances in Jewish literature, it is hard to detect a systematic and full-fledged theology that is accepted as the single dogmatic theory. This is also the case with the various Ḥasidic passages dealt with above. Nevertheless, in some parts of the corpora from which we quoted above, there are strong formulations that negate any form of body from the highest parts of the divine world. Under the impact of R. Sa'adyah Gaon's and R. Abraham ibn Ezra's philosophical theologies dealing with the divine manifestation called Glory, *Kavod*, Ashkenazi masters interpret some anthropomorphic expressions in classical Jewish texts either allegorically or as being attributable to the divine Glory.<sup>301</sup> In one of these cases, belonging to a different school from the one discussed above and known in scholarship as the 'Unique' or the 'Special Cherub' school, and its reverberations in the writings of R. Moses Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, an interesting instance of what I called 'theophoric mediator' is found insofar as the descriptions of the Glory and Cherub are concerned. The Glory is understood as being given the Tetragrammaton.<sup>302</sup> A similar theory is found in another book of R. Nehemiah's, the so-called *Sefer ha-Navon*,<sup>303</sup> which is quoted above.

Nevertheless, this sort of interpretation was not systematic and the writings of those masters also show cases in which anthropomorphic expressions stemming from earlier Jewish sources were adopted in the medieval texts. This may also apply to expressions and terms such as 'face' *panim* or 'appearance of the face' *qelaster panim*.<sup>304</sup> I am not exactly sure how such anthropomorphic expressions impact the specific meaning of the Tetragrammaton in these contexts as an entity dwelling upon man: do the graphic aspects of the letters play a role and are they visible when leaving a human head or body? In any case, it seems that in the main school of Ashkenazi Ḥasidism we have an instance of an identity between the morphic and the nominal, but now this is not a matter of an angelic mediator, but of the human being.

I surmise that the two main Ashkenazi traditions dealing with concepts of son are the two discussed above: the angelic concept related to Metatron and found in the writings of R. Nehemiah, and the concept dealing with the 52 gates that is found both in R. Eleazar of Worms and the pseudo-

Eleazar. This means that neither of these concepts can be simply derived from the other in its medieval form. Nevertheless, I assume that what they share, namely their identification of the son with the Tetragrammaton, or the double Tetragrammaton, may point to an earlier common denominator that developed independently at the hands of two different groups of Ashkenazi thinkers, or perhaps even earlier, through their hypothetical sources. As pointed out above, the affinities between the first traditions adduced in this chapter dealing with Yaho'el and Son, and early Jewish-Christian traditions reflect not only the existence of the Son-tradition prior to the emergence of the two bodies of medieval writings examined above, or more specifically the existence of such a theory only early in the thirteenth century, but the existence of similar traditions more than one millennium beforehand.<sup>305</sup> In a way, the Ashkenazi traditions as known to R. Nehemiah and his followers on this topic, are closer to the pseudepigraphic treatments discussed in the Introduction, more than to any other treatments found in the Jewish traditions in rabbinic literature. By adopting this understanding of the cultural dynamic, in which we see both the divergences between traditions and their common denominators that indicate preceding views, I propose to respect and even emphasize the differences between the two schools as articulated in the written documents, while at the same time being attentive to their shared themes which plausibly point to a common source/s. This methodology is similarly fundamental to my presentation of the Ashkenazi material insofar as the Golem traditions are concerned<sup>306</sup> and other scholars can be seen endorsing a similar type of historical explanation regarding schools in Ḥasidei Ashkenaz independent of my methodology.<sup>307</sup> Therefore, it should be pointed out that unlike the other Ashkenazi schools which have been interested in Golem recipes, the writings of R. Nehemiah do not reflect any special form of concern with this topic nor with *Sefer Yetzirah* in general, with only very few small exceptions. While some of the members of the Kalonymide School and authors belonging to the Special Cherub circle wrote commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah* and elaborated on many of his views in their other writings, in his writings R. Nehemiah scarcely mentions the book.

Yet, there can be no doubt that both these literatures significantly impacted on subsequent forms of Jewish mysticism. As Liebes points out, the passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* quoted first in this chapter was influential on several seventeenth-century Ashkenazi Kabbalists.<sup>308</sup> I found a verbatim quotation from the passage dealing with the son in the late seventeenth-century Ashkenazi author R. Moshe ben Shema'yah,<sup>309</sup> and it appears to him that it is almost a part of the Heikhalot literature. However, it seems that the most interesting instance reflecting the

impact of the discussion of the Son found in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* is a conspicuous reference in a book of ecstatic Kabbalist R. Abraham Abulafia and some of his followers. His view of the affinity between the *Cherub/Bekhor* theme and son may also stem from various Ashkenazi traditions, as seen above. However, to his views on the hypostatic son as Yaho'el, as influenced by the above discussions, we shall turn for a detailed analysis in the next chapter.

Before so doing, however, a few sentences should be devoted to the role of the Ashkenazi literatures mentioned above in the transmission of some of the material discussed in Chapter 1. The lengthy discussions I dedicated to elucidating both bibliographical and textual issues reflect the initial stage of the research in these areas of Jewish mysticism; R. Nehemiah's name was practically unknown in scholarship, and so too was the relationship between his anonymous writings, while the pseudo-R. Eleazar's texts on the Son were discarded by David Segal as late fabrications, as late as mid-sixteenth century. The cryptic nature of the Ashkenazi esoteric discourse calls for a more detailed analysis of the relevant material before attempting to draw more general conclusions, and indeed an examination of the scholarly attribution of texts to different authors requires a lot of precaution.

The rabbinic literature was well known by the Ashkenazi masters as was the Heikhalot literature. Insofar as the latter is concerned, Ashkenazi authors have been its main transmitters in Europe and, without their mediation, little of this body of writing would have reached us from independent sources. However the fact that Ashkenazi copyists, sometime in the thirteenth century, contributed so significantly to the preservation of the much earlier material is not all that is worth noting. Most of the Ashkenazi and Italian manuscripts that contain the Ashkenazi material were copied much later, most in manuscripts from as late as the period between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, the scholarly reconstructions of the content of the Heikhalot views are based upon very late manuscripts, and this fact has not received the scholarly attention that is warranted. Even more problematic from the point of view of reliability of content is the fact that in such manuscripts printed as Heikhalot, material belonging to the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz has been detected.<sup>310</sup> In my opinion, even much later material has been printed as if part of the Heikhalot literature, namely kabbalistic material written as late as the thirteenth century and perhaps even early fourteenth century, which appears, inadvertently to be sure, in Schaefer's *Synopse*.<sup>311</sup> Awareness of the possible accretions, interpolations and conceptual and redactional interferences of medieval figures in texts of the earlier traditions should haunt each and every analysis of the Heikhalot material, especially when copied in Ashkenazi circles.<sup>312</sup> However, in order

for this to be the case scholars must be acquainted with the specific terminologies current in both Ashkenazi and kabbalistic literatures, an acquaintance that does not characterize the vast majority of scholars writing on Heikhalot literature, to put it mildly.<sup>313</sup> Even the potential contribution of the rich kabbalistic material already collected by Odeberg in his lengthy Introduction written in English, which draws from printed material and many manuscripts, ahistorical and eclectic as this collection of material indeed is, has been basically neglected by scholars attempting to deal with the status of Metatron. The fact that he relied on so many manuscripts in order to survey the various views of Metatron indubitably remains an outstanding scholarly achievement even today, though caution in relying on some of his findings is necessary.<sup>314</sup>

In a way, this reliance on late manuscripts is reminiscent of the situation in what is known as the Enochic literature. Both the first and the second books of *Enoch* are preserved in a variety of languages but not in Hebrew in their entirety and are known only from relatively late medieval manuscripts. While small parts of *1 Enoch* have been also found in late antiquity Greek and Aramaic fragments, the part relating to the Parables is reflected only in very late manuscripts stemming from Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the vast majority of scholars do not hesitate to draw conclusions about dramatic religious developments that took place more than a millennium and a half before the datation of the manuscripts, especially with regard to the possible impact of apothotic issues on the emergence of early Christian theories of sonship. Yet, if the fourteenth-century and even later manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* in Slavonic,<sup>315</sup> the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts containing *1 Enoch*, or the medieval manuscripts of the Aramaic translation on the Pentateuch known as the Neophyte Targum, are considered sufficiently reliable as faithful preservers of earlier traditions, conceived sometimes to be as old as a millennium and a half (according to one theory on the time of the afore-mentioned Aramaic translation) we may ask why themes appearing in vast material written by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, a good part of which – many hundreds of pages – still exists only in manuscripts written in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, cannot be drawn from such early material in the same manner? So, for example, some of the Ashkenazi material concerning the angel Yaho'el we have adduced above, may well reflect much earlier traditions, part of which are reflected in apocryphal literature, in Manichean, Arabic and Slavonic texts.<sup>316</sup> Similarly, the mentioning of the *Ben* in the context of Metatron in the same texts may again reflect earlier views about a resemblance between the archangel Metatron and Jesus, which have been guessed by several modern scholars

independently of the Ashkenazi traditions, as seen above in the Introduction.

For the time being, no clear criteria have been even suggested in scholarship in order to respond to these cardinal issues regarding the critique of sources and their transmission. For example, no linguistic analysis is available of the specificity of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages of the manuscripts that are described as belonging to the Heikhalot literary corpora,<sup>317</sup> nor is anything available that relates to the analysis of the literary poetic strategies used in the hymns of this literature. Without such analysis, we are liable to propel medieval material or themes back onto discussions written in late antiquity. When corrected, this major shortcoming in the study of the special language of the Heikhalot texts will certainly help in distinguishing between medieval parts of the corpus printed as if they are considered to be Heikhalot literature, and the earlier treatises. However, on the other hand, if unaware of earlier antecedents, as found in the Heikhalot literature, and in other related treatments – written in late antiquity – as dealt with above in the Introduction, some discussions of medieval material based on historicist approaches may create affinities between unrelated themes though they have been written in the same period. Things are, to be sure, never simple, and earlier materials can become more significant than some contemporary similarities in the immediate surroundings.<sup>318</sup> In any case, anonymous manuscript material found in Ashkenazi codexes still waits for a first perusal, which may generate some surprises as to the emergence of the esoteric doctrines conceived of as Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, the authorship of some of the anonymous texts, but also on the transmission and editions of much older material.<sup>319</sup> The fact that discussions about the important angel Yaho'el that were not treated by scholars are still available in some of those manuscripts, as we have seen above, is just one example of the advantage scholarship can take if a sustained return to neglected manuscripts is undertaken, instead of repeating the same material time and again.

However, the question is whether the perusal of the manuscripts can be done with the necessary intellectual openness avoiding discriminating unnecessarily between the Hebrew material on the one hand, and the Slavonic or Ethiopian material on the other hand. As it stands now scholarship is taking more seriously a text extant in Ethiopian or Slavonic, in manuscripts dated from the sixteenth century, in order to reconstruct religious developments of the early centuries of the Common Era. In Christianity, there are translations of older Hebrew or Aramaic texts now lost, and Hebrew material that may preserve pertinent material, whose relevance for reconstructing the development of Jewish mysticism in late antiquity is not even checked. As seen above, material about Enoch abounds in Ashkenazi corpora, and will be discussed further in the Appendix. This is

also the case with traditions about the archangel Yaho'el. So, why not assume that such material may help, if used carefully, as much as, for example, what is found in *2 Enoch*? At least in one case that I hope to elaborate elsewhere, Ashkenazi material preserves a version of a passage dealing with the appearance of Apollo that is corrupted in the form we have in the Heikhalot literature. To be sure: this proposal should be carried out with all due caution, but it is also true that due to the assumptions of scholars, some of the pseudepigraphic texts we have sometimes include later additions and various accretions. Precaution in scholarship is always in order, and my proposal above is no exception. However, instead of repeating the same material on Yaho'el without any addition of texts after Scholem, for two generations, would it not be better to check additional material that may illumine some of the earlier traditions? That will mean that scholars will have to read new and lengthy manuscripts, anonymous and sometimes quite difficult to decode and understand, like those of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo. However, from my reading of scholarship that avoids quoting material written in modern Hebrew, I have my doubts if something like this will happen soon.

Scholarship, like life, requires risk taking, and there is nothing uniquely problematic in taking academic risks as long as the bold scholar is aware of the problems inherent in such an enterprise and is prepared to respond to them appropriately. Perusing the recent scholarly literature on the topic, I am not confident that many of the scholars dealing with the Heikhalot literature are fully aware or make proper accommodation for the historical and textual problems that haunt the transmission and editions of this literature.<sup>320</sup> Though the beginnings of such discussions can now be found in a few cases of scholarship, I do not see evidence that scholarly practice actually integrates the possible repercussions of this problematic.<sup>321</sup>

## Notes

- 1 For some of the questions related to the transition from the Near East in late antiquity to medieval Europe see above, Introduction, Section 6. For Gnosticism and Kabbalah see e.g. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 21; For analyses of Scholem's view of Gnosticism see David Biale, *Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 113, 128–33, 137–43; Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem, The Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York University Press, New York, 1987), pp. 41–4; Moshe Idel, 'Subversive Catalysts: Gnosticism and Messianism in Gershom Scholem's View of Jewish Mysticism', in eds, David N. Myers & David B. Ruderman, *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1998), pp. 46–56. For the possibility that some late antiquity Ebionite elements had an impact on some Ismailiyah doctrines, and could in

- principle also been known by Jews, see Corbin, 'Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth', *passim*, and Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p. 84.
- 2 See below Chapter 4, Section 2.
  - 3 See Odeberg's Introduction to 3 *Enoch*, p. 28; Reuven Bonfil, 'The Cultural and Religious Traditions of French Jewry in the Ninth Century as Reflected in the Writings of Agobard of Lyon', in eds, J. Dan & J. Hacker, *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 327–48 (Hebrew); Ephraim Kanarfogel, 'Peering through the Lattices': *Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000), pp. 27–8, Moshe Idel, 'The Evil Thought of the Deity', *Tarbiz* 49 (1980), pp. 356–7 (Hebrew); and see also now Idel, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back' and Ketterer, *Alphabet of Rabbi Aqiba*, vol. 1, pp. 85–6.
  - 4 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 41, 46, 84; Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 18–20; Roberto Bonfil, 'Tra Due Mondi: Prospettive di ricerca sulla storia culturale degli ebrei nell'Italia meridionale nell'Alto Medioevo', *Italia Judaica* 1 (1983), p. 149 note 54; Israel Weinstock, 'The Discovery of Abu Aharon of Baghdad's Legacy of Secrets', *Tarbiz*, 32 (1963), pp. 153–9 (Hebrew); Gershom Scholem, 'Has Abu Aharon's Legacy of Secrets Been Discovered?', *ibid.*, pp. 252–65 (Hebrew), and the rejoinder of Weinstock, 'The Treasury of 'Secrets' of Abu Aharon – Imagination or Reality?', *Sinai* 54 (1964), pp. 226–59 (Hebrew); Daniel Abrams, 'The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism', *Shofar* 12 (1994), p. 68; Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, pp. 210–12. See also Moses Gaster's theory of the arrival of ancient Jewish, Jewish-Christian and Gnostic material from the Near East to medieval Western Europe via the Byzantine Empire, formulated in his *Literatura Populara romana*, and *Ilchester Lectures*, as mentioned above in the Introduction note 176. Let me mention a very interesting testimony to the arrival of 'heretical books' from Russian territories to Germany; see R. Moses ben Hisday of Takau, *Sefer Ketav Tamim*, ed. Joseph Dari (Makhon Dinur, Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 55–6.
  - 5 See e.g. Abraham Epstein, *Kitvei R. Abraham Epstein* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1950), pp. 104–8 (Hebrew); Martha Himmelfarb, 'R. Moses the Preacher and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs', *AJS Review* 9 (1) (1984), pp. 55–78; Michael E. Stone, 'The Testament of Naftali', *JJS* 47 (1996), pp. 311–21; Israel Ta-Shma, 'R. Moshe Hadarshan and the Apocryphal Literature', in ed., Carmi Horowitz, *Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Touro Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 5–17 (Hebrew) and his Introduction to *Sefer Gematriyyot* by R. Judah ha-Hassid, p. 18; Shulamit Laderman, 'Textual Parallelism between a Byzantine Text and the Midrashim Attributed to Moshe Hadarshan', *Tarbiz* 70 (2001), pp. 213–26 (Hebrew). On the possibility that the author of *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati* was acquainted with the fourth-century *Journey of Zosimos*, see Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira*, pp. 109–10 and Ronit Nikolsky, *The Provenance of the Journey of Zosimos* (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 63–5 (Hebrew). Compare also the more recent approach of Yoshiko Reed, *The Fallen Angels*. See also Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 295–6.
  - 6 See Abraham Epstein, 'Le livre des Jubilees, Philon, et le Midrash Tadsche', *REJ* 21 (1890), pp. 80–97; Philo of Alexandria, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*, Introduction, translation and commentary by David T. Runia (Brill, Leiden, 2001), pp. 37, 196. The whole issue of the relationship between Philo and *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, the earliest layer of the Zoharic literature, is a matter of dispute and I prefer not to rely on this possibility. See Samuel Belkin, 'Midrash Tadshe' or the Midrash of R. Phinehas ben Yair, an Hellenistic Ancient Midrash', *Horev* 11 (1951), pp. 1–52 (Hebrew) or his 'The Symbolic Midrash in Philo', in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (American Academy for Jewish Research, Jerusalem, 1965), Hebrew Part, pp. 33–67. See, however, the possible affinity between another topic in early Kabbalah and a text of Philo's, discussed in Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 235–9. On the question of Philo and Jewish mysticism see E.R. Wolfson, 'Traces of Philonic Doctrine' and Liebes's numerous discussions, *Ars Poetica*, of similarities between Philo and Jewish later views. Without entering in the specific philological and historical questions involved in the dispute over Belkin's thesis and the allegorical interpretation in *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* in comparison to Philo's method, the phenomenological similarity between the Alexandrian allegoresis and the medieval one is fascinating, and reflects similar cultural situations of encounters between Judaism and Hellenism. See R.J. Zwi Werblowsky; 'Philo and the Zohar', *JJS* 10 (1959), pp. 25–44, 111–35, and the more nuanced view of Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 114–15. See also above, Chapter 1 note 12. For the assumption that Philo's theory of Logos influenced the Zoharic concept of *Ze'vir 'Anppin*, without however referring to the potential filial affinity between the two concepts, see Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 230–1. For more on this kabbalistic concept, see below, Chapter 4. For the preservation of Philo in Christian sources see David T. Runia, 'One of Us or One of Them? Christian Reception of Philo the Jew in Egypt', in ed., Kugel, *Shem in the Tents of Japhet*, pp. 203–22, and Annewies van der Hoer, 'Assessing Philo's Influence in Christian Alexandria: The Case of Origen', *ibid.*, pp. 223–40.
  - 7 See his important contribution to the topic in 'Exploring the Afterlife of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999), pp. 148–77. See also Meir Bar-Ilan, 'The Discovery of The Words of Gad The Seer', *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 11 (1993), pp. 95–107.
  - 8 See, for example, Elliot Wolfson's contention that Judeo-Christian traditions nourished some of the main discussions in the book of *Bahir*. See 'The Tree that is All; Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in the Book of Bahir', *Journal of Jewish Thought* 3 (1993), pp. 71–6, reprinted in his *Along the Path*, pp. 63–88.
  - 9 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 68–70; Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar'; and Idel, 'From Italy to Germany and Back'.
  - 10 On some of these issues see below, Chapter 4.

- 11 See Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*. In the Introduction he refers several times to the various versions of the treatise; Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 219–24; Liebes, *ibid.*; Wolfson, ‘Metatron’. See, however, the absence of this topic in the otherwise comprehensive survey of Alexander, ‘From the Son of Adam to Second God’, though he shortly surveyed this chapter in Jewish mysticism in 3 *Enoch OTP*, vol. 1, p. 252.
- 12 For the concept of 70 names see also *Sefer ha-Navon*, (whose author is, in my opinion, R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, the same writer as that of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*), printed in Dan, *Studies*, p. 132.
- 13 Cf. the critical edition of Ithamar Gruenwald, in *Temirin* 1 (1972), pp. 130–1 (Hebrew), Groezinger, ‘The Names of God’, p. 57.
- 14 See Liebes, ‘The Angels of the Shofar’, p. 185 note 11.
- 15 See BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 42b, discussed by Cohen, *The Shi’ur Qomah*, pp. 128–31. For the list of 70 names of God in 3 *Enoch* see Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, 48b, p. 310 and the 70 names of Metatron, *ibid.*, ch. 48D, pp. 313–14; Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, pp. 160–2, 170–2. See also Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 72 note 37 and Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, ‘Die Namen Gottes und die Namen Metatrons, Zwei Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur’, *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*, 19 (1991–2), pp. 95–183. I identified a commentary on this list, again by R. Nehemiah, and I shall describe it in a forthcoming study.
- 16 See the text printed by Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 201 and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 260. It is curious that neither of the two scholars, nor Liebes in his seminal study ‘The Angels of the Shofar’, p. 187 note 20, made a connection between this testimony and the anonymous *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. See meanwhile below, note 18.
- 17 See Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 219–24.
- 18 About the two versions of this treatise see Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 220–1; Dan, ‘The Seventy Names of Metatron’, *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division C (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 19–23; Liebes, ‘The Angels of the Shofar’; Abrams, ‘The Boundaries’, pp. 301 note 33, 302–5, where very important bibliographical information is to be found; Abrams, ‘*Sod kol ha-Sodot*’; and various discussions of Wolfson’s in *Through a Speculum*. As Liebes pointed out throughout his article, there are several writings belonging to what he calls the circle of *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, which he enumerates in his notes. For the identity of the author of this literature see Moshe Idel, ‘Some Forlorn Writings of a Forgotten Ashkenazi Prophet: R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi’, *JQR* 75 (1) (2005), pp. 183–96; Idel, ‘The Commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo’, and below, note 301.
- 19 See MS. New York, JTS 2026, fols 3b–11a.
- 20 See the testimony of R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, printed by Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 201 who describes R. Nehemiah as the author of a *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. See also Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 206, where the commentary is attributed to a prophet R. Troestlin of Erfurt, which may be but another name of R. Nehemiah. Even more persuasive is the fact that a lengthy treatise dealing with commentaries on various issues, including divine names, very similar to the content and exegetical techniques found in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, has been printed under the name of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo in *Merkavah Shelemah*, ed. Shlomo Mussayoff (Jerusalem, 1926), fols 22b–32a. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 239 note 86 mentions only fols 31a–32a. On these folios see in more detail Liebes, ‘The Angels of the Shofar’, pp. 186–7 note 20.
- 21 Exod. 14.2. For more on the interpretation of this verse see below at the end of this section.
- 22 R. Nehemiah interprets two words whose gematria are equal respectively to Enoch and to Yaho’el, found in the same verse, creating a relationship between them, according to which Enoch becomes Yaho’el.
- 23 The occurrence of this word in this context has to do with the verse from Isa. 63.9, where it is found immediately before the expression *mal’akh panav*. From another point of view, the resort to *Ben* in the context of *ba-kol* as numerical equivalent is already found in the commentary of Rashi (the acronym of R. Shlomo Yitzhaqi) – the eleventh-century authoritative exegete – on Gen. 24.1. This is one of the few cases in which Rashi resorts explicitly to a gematria in order to make his point. Several Ashkenazi biblical exegetes followed Rashi by pointing to this gematria. See the material collected by Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 2, pp. 245–6. As it is adduced in some of the Ashkenazi interpreters, their identification of *Ba-kol* with son has a certain polemic dimension, as an argument against a Talmudic (BT *Berakhot*, fol. 16b) view according to which Abraham, mentioned in Gen. 24.1 had a daughter named *ba-kol*. This gematria recurs in eighteenth-century Hasidism. See R. Moshe Hayyim Efrayyim of Sudytkov, *Degel Mahaneh 'Efrayyim*, pp. 26, 27 once in the name of the Besht, and R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye, *Kutonet Passim*, ed. G. Nigal (Mekhon Peri ha-Aretz, Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 109. See also below, note 87. I see no reason to connect this syntagm to the feminine description of the legendary daughter of Abraham and the *Shekhninah* insofar as the Ashkenazi texts are concerned, as Scholem did in *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 89, 187 and as used by Scopello, ‘Youel’. Compare Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 224–5. See also below, Chapter 4 note 200.
- 24 This explanation of the gematria is rather artificial, as is the case in many other instances in those traditions. For a similar stand see also *ibid.*, *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 4a. This cosmic understanding of the angel is reminiscent of cosmic visions of sonship.
- 25 On the possibility of seeing Jesus as the finger of God see Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, p. 127. The view that angels are linked to or appointed upon divine limbs is found in a variety of sources. See e.g. *ibid.*, fol. 4a. The closest one is a treatise written by R. Nehemiah who authored, in my opinion, also the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. See his *Commentary on the Haftarah*, MS. Roma-Angelica 46, fol. 35a; and in another version of this material in MS. New York, JTS 2026, fol. 8a and my discussion of these texts in *Ascensions on High*, pp. 86–8 as well as Idel, ‘Il Mondo degli Angeli’, pp. 8–13 and below in this chapter, Section 4. For the expression ‘finger of God’, see Y. Tzvi Langermann, ‘Of Cathars and Creationism: Shemarya Ikriti’s Polemic against a Dualistic Eternalism’, *JQR* 13 (2006), p. 170 note 32, where he refers to my emendation of

- an Ashkenazi text from 'Emtza'ō to 'Etzba'ō, namely from middle to finger. The emendation, however, makes perfect sense in the framework of the thought of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo. See below the discussions of this author concerning the arm of God.
- 26 The first and the last letter of the Pentateuch constitute the Hebrew word *Lev*, heart. This occurrence fosters the interpretation of the earlier occurrence of *KLB* as *Ke-Lev*. The Hebrew consonants are *KLB*, which can be understood in two ways: when vocalized *ke-lev* they mean 'like a heart', as we have interpreted the text here. However, there is also another possible interpretation: *Kelev*, which means 'dog'. In both cases the numerical value is the same. Though the second interpretation is less plausible it is not totally impossible. In this context it should be pointed out that in an anonymous composition that is related to R. Nehemiah's circle, we find the following discussion: 'Why do the nations of the world call the Jews "dogs" [*kelavim*]?' The answer is according to the [verse: Deuteronomy 14.1] 'You are the sons of the God the Lord.' *Banim* [namely sons] amounts in gematria to *Kelavim* [namely dogs], MS. Cambridge Add., 858.2, fol. 28b. This piece of polemic assumes that the gentiles inadvertently express the view of the sonship of Jews even when they resort to the most negative epithet, dogs. See also Berger, *The Jewish Christian Debate*, p. 313 and from the Jewish side, some form of association between Christians and dogs in Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, pp. 26, 76. See also below, note 115.
- 27 This is a word for imploration, which amounts in gematria to 52.
- 28 Compare to the view that before the revelation, the Prince of the Face is awaking the prophet, and only then the prophet receives the revelation. *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 1, fol. 1a.
- 29 *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fols 7b–8a. This passage is found also at the beginning of the two other, shorter versions, which differ slightly from each other, in R. Abraham Ḥamoi's edition, printed in *Sefer Beit Din* (Livorno, 1858), fol. 196b, and in MS. Rome–Angelica 46, fol. 34a and MS. New York, JTS Mic. 1804, fol. 7a, and see also the comments of Scholem in *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 89, 186–7. In my opinion, the special form in which some of the discussions in this book are extant may reflect a doctored version, written in the circle of the descendants of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, R. Moses Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, whose views pertinent to our topic will be dealt with below in this chapter. They may consist in the removal of an expression '*Hu' go'el*', about which we shall seek much more in the next chapter, and the insertion of theories of emanation, expressed by the root *ZRH*, in R. Nehemiah's work. Some of the gematrias found in this passage, including the word *Ben*, recur also in MS. British Library 752, fol. 34b, where material related to R. Nehemiah is found. On the numerical division between the different parts of this passage and of some others from this book adduced in this chapter and in the Appendix, see my discussions below. Though I do not always dwell of the significance of the tripartite division, I note it in order to clarify the recurring pattern that informs the discussions on the names of Metatron.
- 30 *Shofet*. This is a higher status than Metatron as a witness, but it reflects the role of Metatron as *Dayyan* in 3 *Enoch*. For Metatron as *shofet* see the tradition adduced in the name of a certain R. Yehudah – perhaps Yehudah he-Ḥasid – in the anonymous Ashkenazi commentary found in MS. Sanct Petersburg, Firkovich, I, 324, fols 17b–18a.
- 31 The theme of the Prince of the Face acting together with God recurs in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, and it may be connected to the concept of brotherhood between them, to be discussed below. See also the material found in MS. Munchen 40, fol. 200ab.
- 32 This is an elliptic formulation.
- 33 MS. Berlin–Tuebingen 239, fol. 112a, printed by Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 220–1. A somewhat shorter version of this passage is found in MS. New York, JTS 2026, fols 7b–8a, and it has been printed as an appendix to *Sefer Beit Din* by R. Abraham Ḥamoi (Leghorn, 1858), fol. 196a.
- 34 On this issue see the detailed analysis of Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar' and Idel, 'Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo'.
- 35 See also Liebes, *ibid.*; Vajda, 'Pour le Dossier de *Metatron*', p. 345; Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 268–72. See also Y. Tzvi Langermann, 'Of Cathars and Creationism: Shemarya Ikriti's Polemic against a Dualistic Eternalism', *JQR* 13 (2006), pp. 169–70.
- 36 For the two forms of the letters of the Tetragrammaton as one of the names of Metatron, see Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 72. It seems that this resort to a double name reflects the impact of the double occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in Exod. 34.6. Let me point out that the transfer of the Tetragrammaton to Metatron, as the Lesser *YHWH*, or here in the context of the term *Ben*, is reminiscent of the transfer of this name to Jesus as Son of God already by Paul. See Rom. 10.13, Acts, 2.21; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, pp. 108–18; and Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 77–8. It should also be pointed out that a mid-fourteenth-century anonymous Kabbalist who wrote the book *Peliyah* in Byzantium, and was influenced by R. Nehemiah, derives the figure 52 both from the two consonants of the name *Hanokh*, KhW = 26, and from the acronym of the words related to Enoch, and also mentions the two Tetragrammata and their gematria. See vol. 2, fol. 66b. For other instances of the impact of R. Nehemiah on this book see Idel, 'The Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo', pp. 243–61.
- 37 BT *Babba' Batra*, fol. 75b discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.
- 38 See *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, no. 30 and above in the Introduction and below in the Appendix.
- 39 This view implies that one of the two likenesses belongs to the terrestrial Enoch. On the issue of *demut* in Ḥasidei Ashkenaz see Haym Soloveitchik, 'Topics in the *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*', *JJS* 18 (1967), pp. 75–8; Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 224–5.
- 40 See also *ibid.*, fol. 5b, where the concept of doubleness, *kaful*, is related to the mortal and angelic phases of Metatron.
- 41 There may be a connection between this term and the possibility that the author was himself a prophet: R. Nehemiah the Prophet. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 239 and above, note 18. In fact, the first paragraph of the book, fol.

- 1a, deals basically with the phenomenon of prophecy. It should be pointed out that a contemporary of R. Nehemiah, a certain prophet, was portrayed as conjuring Metatron to descend, according to an account related to Paris. See Moshe Idel, 'Metatron à Paris', in eds, J.-P. Boudet, H. Bresc & B. Grevin, *Les anges et la magie au Moyen Ages* (Ecole Française de Rome, 2002), pp. 701–16.
- 42 The Hebrew is not quite clear here and my translation is an approximation; in the original it is written: *ka-'asher Yivhar be-'avadut ha-navi'* and I assume that a better version could be *'avadot ha-navi'* or *ha-Qabah ha-Navi'*, namely the Holy One, Blessed be He, chose the prophet. See Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', p. 210 note 49 and *ibid.*, fol. 1a.
- 43 *Yarimehu*. This form is found in the long version of *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, and sounds better than the meaningless version *Yermiyahu* – apparently influenced by the occurrence of the term 'prophet' beforehand – as quoted by Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 223; Maybe it is a copyist's error for *yare'hu*, i.e. He [God] has shown to him [namely to the prophet]. However, the sequence *be-zohar kevodo* fits the phrase *yarimehu*, and not *yare'hu*. Moreover, Ps. 112.9: *Qarmo yanum be-kavod*, whose words are reminiscent of the situation dealt with here, can be translated as 'his horn will be exalted with glory'. For a reading of this verse as pointing to the ascent of the soul in early Kabbalah see Idel, 'In the Light of Life' and Idel, 'Some Remarks on Ritual and Mysticism in Geronese Kabbalah', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993), pp. 118–20. Moreover, the ascension of the prophet, which is signified by *yarimehu*, fits the discussion which immediately precedes this quotation where the two likenesses are described as one pointing to the status of man, the other to Enoch's status of angel, thus implying the translation, and thus the ascension, of the patriarch.
- 44 *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 4a. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 223, brings, in lieu of the verb discussed in the preceding note, the form *Yermiyahu!* See also Idel, 'Additional Fragments', p. 51 and note 26. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 223 translates this passage, using the phrase 'he sees the splendor of the glory', apparently on the basis of several manuscripts, with the version of *yare'hu* [which means He (God) showed him [namely to the prophet] the splendor of the glory] as the correct reading. However, if the *yarimehu* version is indeed the correct one, this passage reflects a pattern of apotheosis, already found in much earlier forms of Jewish mystical literature. See Peter Schaefer, *The Hidden and the Manifest God* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), pp. 165–6; Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron', p. 225 note 18, and the study of Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Yenidah la-Merkavah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism', in ed., R.A. Herrera, *Mystics of the Book, Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (Peter Lang, New York, 1993), pp. 13–44 and, in a more general manner, Geo Widengren, 'Heavenly Enthronement and Baptism, Studies in Mandaean Baptism', in ed., Jacob Neusner, *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Honor of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (Brill, Leiden, 1968), pp. 551–82; Widengren, 'Baptism and Enthronement in Some Jewish-Christian Gnostic Documents', *The Saviour God*, ed. S.G.F. Brandon (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1963), pp. 205–17; Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christianity* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 119–225.
- 45 See e.g. R. Eleazar of Worms's *Hilekhot Kavod*, printed in Abrams, 'Sod kol ha-Sodot', p. 79; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 233, 237.
- 46 See *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Brill, Leiden, 1959), p. 236. In the Christian Aramaic treatise from Edessa entitled *Testamentum Domini* it is written that 'For every soul the Image [*salma*] or type is standing before the face of God, even before the foundation of the world'. Quoted by Gilles Quispel, 'Genius and Spirit', in ed., M. Krause, *Essays on Nag Hammadi Texts* (Leiden, Brill, 1975), p. 159. See also the *Gos. Thom.* logion 84 and Macarius's *Homilies* quoted *ibid.*, pp. 159–60 and also p. 163. For the possible Philonic background of the theory of the human image on high, which antecedes that found below, and occurs in the *Gospel of Thomas* see Meyer in *The Gospel of Thomas*, tr. and intr. Marvin Meyer, interpretation Harold Bloom (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1992), p. 100.
- 47 *Sefer Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, ed. N.E. Weiss (Benei Beraq, 1987), p. 23.
- 48 Ed. Shalom Weiss (Mekhon Sha'arei Ziv, Jerusalem, 1991), p. 135.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 38, a passage to be discussed in one of the sections below. See also Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 208–9. For additional examples of ascent by means of a ray that brings the soul to the upper world see Idel, 'In the Light of Life', pp. 209–11.
- 50 See the text printed by Dan, *Studies*, p. 176.
- 51 *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, printed in *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 4b, MS. New York, JTS 2026, fol. 3b. See also Abrams, 'The Boundaries', p. 305. For the explicit rabbinic denial that God has a son or a brother see *Deuteronomy Rabba'* 2.24. Interestingly enough, in the same treatise, namely in the commentary under scrutiny, both the term son and brother are attributed to Metatron. For an attribution of the term 'brother' to the creator see MS. British Library 752, fol. 39a, in a context in which theories of ten *sefirot* and the special cherub are combined. This manuscript contains several folios written by R. Nehemiah. For the view of the Jews as the brothers of God see R. Eleazar ha-Darshan. The grandson of R. Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematria'ot*, MS. Munchen 221, fol. 245a–245b. See also Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, p. 294.
- 52 On the brotherhood of God and Israel see also above, Chapter 1, the quotation from *Mekhilta' de-Rabbi Simon b. Yoḥai*. Interestingly enough, in the same treatise, namely in the commentary under scrutiny, both the term son and brother are attributed to Metatron. The concept that the *Shekhinah* is the brother, in a context related to Metatron, occurs in a late thirteenth-century text by R. Joseph of Hamadan, a Kabbalist active in Castile. See *Joseph de Hamadan, Fragment d'un commentaire sur la Genèse*, ed. Charles Mopsik (Verdier, Lagrasse, 1998), pp. 21–2 (Hebrew text), pp. 96–7 (French translation). Interestingly enough, this stand is found in the immediate vicinity of a discussion about the angel Yaho'el, which is quite a rare topic in Spanish Kabbalah, and its occurrence may indicate the impact of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's thought. A view according to which the creator is the brother is found in MS. British Library 752, fol. 33a, in a treatise that combines theosophical views with a theory of the special cherub. For the concepts of twin creators in medieval sources, Bogomil and Romanian, and their

- earlier parallels see Romulus Vulcanescu, *Mitologia Romina* (Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 1987), pp. 224–36. It should be pointed out that R. Nehemiah preserved the term Satanael, which is quite rare in late antiquity Jewish sources, but much more present in Bogomilism. See Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 163, 173, 176, 246, 268, and the bibliography collected on p. 301 note 6. On the existence of a brother, sometimes a demonic being, of the creator in some ancient myths see Mircea Eliade, 'Le créateur et son ombre', *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 30 (1961), pp. 226–30. Some of sources mentioned are Ebonites, namely Judeo-Christian. May those views have something to do with the Byzantine Apulian background of some of R. Nehemiah's traditions? See also above, Chapter 1 note 309 and below, Chapter 4 note 298.
- 53 This issue recurs several times in this small treatise; see below at the end of this section. On the Logos as high priest in Philo see Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques*, p. 104.
- 54 This is evidently a priestly unction. On unction in the Enoch tradition see below Chapter 3.
- 55 The theme of the mission recurs in this treatise. See e.g. *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 2b.
- 56 *Ibid.*, fol. 1a.
- 57 This topic recurs in the treatise also elsewhere. See *ibid.*, fols 2b, 3b. See also par. 42, fol. 5b, where the term *demut* is described as pointing to the angel that has been born with a likeness and image. However, it should be pointed out that *demut* may stand also for a supernal entity. See e.g. the text printed by Urbach, in *'Anagat ha-Bosem*, vol. 1, p. 77. See also *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, discussed in Idel, *Golem*, p. 88.
- 58 See also *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 3b.
- 59 Other writings belonging to R. Nehemiah, the author of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, are also built upon this triple structure. See e.g. the passage discussed by Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 173–4.
- 60 Both words amount to 116.
- 61 This is an abbreviated form for the Tetragrammaton, which stands for God.
- 62 Exod. 23.21. In fact in this small treatise there are two modes of attachment of the divine name to the angel: the name is within, like in the biblical verse, or it is written on the heart of the angels, including Metatron. It should be mentioned that this verse recurs several times in this small treatise, following both the interpretation in BT *Sanhedrin*, fol 38b, and that in the Heikhalot literature. See below, note 65.
- 63 Compare *Exodus Rabba* 32.4.
- 64 *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 2b. See also Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 222.
- 65 Compare also to par. 58, fol. 7b, where the name *HWH HYH* is followed by *H'P'L*, namely *ha-'El*, the Lord, but this sharp meaning has been explained in the following sentence as 'because he was called by the name of his master'. See also par. 20, fol. 3b, where one of the names of Metatron is interpreted as *Shem YH*, i.e. the divine Name Yah.

- 66 This hypothesis is built on the parallelism between the two explanations of the double Tetragrammaton: one is *Ben*, and then it is Yaho'el.
- 67 See Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 174.
- 68 See also below, Chapter 3, the recurring resort of the ecstatic Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia to the name Yaho'el, presumably under the impact of Ashkenazi traditions.
- 69 See e.g. Alexander, *3 Enoch*, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 244; G.H. Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* (SPCK, London, 1918), p. xxv; Susan Niditch, 'The Cosmic Adam: Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature', *JJS* 34 (1983), pp. 137–46; Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 99, 144; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 68–9; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 187; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 47, 51; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 378; Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, p. 22; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1993), pp. 51–3; Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 48–9, 60, 120–1; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 289, 318–21, 333; Christopher Rowland, 'The Vision of the Risen Christ in Rev. 1, 13ff: The Debt of an Early Christology to an Aspect of Jewish Angelology', *JTS* (NS) 31 (1980), pp. 6–9; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 224; Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 58, 74, 79, 82, 83; Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 52, 97–8, Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 5–12; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, passim; Reimund Leicht, 'Qedushah and Prayer to Helios: A New Hebrew Version of an Apocryphal Prayer of Jacob', *JSQ* 6 (1999), p. 170 note 102; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, p. 355 note 89; and Geschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 67 note 45, 142–6; and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, passim. See also Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 52–7 and Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 53–4 and more recently the more comprehensive categorization of mediators in Davila, 'Of Methodology'.
- 70 'Youel'. See especially *A Coptic Gnostic Treatise*, ed. and tr. Charlotte A. Baynes (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1933), p. 149, where the form Youel occurs. This treatise, quoted in our study here as the *Untitled Treatise*, has many affinities to ancient Jewish mythologoumena. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 364 note 72, 365 note 89; Green, *Keter*, pp. 30–1; Moshe Idel, 'The Image of Man above the Sefirot', *Daat* 4 (1980), pp. 46–7 (Hebrew), Idel, 'On Theosophy at the Beginning of Kabbalah', in eds, Z. Gries, H. Kreisel & B. Huss, *Shefa' Tal, Jewish Thought and Culture Presented to Bracha Sack* (Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2004), pp. 131–48 (Hebrew).
- 71 'Youel', p. 375.
- 72 *Ibid.*, pp. 377–9.
- 73 See *Sefer ha-Razim*, p. 83.
- 74 *Ibid.*, pp. 379–81; cf. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 89, 186–7.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 382. For an understanding of this angel as referring to a feminine divine power see, however, the late thirteenth-century text adduced from R. Joseph of Hamadan, in Chapter 4 note 200 below.
- 76 See also 3.135, p. 351. For a linkage between John and Elijah see Lk. 9.18–20 and Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 47, 51–4, 124–5.
- 77 *Pistis Sophia*, ch. 7, pp. 12–13; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 301–2; Odeberg, *3*

- Enoch*, p. 189. This passage should be compared to the magical material adduced by Fossum, *ibid.*, p. 189. See also one of the versions of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where Yaho'el is described as being in the midst of God. Cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, p. 55 note 14. It is plausible that all those references have something to do with a certain different interpretation of the biblical phrase 'My name is within him.'
- 78 See the texts of St Ephrem, discussed in Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 184–5. See especially the pertinent remark of Mopsik, *Le livre Hebreu d'Henoch*, p. 228, who has already made this point.
- 79 See *ibid.*, p. 378 note 26; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, pp. 61–2; and Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, pp. 98–103.
- 80 For an additional affinity between *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 4, ch. 136, p. 353 on Iao and Jewish material, basically *Sefer Yetzirah*, see the important remark of Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 32 note 55.
- 81 Deut. 1.5. A similar interpretation of this verse is found in the circle of the Gaon of Vilnius, see Liebes, 'The Attitude of the Vilna Gaon', pp. 276–7.
- 82 Exod. 24.1.
- 83 In Hebrew 'El YHWH, whose letters are like those of Yaho'el.
- 84 MS. London, British Library 752, fol. 45b, translated in part by Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 68–9, and p. 366 note 108 where he printed a fragment from this quotation. For a full printing of the passage and a parallel to it found in another manuscript in the name of R. Troestlin, a nickname of R. Nehemiah, see M. Idel, 'R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo and MS. London, British Library 752' (forthcoming). A similar view has been expressed also by R. Efrayim ben Shimshon in his *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 2, p. 152 and in an Ashkenazi manuscript printed by Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 2, p. 299, no. 15. Both sources drew, in my opinion, from R. Nehemiah's views. See also Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 186 note 13. For an earlier version of the Talmudic discussion that may indicate that R. Nehemiah has before his eyes a formulation where the phrase 'the Lesser YY' occurred, and thus was closer to his text, see the material adduced by Liebermann, *Shekiin*, pp. 14–15. On the content of this manuscript a sharp debate between Gershom Scholem and Israel Weinstock took place, the latter claiming that, in this codex, traditions related to early esoterica that had been brought to the West by Abu Aharon have been preserved, while Scholem opposed it. See above the references in note 2. In this manuscript there is an untitled treatise of R. Nehemiah, as well as other folios written by him, all of them anonymous, and I hope to elaborate on this material elsewhere. See also below, notes 87 and 127. The occurrence of the figure 52 together with Abraham may have something to do with the description of Abraham as the Son of God in the version of *Sefer Yetzirah* that has been discussed above. See above, Chapter 1 note 186, especially the passage from MS. London, British Library 752, quoted there. It is, however, strange that in the passage translated here *Sefer Yetzirah* is not mentioned in the context of God's teaching Abraham.
- 85 Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 68.
- 86 See e.g. the Ashkenazi commentary printed in Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 8, p. 346, no. 3, from MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 946. In fact it is a desideratum to check whether the anonymous Ashkenazi commentary does not reflect the impact of R. Nehemiah.
- 87 See *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 77, and Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 89. A similar stand is found in an anonymous *Commentary on the Name of Seventy-Two Letters* found in manuscripts that contain material of R. Nehemiah, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1568, fol. 14b and it is paraphrased in an Ashkenazi commentary on the Pentateuch, printed in Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 2, p. 247, no. 15. To be sure: this text has nothing to do with the much more widespread name of 72 letters that has been commented on, inter alia, also by our R. Nehemiah. This magical treatise should be compared in more detail with another magical genre found in a variety of European literatures: German, French, Slavonic and Romanian, dealing with the 72 names of Jesus. See Moses Gaster, 'Zur Quellenkunde deutscher Sagen und Maerchen', *Germania* 26 (1881), pp. 203–4, and his *Literatura Populara Romana*, pp. 265–7, as well as Nicolae Cartoian, *Cartile Populare*, second edn (Editura Enciclopedica Romana, Bucharest, 1974), vol. 2, pp. 134–40. See also in the next chapter the description of the encounter between Abraham and Yaho'el. Interestingly enough, this author, who knew already the book of *Bahir*, where *Ba-kol* is understood as a daughter, did not adduce such a reading. In general, I wonder whether there is any affinity between the masculine interpretation of the gematria, *ba-kol* = 52 = *Ben*, and the attempt to read this word as representing a feminine power. See also above, note 23. In my opinion, R. Efrayim was acquainted with R. Nehemiah's thought, and was influenced by it, as I shall show in a separate study. See also above, note 85. It should be pointed out that the name Yaho'el occurs also in another magical treatise, which belongs, in my opinion, to the circle of R. Nehemiah, and related this angelic name to the name of 72 aspects, or facets, a term which occurs twice in a fragment, printed as an anonymous passage by Scholem, *Devils*, pp. 131–6, see especially pp. 133–4. On the background of this text, probably written in late thirteenth-century Germany I hope to return in a separate study. Without a detailed analysis it is hard to decide whether this is a case of back-borrowing, or an influence of Jewish material on German and Romanian folklore.
- 88 See the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, printed in *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, no. 30, fol. 4b, no. 45, fol. 6a.
- 89 See Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 58–9, 62, 74, 79, 82–3; Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, p. 98 and more above, Introduction notes 58–9, and below, note 92. For the view that Metatron is sitting at the right of God see *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, ed. Epstein, fol. 4a.
- 90 Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God', pp. 242–3; Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p. 59.
- 91 See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 79–81; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 289, 318–21. See especially, p. 320 where he suggests a certain nexus between Yaho'el and the high priest, a motif that is going to recur in the case of Metatron later on. See e.g. *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 1b.
- 92 See *ibid.*, p. 307.

- 93 See e.g. the Gnostic *Untitled Text*, pp. 247, 249, 251, 266. The last discussions are found in a treatise that is replete with ancient Jewish theologoumena that echoed also in Kabbalah. See also the view of Monoimos, another Gnostic figure who was plausibly acquainted with some themes found in Jewish esoterica: 'Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist . . . For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.' Cf. the passage preserved in Irenaeus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, vol. 8, ch. 6, p. 319.
- 94 *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 6a.
- 95 See his appendix to Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, pp. 239–40. For synthronic figures in late antiquity see Hengel, 'Setze dich zu meiner Rechten', pp. 154–5, 166–9.
- 96 MS. Strasbourg, University Library 3972, fol. 58a. Compare to the end of version [b] of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. For the occurrence of the name Yaho'el in magical texts from the Genizah see above, Introduction note 47.
- 97 Isa. 63.9.
- 98 The translation is based upon a combined version of some corrupted texts, one printed in *Sefer Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. Jacob Gellis, vol. 7, p. 134, R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon's *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 201 and the text found in MS. Leningrad-Firkowitch I, 324, fol. 12a. The gematria is 182 and 181 for the two Hebrew phrases. On another discussion concerning the intervention of Metatron in saving the children of Israel by splitting the Red Sea see the above-mentioned *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fols 4b, 6a. See also the shorter version of this treatise, printed in *Sefer Beit Din*, fols 197b, 198a. It should be mentioned that in Isa. 63.9 the expression 'the angel of his face will rescue them' already implies a salvific role of the angel of presence. R. Efrayyim was certainly acquainted with some version of R. Nehemiah's passage discussed above as he adduces several times the connection between *Ben*, 'Eliyahu and two Tetragrammata in his *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 77, 284, vol. 2, pp. 27, 133. See also the seventeenth-century Moroccan Kabbalist R. Jacob Ifargan, *Minḥah Ḥadashah*, vol. 2, p. 621.
- 99 'The Name of God', pp. 81–2.
- 100 See e.g. in the anonymous Ashkenazi *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, where the term 'angel' as Metatron is quoted, found in MS. Leningrad-Firkowitch I, 324, fols 17b–18a, which adduces a view found in the *Commentary on the Pentateuch* by R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, ed. Y.S. Lange (Daf Hen, Jerusalem, 1975), p. 109; the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 2, p. 129 and R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 270–1. See also Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 119.
- 101 See e.g. Winston, *Logos*, p. 16 and the discussion above, Introduction.
- 102 Cf. Winston, *ibid.*, pp. 49–50.
- 103 Compare Winston, *ibid.*, p. 42.
- 104 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 65–79, and in the next chapter.
- 105 See Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo, Foundation of Religious Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., London, 1982), vol. 2, p. 415, and compare Winston's analysis of the relevant passages, who accepts the messianic nature of Philo's discussions, without, however, mentioning the Logos in that context, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 57–8. On the great influence of Philo's view of Logos on early Christology see, e.g. Thomas H. Tobin, 'The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990), pp. 252–69 and Boyarin, 'The Gospel of Memra'. Important remarks on Philo's Logos and Metatron and their reverberations are found in Joshua Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism* (G. Bell and Sons, London, 1913), p. 67 and Daniel Abrams, 'The Book of Illumination' of R. Jacob ben Jacob Ha-Kohen (Ph.D. Thesis, New York University, New York, 1993) p. 78.
- 106 Robert Macina, 'Le role eschatologique d'Elie le Prophete dans la conversion finale du peuple juif, Positions juives et chretiennes à la lumiere des sources rabbiniques et patristiques', *Proche-Orient Chretien* 31 (1981), pp. 71–99; Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, tr. W.F. Stinespring (Macmillan, New York, 1955), pp. 451–7. An issue that cannot be dealt with here is the revelatory role of Elijah in writings related to the circle of R. Nehemiah, and I hope to do it elsewhere. See above, note 87.
- 107 See 'The Return to the Divinity'. For a theory of the descent of Enoch from the divine realm, namely the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, designated expressly as *Ben*, son, and the return there see the theory adduced in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 2, fol. 66cd and see also *ibid.*, fol. 67d. It stands to reason that these discussions stem from the kabbalistic literature related to the Book of *Temunah*, a mid-fourteenth-century Byzantine kabbalistic book.
- 108 This expression is related to the assumption of the existence of a primordial magical structure of the Torah, now lost. See *Midrash Tehilim*, p. 33. The affinity between the two early medieval discussions has been noticed already by Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, p. 37.
- 109 *Ma'ayan Hokhmah*, printed by Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 1, pp. 58–9; Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', pp. 27–8; Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 166–7, 179–81, 191. For a discussion of Yefeyfiah as the angel of the Torah, see the *Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, par. 36, fol. 5b.
- 110 See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 140–6. On the presence of the prince of the Torah at the Sinaitic revelation see also the Heikhalot text translated and discussed in Swartz, *ibid.*, p. 112. It should be mentioned that Yefeyfiah as the prince of the Torah is related to several instances when the angel Yuppi'el is described as *Sar ha-Torah*. See e.g. Cordovero, *Derishot*, p. 70; K.E. Groezinger, *Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott, Eine Rabbinische Homilie zum Ersten Gebot [Pes. R. 20]* (Frankfurt/M, Bern, 1976), pp. 182–5.
- 111 MS. Roma-Angelica 46, fol. 34a. See Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 175–6. This literal game recurs also in Abulafia's 'Or ha-Sekhel, ed. Amnon

- Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), p. 47, and in his own *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, to be discussed in the next chapter. See also the late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century treatise by the Moroccan Kabbalist R. Isaac ben Abraham ha-Kohen, *Ginnat Beitán*, ed. Moshe Hallamish ('Orot Yahadut ha-Magreb, Jerusalem, 1998), p. 130. In this text the term *Ben* has been eliminated.
- 112 See 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 174–7. See also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 68 and Asulin, 'Another Glance', p. 453 note 68, 545 note 70. On the occurrence of the name of Jesus in Jewish magical literature, which presumably antedated the Ashkenazi material, see Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, pp. 87, 89; Dan Levene, '... and the name of Jesus ...' an unpublished magic bowl in Jewish Aramaic', *JSQ* 6 (4) (1999), pp. 283–308; Shaul Shaked, 'Jesus in the Magic Bowl', *ibid.*, pp. 309–19; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, p. 103.
- 113 According to a gematria found in Ashkenazi material *manhig kol ha-'olam*, 'the ruler of the entire world' amounts to gematria 314, like Metatron. See Wolfson, 'Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah', p. 78. See also R. Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematria'ot*, p. 149 and the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 2, p. 129.
- 114 See Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, pp. 203–27; Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 41–69; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*; and Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*. The angelic substratum of the cult of Jesus in ancient Christianity has been put in relief by Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, pp. 119–27.
- 115 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 192–3 note 79. For the reverberation of the connection between *Ben* and *kelev*, as identified as Jesus, see the views of two seventeenth-century Kabbalists in Poland as analyzed by Yehuda Liebes, 'Yonah ben 'Amitay as Messiah the son of Joseph', *JSJT* 3 (1984), pp. 275–86 (Hebrew). See above, note 26.
- 116 See *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 2b.
- 117 See E. Huntress, "'The Son of God" in Jewish Writings Prior to the Christian Era', *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 117–23; See also Jan Assmann, 'Die Zeugung des Sohnes', in eds. J. Assmann et al., *Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos* (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1982), pp. 13–61.
- 118 Ch. 48, C, 7. See above, Chapter 1.
- 119 See Mueller, *Messias und Menschensohn*, pp. 54–60 and Olson, 'Enoch and the Son of Man'. For more on this issue see above, Introduction, Section 3.
- 120 See Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 393–9.
- 121 See above note 30 and Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 175.
- 122 See *The Image of God*, pp. 386–435 and the discussion below in the Concluding Remarks.
- 123 See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 71. See also Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 157 note 137.
- 124 See BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b.
- 125 See e.g. the *Commentary on the Haftarah*, MS. Berlin Or. 942 fols 149b–157b, quoted below in this chapter. My assumption is that R. Nehemiah also authors this work.
- 126 Isa. 57.2. See also below in the Appendix note 98.
- 127 Printed in *Sefer Raziel ha-Mal'akh* (Amsterdam, 1701), fol. 45b. On the affinity between this short commentary on the name of 42 letters and the material from this Ashkenazi circle see Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 186 note 13. Let me point out that in the two manuscripts that contain this commentary, there are two words that are absent in the printed version; they are *Mashiah Ben*, namely Messiah [is] Son. However, from the content it seems that an additional letter should be included, which is *Vav*, and it may be added to either *Ben* or *Mashiah*, which would form the expression *Meshiho Ben*, namely 'His Messiah is a Son', or *Mashiah Beno*, 'The Messiah is His Son', or alternatively, *Mashiah u-ven*, 'Messiah and Son'. See e.g. MS, London, British Library 752, fol. 105b. The context of this pun has been printed in Idel, 'The Commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo', p. 238. We witness therefore a clear example of censorship, which removed from the manuscript version the two words before printing the short treatise in *Sefer Raziel ha-Mal'akh*. For more on the phenomenon of censorship applied to another passage by R. Nehemiah in a Christological context see the next chapter.
- 128 See already in St Ephrem the Syrian: 'Why did Adam die? Because he did not keep the commandment. This stands against the heretics who say "He [God] took out Adam from the Paradise in an unjust manner." Seeing, however, Enoch who behaved in a just manner, He put him in Paradise [taking him] from this earth. If He took out Adam from Paradise for whatever reason, [then] Enoch, the seventh after Adam, has been put in [the Paradise] because of his faith and He kept him immortal, since God has been fond of him.' (*St. Ephrem Sirul, Cuvinte si Invataturi*, tr. Ioan Filaret (Editura Bunavestire, Bacau, 1997), vol. 2, p. 335.) On the background of this quotation see Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', p. 186.
- 129 See below, Appendix.
- 130 See especially in the text from *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 31b, which belongs to R. Nehemiah, where several instances of numerical calculations related to *Tzaddiq* are found. See also in the *Commentary on the Haftarah*, MS. Berlin Or. 942, fol. 154a.
- 131 See the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, p. 93. For two other instances when this verse has been interpreted in such a way in commentaries, most of them of Ashkenazi extraction, printed in Gelis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 1, pp. 176 par. 1, 177 par. 6, and in an author of Ashkenazi extraction at the end of the thirteenth century see *Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabba*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1984), p. 145, p. 265 note 4 as well as the passage of Shlomo Molkho to be dealt with in the Appendix. See also on the Lurianic tradition I printed in 'Enoch – the Mystical Cobbler', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 273–4 (Hebrew).
- 132 Alexander, 3 *Enoch*, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 258.
- 133 When the consonants of Metatron are changed according to the *A'T B'Sh* method their numerical value amounts to 202, while the consonants of Phinehas

- amount to 198 plus the 4 consonants of the name themselves = 202. For the image of Enoch as zealous, like Phinehas and Elijah see the kabbalistic text translated in the Appendix.
- 134 Exod. 19.3.
- 135 See R. Jacob ben Asher, *Ba'al ha-Turim* (Rubinstein's Press, Benei Beraq, 1985), vol. 1, p. 16, on Gen. 5.24. For another interesting occurrence of an Enochic reading of this verse see the anonymous kabbalistic tradition in MS. New York, JTS 1737, fol. 12a and in R. Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, par. 31 to be discussed in Chapter 4 below. On Enoch and heptads see also below, Appendix.
- 136 See e.g. below in Chapter 3 note 89.
- 137 See especially her *The Older Bible, The Lost Prophet and The Great Angel*.
- 138 See Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 24–8; Abusch, 'R. Ishmael', p. 312 note 12.
- 139 *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 251–73.
- 140 *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, pp. 770–3.
- 141 *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 224–9, 247–8.
- 142 *The Image of God*, passim.
- 143 *Golem*, pp. 285–95.
- 144 *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, vol. 2, p. 388.
- 145 Gen. 1.26. The three letters נ in the Hebrew original: *Na'aseh 'Adam Be-TzalmeNu ki-DemuteNu*'.
- 146 Deut. 4.9. In this verse there are also three consonants of *Nun*: *BeNeikh, u-veNei, vaNeikha*, and we shall revert to this issue further on in this section. In the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, ad locum, vol. 3, p. 173, this verse is interpreted in quite a similar manner: the three letters of *Nun* are inverted and the issue of the 50 gates of understanding is mentioned. Whether this verse should be understood as a possible origin of the theory of double sonship mentioned several times above is an open question.
- 147 Prov. 10.1. That this verse has been interpreted as dealing with both the son and 52, we can see already in R. Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematria'ot*, pp. 86–7, and in R. Eleazar's *Sefer Sodei Razei Semukhim*, pp. 25–6. Those two discussions confirm the affinity between material found in *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* and the Kalonymite traditions on the topic that is central for our analyses here. See also the interesting description of God and his son, who is the people of Israel in R. Eleazar's *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 19.
- 148 The plene spelling of the consonants of *ha-'Adam* both amount to 50. See also Chapter 3 note 81. Interestingly enough, the Great Angel of Maghariah, discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1, has both the divine name and the appearance of Adam attributed to it.
- 149 Those are the consonants of the Tetragrammaton basically written twice, and their numerical value amounts to 52 like *Ben*.
- 150 8.5. On the various understandings of this verse in ancient Judaism see Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 114, and Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam'. For the gematria of *ha-'Adam* as 50 see R. Eleazar of Worms's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, compare pp. 120–1 to 117.
- 151 Ps. 96.11; 1 Chron. 16.31. See also in R. Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematria'ot*,

- p. 58. I wonder if indeed the affinity between the Tetragrammaton and the image, so prominent here, does not include the idea of a sonship, by dint of the affinity between image and son in the treatise of *Avot*, 3, as analyzed by Lorberbaum, 'Imago Dei – Imitatio Dei'.
- 152 Gen. 1.26.
- 153 Printed in the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, p. 32. A parallel, though somewhat shorter passage is found *ibid.*, p. 48. See also *ibid.*, pp. 31 and 32–3. On this book see Joseph Dan, 'The Ashkenazi Hasidic "Gates of Wisdom"', in eds, G. Nahon & Ch. Touati, *Hommages a Georges Vajda* (Peeters, Louvain, 1980), pp. 183–9; Dan, *Studies*, pp. 44–57; Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society* (Brill, Leiden, 1980), pp. 69, 119; Marcus, 'Exegesis for the Few and for the Many: Judah he-Hasid's Biblical Commentary', in ed., Joseph Dan, *The Age of the Zohar*, pp. 1–24. For the affinity between *tzelem* and divine names see also Groezinger, 'Between Magic and Religion: Ashkenazi Hasidic Piety', in eds, K.E. Groezinger & J. Dan, *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1995), pp. 28–43.
- 154 See his *Sefer Sodei Razei Semukhim*, especially pp. 65–6. It should be mentioned that one more manuscript dealing with the exegetical gates of R. Eleazar of Worms, and not mentioned by Segal, is extant. See the Manfred Lehman manuscript, described by the late Lehman in his article, 'Hints to "That Man" and to Muhammad in the Commentaries of Hasidei Ashkenaz', *Sinai* 87 (1980), pp. 36–7 (Hebrew).
- 155 Abraham ben Azriel, *Aryagat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, vol. 3, p. 53. See also R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, vol. 1, p. 149. Thus, R. Eleazar, like his teacher R. Yehudah he-Hasid, was not just a simple traditionalist, but a thinker who could develop or accept traditions according to which it was Adam, not Moses, who was the recipient of the gates of wisdom. Moreover, even David Segal himself hints at the possibility that R. Eleazar himself possessed not 49 gates but 52. See his edition of *Sodei Razei Semukhim*, p. 9 note d.
- 156 *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, p. 224. See also R. Eleazar's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, p. 127.
- 157 See Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 322–3.
- 158 *Ibid.*, p. 29. For the assumption that man was created in the image of the hypostatic cherub see Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, p. 72, a theory reminiscent of Rabad's stand where the assumption is that man was created in the image of Metatron. See Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 198–9.
- 159 *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, p. 48. On the complicated problems related to the different authorship of the various parts of this book see Idel, 'The Commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo', pp. 212–22.
- 160 For gates of understanding in Heikhalot literature see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 81–3, though the number 52 is not specified.
- 161 See the text from *Sefer ha-Shem* translated by Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 243, 245, now printed in *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 8, and see also pp. 25, 173. For the importance of clouds in the writings of this master see in the texts discussed by

- Wolfson, *ibid.*, pp. 243–4. See also R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, vol. 2, p. 464 where, interestingly enough, he mentions the occurrence of the words My name, Name, and His Name, in the Pentateuch 52 times, as in the case of the word cloud. Since R. Eleazar put together three biblical expressions: My Name, Name and His name in order to reach 52, it demonstrates that he was especially interested in this figure.
- 162 See e.g. R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, eds M. & Y.A. Herschler, vol. 1, pp. 5, 149; R. Abraham ben Azriel, *Sefer 'Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, vol. 3, p. 53; Dan, *Studies*, pp. 46, 48 note 29. See also the short mentioning in *Sefer ha-Tagi*, whose authorship is not established in a final manner, found in MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566, fol. 243a which will be discussed below; R. Eftayyim ben Shimshon, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 11 etc.
- 163 BT *Rosh ha-Shanah*, fol. 21b. It should be mentioned that in one case pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms identifies the 49 gates with syllabs of the alphabet – *havarot* – no doubt some form of combination of letters related to *Sefer Yetzirah*, and perhaps the creation of the Golem. See his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 2, pp. 283–4. On *havarot* see below the quotation from MS. Moscow-Ginzberg 96.
- 164 See *Leviticus Rabba* 30.2, *Midrash Tehilim* Ps. 54.4.
- 165 1 Chron. 29.13.
- 166 On the problems related to this gematria see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 265 note 327 where he suggests, correctly in my opinion, the elimination of the word *ben*. Indeed this is the form in which this gematria appears in *Sefer Gematria'ot*, p. 27 as well as in R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, vol. 2, p. 464.
- 167 Isa. 60.1.
- 168 *Ibid.*, 60.2.
- 169 *Ibid.*, 63.14.
- 170 Ps. 145.21.
- 171 *Ibid.*, 72.19.
- 172 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566, fol. 37b, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1567, fol. 49b, translated and discussed in Wolfson, *Through the Speculum*, pp. 264–5. On the possible authorship of the content of these manuscripts see Dan, *Studies*, pp. 134–47, who attributes the material to R. Yehudah he-Hasid.
- 173 On *Binah* as a more profound mode of understanding see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 202–20. For the requirement of having sons in order to be informed in the esoteric doctrine of the divine name see R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 139.
- 174 This sentence should be understood in the context of the view presented there, that as long as man is alive, his soul has a shadow, but when it departs he becomes, like God, the divine Glory and the angels, shadowless.
- 175 This view recurs also elsewhere in the same book, p. 106, and the analysis of Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, vol. 3, pp. 1071–84, and the new material referred to by Theodor H. Gaster, in his *Prolegomenon*, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. xxxv.
- 176 Isa. 38.16. In the Masoretic version of the Bible the divine name is 'Adonai not the Tetragrammaton.
- 177 Ps. 96.11; 1 Chron. 16.31.
- 178 *Ha-shem*. The term may stand for both God and the divine name. From the context I conjecture that it is the divine name that is intended.
- 179 See also his *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, p. 25 where it is written, in what I consider to be the better version of MS. Parma-de Rossi 1390, fol. 48a, 'God is on the head'. See also his *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 213.
- 180 1 Sam. 28.16.
- 181 Num. 14.9.
- 182 *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, p. 63. A close parallel to this passage is found in E. Eleazar's *Sefer ha-Shem*, pp. 204, 218, and in R. Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematria'ot*, p. 58. For more on the practice of examining someone's image during the night of *Hosha'ana Rabba* see the discussion and the bibliography adduced in Idel, 'Gazing at the Head'. An important reverberation of details relating to this ritual is found in the fourteenth-century R. Menahem Zion, in his commentary on the Pentateuch known as *Ziuni* (Jerusalem, 1962), fol. 62a..
- 183 See note 123 above.
- 184 Isa. 51.16. It should be mentioned that the Hebrew word *tzel* stands also for protection, and this meaning seems to be found also in Assyrian sources. See Leo Oppenheim, 'The Shadow of the King', *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 107 (1947), pp. 7–11; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 173–81.
- 185 On righteousness see below, note 207.
- 186 According to MS. Parma-de Rossi 1390: *Mi she-hayah 'alai*. If this version is the correct one, an issue that is not self-evident, then we have here a rare confession in the first person of a mystical experience; for a similar statement see R. Eleazar's passage from *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, cited and discussed by Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 17. On the larger question whether the Hasidei Ashkenaz literature was a theological or a mystical one, see e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 16–17, Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 27, 91–2, 98, and 323 note 171, Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 190–2.
- 187 As we shall see below from the passages of R. Moshe ben Eleazar, the hand and the shadow occur as some form of presence of the higher upon the lower entity.
- 188 The following sentences recur often in the writings of R. Eleazar. See e.g. *Hilekhot Nevu'ah*, MS. Parma-de Rossi 1390, fol. 77a.
- 189 *Sodei Razzaya*, *Hilkhot Nevu'ah*, ed. Israel Kamhelar (Jerusalem, 1936), p. 49 corrected, in some cases, according to MS. Parma-de Rossi 1390, fol. 76b; this version of this manuscript, copied in 1286 in Italy, includes some copyist errors, which have not been indicated here. On some of the themes in this passage see also Y.D. Wilhelm, 'Sidrei Tiqqunim', in *'Aleï 'Ain: Schocken Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 134 (Hebrew). On other partial parallels to this view see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 197–8. On related issues in Hasidei Ashkenaz see Green, *Keter*, pp. 91–105.
- 190 *Sodei Razzaya*, pp. 64, 103.
- 191 See note 184 above.

- 192 *tzel qomato*.
- 193 *Commentary on the Name of Forty-two Letters*, MS. Moscow-Guenzberg 366, fols 40b–41a. For the authorship of this treatise see Idel, ‘The Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo’, p. 165 and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 233 note 183. The concept of the shadow of God in R. Nehemiah’s thought will be dealt with elsewhere in some detail on the basis of additional texts. In any case, this theory of shadow seems to differ from the more metaphysical stand of Philo or other Jewish philosophers. See Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques*, p. 104 and Alexander Altmann, ‘Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli’, in ed., Isadore Twersky, *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 11, 115 note 63.
- 194 Printed in Dan, *Studies*, p. 119. For a much earlier instance of linguistic iconism see above, Introduction, the passage from the Gnostic treatise known as *Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*, beside note 91.
- 195 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1567, fol. 8b, printed by Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 134. See also *ibid.*, fol. 8a; Dan, *ibid.*, p. 137. On the continuum of faces in the main school of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz see Idel, ‘Gazing at the Head’. The beginnings of this stand are to be found much earlier in the Heikhalot literature. See Abusch, ‘R. Ishmael’, p. 333.
- 196 Ps. 96.11.
- 197 MS. Paris BN 841, fol. 66b. For a slightly different reading see M. Hallamish’s edition of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, *Commentary on Genesis Rabbah*, p. 147, and see also *ibid.*, p. 149. For a French translation of the passage and a brief discussion, Georges Vajda, ‘Un chapitre de l’histoire du conflit entre la Kabbale et la Philosophie’, *AHDLMA* 23 (1956), pp. 73–4.
- 198 See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 56–73. See also the Neo-Platonic view about the hypostatic names as *agalmata*, statues, as discussed in Mortley, ‘The Name of the Father is the Son’, p. 247.
- 199 On this book see Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 70; Dan, *Studies*, p. 137.
- 200 Gen. 1.26.
- 201 Ps. 73.20. Compare also to the interpretation of this verse in R. Eleazar’s *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 204.
- 202 This Hebrew syntagm has no sense, as it means the revolution of the world. Perhaps the correct version is *Godel ha-‘Olam*, the size of the world, namely the stature of man was as great as the world – a view found in rabbinic thought. See the texts of *Genesis Rabba*’ 24.2, p. 230; 14.8, p. 132, cited by Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, p. 163; Susan Niditch, ‘The Cosmic Adam: Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature’, *JJS* 34 (1983), pp. 137–46. See also Idel, ‘Enoch is Metatron’; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 272–3.
- 203 The diminution of Adam is well known in rabbinic sources. See Idel, ‘Adam and Enoch’, pp. 198–9.
- 204 This theme is reminiscent of the passage we adduced at the beginning of this section, but is somehow different because only the 50, and not 52 gates of understanding are mentioned. Nevertheless, the affinity between them is quite obvious because in both cases it is Adam, not Moses – like in the rabbinic discussions – that is the subject of the discussion.
- 205 The following statement stems from *Pesiqta’ de-Rabbi Kahana*’, ch. 9, adduced in R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, p. 113.
- 206 Job 38.14. See also BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b.
- 207 The author refers to the extraordinary powers of the righteous, which is found indeed in the very context of the creation of the Golem in BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 65b and the author hints at them immediately afterwards. The extraordinary powers of the righteous may have something to do with the traditions that the souls of the righteous pre-existed creation and were consulted by God.
- 208 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566, fol. 243a. See also Idel, *Golem*, pp. 59–60. The existence of significant affinities between this passage too and the quotes from *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, problematizes David Segal’s too comprehensive proposal that the latter book is a late fabrication, compiled by a mid-sixteenth-century copyist. For the inverted *Nun* in the same verse see also R. Efrayim ben Shimshon, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 22.
- 209 See the remarks of Urbach, in his edition of Abraham ben Azriel, ‘*Arugat ha-Bosem*’, vol. 3, p. 53 note 94. On this approach to the letter *Nun* in the word *Na’aseh*, see *Sefer Gematria’ot* by R. Eleazar ha-Darshan, a descendant of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, extant in MS. Munich 221, fol. 84a–84b.
- 210 See MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566, fol. 242b; see also *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, printed in *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 32–3. After those generations men were created as centaurs. See references to earlier sources and bibliography in the next footnote.
- 211 Cf. *Bereshit Rabba* 23.6, p. 227. See also Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, pp. 50–1 note 60, and Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, p. 323 note 149. It is interesting to remark that in the Midrash referred to here there is an opposition between the image of God and the image of the centaurs, which may reflect an opposition between the creator and the evil principle, or the head of the devils, designated in Slavonic literature as *Kitovras*, a form of *Kentaurus*. See Gaster, *The Ilchester Lectures*, pp. 40–1.
- 212 See *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, vol. 1, p. 145. See also *ibid.*, pp. 148, 149. On theurgy as enhancing the divine glory in R. Eleazar see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 160–1; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 245, and *Along the Path*, p. 171 note 307.
- 213 Gen. 18.27. Compare the discussion below of the return of the Golem to dust and ashes in the circle of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, from MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1566.
- 214 BT *Sotah* 17a, *Yalqut Shime’oni*, Naso no. 707. Cf. Num. 5, 28 where it is written that if the woman proves to be innocent, then she shall conceive seed. However, the precise connection between the dust and the son, proposed by Rava, cannot be extracted from the biblical material. See, however, the commentary of *Sifrei ad locum*, *Sifrei de-be Rab*, ed. H.S. Horowitz (Wahrman, Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 22–3, *Yalqut Shime’oni*, *ibid.*, no. 709, where the undefiled woman who drank the bitter water is promised retributions that are related to

- fertility in general, without mentioning the connection to dust found in the Babylonian Talmud in the name of Rava.
- 215 *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Numbers, ed. Sh. Fish (L. Honig & Sons, London, 1958), vol. 1, p. 96, and see also note 150 there. See also Idel, *Golem*, pp. 61–2.
- 216 *Commentary on the Merkavah*, MS. Paris BN 850, fol. 49b. On this passage and its connection to the Heikhalot literature see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 236, 267.
- 217 These two words amount to gematria 32 like *Kavod*.
- 218 On the transmission of the divine name and esotericism see Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 74–6 and Wolfson, *ibid.*, pp. 238–41.
- 219 The term is *kavod* as in the expression found later in the text as seat of Glory. However, the meaning here may also be ‘honor’ of God.
- 220 Prov. 25.2.
- 221 Ezek. 1.26.
- 222 Ps. 147.5. This verse when understood according to *gematria* points to the size of the divine body in the book of *Shi’ur Qomah*.
- 223 1 Sam. 2.8. For the Midrashic interpretations of this verse and a Christian appropriation of an ancient Jewish stand see Evans, in Chilton-Evans, *Jesus in Context*, pp. 457–8. For an appropriation of the interpretation of this verse by R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, see his *Commentary on the Merkavah*, pp. 110–11 and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 25, 35–6.
- 224 *Soddei Razayya’*, ed. Weiss, p. 135, and in his *Commentary on the Merkavah*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1921, fol. 5a. See also the late thirteenth-century Ashkenazi manuscript MS. Roma-Angelica 46, which contains a version of this passage. Especially important from our point of view is the emphasis of R. Eleazar of Worms on the necessity of having a son in order to receive the divine name, according to an explicit statement in his *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 139. Is there here a connection between the morphism of the son and the reception of the divine name by the father?
- 225 See Alexander Altmann, ‘A Note on the Rabbinic Doctrine of Creation’, *JJS* 6/7 (1955/6), pp. 195–205, esp. pp. 203–5; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 234–47; Idel, ‘Defining Kabbalah’, p. 102.
- 226 On the throne of Adam in ancient Jewish literature see Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 60–1. For more on the importance of the throne in the context of the sonship see Matthew Black, ‘The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the “Son of Man”’, in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquities: Essays in Honor of W.D. Davies* (Brill, Leiden, 1976), pp. 57–73; Evans, in Chilton-Evans, *Jesus in Context*, pp. 458–9; Borsch, *Christian and Gnostic Son of Man*, pp. 118–9; and the collection of articles edited by Marc Philonenko, *Le Throne de Dieu* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1993).
- 227 See Dan, *Studies*, p. 81. See also below, Appendix.
- 228 See already in the first passage quoted in this section. On the importance of three generations for continuity see the rabbinic passages discussed in the Concluding Remarks.
- 229 For the affinity between the 50 gates of understanding and Torah see also R. Eleazar’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 1.8, p. 106.
- 230 BT *Babba’ Metzvi’a’*, fol. 85a.
- 231 *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, printed in the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 31. For more on this issue see below in the Concluding Remarks.
- 232 Vol. 3, p. 173. See also *ibid.*, pp. 24, 27, 271. An issue that I cannot enter into here is the possibility that some elements of the above discussions were found already in *Sefer ha-Kavod*, one of the main sources of the Hasidei Ashkenaz. See R. Abraham ben Azriel, *Sefer ‘Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, vol. 3, p. 47.
- 233 Presumably on the basis of BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b. On this legend see Anderson, ‘The Exaltation of Adam’, pp. 89–90.
- 234 In the Talmudic version the names of the angels are not mentioned. Those two names belong to the Enochic traditions. See Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 7, and Anderson’s discussion, ‘The Exaltation of Adam’, pp. 104–5; Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, pp. 119–23. Here the version is unusual: H̄ instead of ‘Ain. See also below, note 319. This is just one of the traditions related to earlier material, basically Enochic, but extant in Ashkenazi manuscripts. I hope to return to those traditions in a separate study. Compare, meanwhile, Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels*, pp. 122–59, 235–40. I wonder whether the divergent spelling may be the result of a ‘back-borrowing’.
- 235 Ps. 8.5.
- 236 BN, translated as 50, is also Son, like the first word in the second part of the cited verse.
- 237 Deut. 32.20.
- 238 Namely the two angels.
- 239 *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, printed in the pseudo-R. Eleazar’s *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 32–3. See also R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 11, about 50 gates of understanding and Adam.
- 240 I wonder if it has something to do with the fact that in some ancient Christian versions, God is inviting His son and the Holy Spirit to create Adam. See Anderson, ‘The Exaltation of Adam’, p. 87.
- 241 Ps. 8.5.
- 242 Namely the speech, or more rarely the wisdom, as we have seen in the passage quoted above from *Sefer Tagi*.
- 243 See Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 231 and his note 7 where Scholem pointed out the similarity between this text and *Sefer ha-Bahir*. For Solomon and the 50 gates of understanding see R. Yehudah he-Hasid, in *Sefer Gematria’ot*, p. 98. See also another Ashkenazi text, perhaps contemporary to R. Moshe Azriel, found in a manuscript in MS. Oxford-Bodleiana, Opp. 260 and printed by Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 1, p. 186, par. 11. For a later affinity between the gates of understanding and Solomon see Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah*, p. 250, drawing from a Midrash on the Hebrew Alphabet attributed to R. Akivah, which I could not identify. On Reuchlin’s use of this treatise see Ketterer, *Alphabet of Rabbi Aqiba*, vol. 1, pp. 260–4.

- 244 *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, p. 83. See also *ibid.*, pp. 71, 131.
- 245 See *Sefer Sodei Razei Semukhim*, pp. 65–6. Segal assumes that all the Jewish thinkers accept the Rabbinic tradition without the possibility to change it at all, and this is a major argument for discarding R. Eleazar's authorship on *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*. See also above, note 243.
- 246 3 *Enock*, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 262.
- 247 Ezek. 1.1.
- 248 Ps. 147.51.
- 249 According to *Sefer Yetzirah*, the combinations of letters – the gates – are done by resorting to concentric circles or wheels. It is interesting that the same term *sha'ar*, gate, occurs in all of the above discussions, though the figure differs from one text to another. For the importance of this figure in ecstatic Kabbalah see our discussions in the next chapter.
- 250 MS. Moscow-Ginzberg 96, fol. 18b. See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 149–50. The material in this manuscript represents some forms of synthesis between various Ashkenazi traditions, including the 'Special Cherub' one, and it deserves a more detailed study.
- 251 Idel, *ibid.*, p. 160 note 91.
- 252 See his text printed in Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 218–19.
- 253 The phrase *zeh keruv*, or *hu' keruv*, occurs three times, *ibid.*, on pages 217–18. In one case, p. 217, it is clear that it stands for 240. See also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 233.
- 254 On this gematria see Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah, Liturgy and Theurgy*, pp. 104–5.
- 255 Exod. 4. 22.
- 256 Hos. 11.1. This verse occurs in a similar context on p. 111. The nexus between cherub and youth is made by resorting to a Talmudic etymology: *cherub* = *Ke-Rub* = *Ke-rabiyya*, in Aramaic 'like a child', found in BT *Hagigah*, fol. 13b.
- 257 Deut. 33.17.
- 258 *Commentary on the Merkavah*, p. 112. For another, quite enigmatic reference to a hypostatic son in a text by R. Jacob ha-Kohen, see MS. Milano-Ambrosiana 62, fol. 80a. Thanks to Professor Daniel Abrams for this reference. See also Wolfson, 'Metatron and *Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 90. For the use of the permutations of the consonants *BKlR*, in different ways, as *Bekhor*, *Kerub*, *Rokhev*, see also R. Eleazar ha-Darshan's *Sefer Gematria'ot*, MS. Munich 221, fol. 254b and for the addition of *Berakhot* to these combinations see the *Commentary on the Name of Forty-two Letters* by R. Moshe of Burgos, printed anonymously in *Liqqutim Me-Rav Hai Gaon* (Warsaw, 1840), fol. 7b.
- 259 For an important short treatment of the evolution of the Cherub theories see Farber, *The Concept of the Merkavah*, pp. 309–13.
- 260 Exod. 13.13. On this issue see also below, Chapter 3 note 212.
- 261 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz 2.7, p. 267.
- 262 *Ibid.*
- 263 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 195–203. See also below, Chapter 3 note 161.
- 264 For an additional instance of the *bekhor/cherub* permutation, to which also *Rokhev* and *Barukh* are added, in a relatively triunitarian context, see Rashba, *Responsa* discussed by José Faur, 'A Crisis of Categories: Kabbalah and the Rise of Conversion in Spain', in eds, Moshe Lazar & Stephen Haliczzer, *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492* (Labyrinthos, Lancaster, CA, 1997), p. 55. Faur already surmised that *Bekhor* in the Rashba's discussion has some Christological overtones. Unlike Faur, however, I assume that Rashba's source is not R. Azriel of Gerona, but some Ashkenazi traditions similar to that preserved in R. Moses Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan.
- 265 Boyarin, 'The Gospel of the Memra', p. 258 note 53.
- 266 'The Boundaries', pp. 316–21.
- 267 *Guardians of the Gates*, pp. 151–7.
- 268 'Of Methodology'.
- 269 *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 65–84.
- 270 Namely the lowest among the ten *sefirot*. If the letter *Yod* refers to a number, namely ten, then it is possible that the term *sefirot* is understood in a numerical sense, closer to *Sefer Yetzirah*, and less to the theosophical sources that reached the author from the Provençal-Catalan Kabbalah. On such an interpretation of the *sefirot* see also this author's contemporary, Abraham Abulafia, whose numerical interpretation of this term will be dealt with in the next chapter, Section 3.
- 271 This is a term for Christianity in medieval Jewish sources just as Ishmael stands for the Muslims.
- 272 Exod. 23.21.
- 273 This expression is found also *ibid.*, p. 220 in the context of the ancients. I assume that this is an expression for fathoming the secrets, coined on the basis of the descent to the Merkavah.
- 274 This seems to be a reaction against an accusation that the theosophical Kabbalists reflect some form of Christian-like speculations, as found, for example, in Abraham Abulafia's critique of Nahmanides' school. I doubt, however, whether this somewhat earlier passage reflects Abulafia's views. On the contrary, he might have been acquainted with such a passage.
- 275 On the special effect of the light of God's face in Jewish mysticism see Idel, 'Gazing at the Head', and below, Chapter 6.
- 276 On Metatron as a high priest see in another text of the same author printed in Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 235–6 and above in Section 1 in the discussion of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*.
- 277 On this book and especially on this issue see Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, pp. 48–9 note 62. The proposal to understand the seven letters spelling as Mytatron, found already in some texts before Hasidei Ashkenaz, as pointing to the seven consonants of *YHWH Qaṭaṇ*, seems to originate with this author. For other speculations that connect Metatron or Enoch with different heptades see below in the Appendix, in the anonymous kabbalistic text translated and analyzed there. Especially interesting is the fact that Enoch is comprised there by seven *sefirot*, while here the ten *sefirot* are called Metatron.

- 278 Therefore, towards the end of the thirteenth century, the difference between the two spellings was already known from several sources. See above, Chapter 1 note 140.
- 279 See R. Moshe Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, printed in Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 202–3; Scholem, 'The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalah', p. 28. The affinity between the Tetragrammaton and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet goes back to *Sefer Yetzirah*.
- 280 *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 162–80 and the discussions in Chapter 4 below.
- 281 See *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 1, fol. 1a, par. 39, fol. 5b, par. 52, fol. 7a, par. 54, fol. 7a, par. 55, fol. 7a, par. 59, fol. 8a. In par. 60, fol. 8a, God is described as the creator of Metatron.
- 282 *Ibid.*, par. 10, fol. 2a, par. 13, fol. 2b and see the important analysis of Wolfson, 'Metatron and *Shi'ur Qomah*', pp. 66–83.
- 283 See Wolfson, *ibid.*
- 284 See Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 204–5.
- 285 MS. Oxford, Christ Church College 198, fol. 7a; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 187, as well as pp. 214–15, 299 note 198; Wolfson, 'Metatron and *Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 67. A similar view is found again in the same manuscript, *ibid.*, fol. 9b, in a context plausibly related to Nahmanides' school. See also the kabbalistic prayer attributed to R. Nehunyah ben ha-Qanah, stemming from the circle of *Sefer ha-Yuun*, as quoted in R. Yehudah H̄ayyat's *Minhat Yehudah*, fol. 32a.
- 286 See Chesnut, *Three Monophysite*, pp. 9–12. For the assumption that Christianity emerged as the misunderstanding of Kabbalah see the fourteenth-century thinker Profiat Duran's *Kelimat Goyyim*, to be translated and discussed in the Concluding Remarks. In one manner or another, this view is found also in the writings of the nineteenth-century thinker R. Elijah ben Amozegh, who assumed that Christianity had been impacted by ancient kabbalistic esoteric themes and resorted explicitly to Duran's passage in order to foster his view. See his *La Kabbale et l'origines des dogmes chretiens*, Chapter 4. Duran attributed this view to an Ashkenazi master and to Kabbalists, and if this attribution is historically correct, we have another evidence for an explicit rapprochement between Kabbalah, sonship and Christianity in the context of an Ashkenazi author, perhaps someone influenced by discussions found above in this chapter.
- 287 See 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 175. This reconstruction is important since it plausibly points to an early tradition, perhaps a Jewish-Christian one, and problematizes an explanation of the occurrence of the 'son' to lateral Christian influence. Notwithstanding this statement, I do not deny the possibility of other forms of the lateral impact of Christianity on the main school of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, the Kalonymide one, as it has been argued by Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 175–232, by Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 104, and by Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that sharp anti-Jesus statements are found in different Ashkenazi commentaries on the Pentateuch. See Manfred Lehman's article mentioned above, note 154.
- 288 *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 217. See also p. 226.
- 289 *Ibid.*, p. 218. See also p. 214.
- 290 *Ibid.*, pp. 213–14.
- 291 See *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, p. 244. Dan presumably projected the view found in 3 *Enoch* ch. 9; Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 14 (Hebrew).
- 292 The three Hebrew terms amount to gematria to 137.
- 293 *Sar ha-Panim*.
- 294 Cf. BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12b.
- 295 Deut. 33:27.
- 296 MS. Berlin, Or. 942, fol. 153b. See also the view of Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 190 note 51.
- 297 MS. Berlin, Or. 942, fol. 153a. See also Idel, 'Il mondo degli angeli', pp. 9–10.
- 298 See MS. Jerusalem, NUL 4° 6246, fols 5b–6a. This text has been printed in Shlomo Musajoff, *Merkavah Shelemah* (Soloman Press, Jerusalem, 1921), fols 23b–24a. For more on the views found in this circle see Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 86–8.
- 299 See Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, p. 32.
- 300 For the views of the Cherub in a circle of Ashkenazi esotericism known to our author see Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, *passim*.
- 301 See Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 104–68; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 192–5; Abrams, '*Sod kol ha-Sodot*'; Urbach, *Sefer 'Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 4, pp. 76–9; and Idel, 'R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's Commentary on the Poem '*Al Na' le-'Olam Tu'aratz*', *Moreshet Israel* 2 (2005), pp. 18, 21 (Hebrew).
- 302 See Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, pp. 146–7; Dan, *Studies*, p. 120 note 79. It is bizarre that Dan is so surprised by the occurrence of the attribution of the Tetragrammaton to the Glory (an attribution which he calls, twice, 'radical'), while this approach is accepted even in more mainline rabbinic discussions mentioned in Chapter 1 above, even in the context of mortals. The simplistic understanding of rabbinic literature by scholars even today, what I called above 'compact Judaism', creates problems in a correct interpretation of elements found in rabbinic literature and in an appropriate description of the history of Jewish mysticism. See also above, Chapter 1, Section 1.
- 303 See Dan, *Studies*, p. 120 note 79 where the claim of 'radicalism' appears for the first time.
- 304 See Idel, 'Gazing at the Head', pp. 280–94. For one of the sources of the Ashkenazi resort to the expression *qelaster panim* see pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms', *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 82, and the *Qedushta*' of R. Amitai, printed in ed., Benjamin Klar, *Megillat Ahima'atz* (Sifrei Tarshish, Jerusalem, 1974), p. 91. See also R. Nehemiah's afore-mentioned *Sefer ha-Navon*, printed as an anonymous treatise in Dan, *Studies*, p. 123. The source, however, is much earlier, and stems from rabbinic views. See e.g. the material related to the material close to Heikhalot literature discussed by Abusch, 'R. Ishmael', pp. 333–4 and Idel, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 72–80.
- 305 For another possibility of the same cultural dynamic regarding other themes in early Jewish medieval mysticism see also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 63–88.
- 306 See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 54–95. Compare, however, the simplistic manner in which

- Peter Schaefer portrays my stand, overlooking in his own explanation of the emergence of what he calls the Golem legend the significant divergences I point out between the different Ashkenazi recipes for creating the Golem. The simplification of the Ashkenazi view renders his theory about the Ashkenazi beginnings of this magical phenomenon rather questionable. Neither is he aware of the much earlier Arabic source of the Golem story. See his 'The Magic of the Golem, The Early Development of the Golem Legend', *JJS* 46 (1–2) (1995), pp. 249–61. His homogenizing approach to such a complex magical literature, which includes several different types of recipes, has been implicitly endorsed by Joseph Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, p. 38 note 10. See, however, Idel, 'Golems and God' for discussions of Arabic material that substantially antedate the Hasidei Ashkenaz discussions on the topic, and deal with the creation of an anthropoid.
- 307 See Farber, *The Concept of the Merkavah*, pp. 21–7, 231–2, 310–11, and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 59–62.
- 308 See his 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 177, 180–1.
- 309 *Va-Yikhtov Moshe* (Krakau, 1899), fol. 32d.
- 310 See Daniel Abrams, 'The Dimensions of the Creator – Contradiction or Paradox? Corruptions and Accretions to the Manuscript Witness', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 35–53; Annelies Kyut, 'Traces of a Mutual Influence of the Hasidei Ashkenaz and the Hekhalot Literature', in eds, N.A. van Uchelen & I.E. Zwiep, *From Narbonne to Regensburg: Studies in Medieval Hebrew Texts* (Judah Palache Institute, Amsterdam, 1993), pp. 62–8; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 96 note 99; Herrmann Klaus, 'Re-written Mystical Texts; The Transmission of the Heikhalot Literature in the Middle Ages', *BJRL* 75 (3) (1993), pp. 97–116; Klaus, 'The Reception of Hekhalot Literature in Yohanan Alemanno's Autograph MS. Paris 849', in ed., Joseph Dan, *Studies in Jewish Manuscripts* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1999), pp. 19–88; Klaus, 'Die Gottesnamen 'kwzw' und 'mzpz' in der Hekhalot-Literatur', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 16 (1988), pp. 75–87. See also the versions of MS. L in Odeberg's edition of *3 Enoch*, related to Ashkenazi material. Cf. his *3 Enoch*, p. 18. See also note 313 below.
- 311 To this issue I hope to devote a separate study.
- 312 See note 311 above and Daniel Abrams, 'Special Angelic Figures: The Career of the Beast of the Throne-World in *Hekhalot* Literature, German Pietism and Early Kabbalistic Literature', *REJ* 155 (1996), pp. 363–86, especially pp. 371–2 and the pertinent bibliography mentioned in this study. I hope to deal with the affinities between some pieces of Heikhalot literature, R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, and the manuscripts that contain them, in a separate study. See, meanwhile, Peter Schaefer's detailed descriptions of those manuscripts, without connecting them, however, to what I conceive to be the specific pertinent Ashkenazi background, *Hekhalot-Studien*, pp. 154–233.
- 313 Even in the reviews of Schaefer's *Synopse* written by two scholars who also wrote on kabbalistic literature, the occurrence of explicit kabbalistic theosophical material, which consists in a list of ten *sefirot* in their common order, combined with a description of mystical union, has not been detected. Emblematic of the quite massive neglect of scholarly material written in an exotic language like modern Hebrew is the undeserved absence of Yehuda Liebes's two articles dealing with Jewish-Christian traditions, even in books dealing with this specific topic, like *The Ways that Never Parted*. Ways however part and sometimes in quite dramatic manners, both in late antiquity and in recent times, especially, as mentioned above, when someone writes in Hebrew. This is also the case with some of my articles about Metatron that were written in the same language. Theological good intentions aside, the neglect of the scholarly material written in Hebrew (and sometimes also in French, as is the case with Charles Mopsik's studies) is evident not only in the scholarship on Heikhalot and Jewish-Christian literature written in English or German, but also in studies about Qumran and pseudepigraphic literatures. This 'development' in scholarship, which may or may not have something to do with mastering Hebrew, is worthwhile of inquiry in itself.
- 314 It should be pointed out that Odeberg made the first remarkable redactional observations concerning this literature. See e.g. *3 Enoch*, p. 188, where he attempted to separate a core of the Enoch/Metatron theme in *3 En.* ch. 48, as the more ancient part of the *Hebrew Enoch*. On this literary unit see now Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, passim.
- 315 For the datation and the list of late Middle Ages manuscripts of this pseudepigraph see Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 3, 97.
- 316 See the references adduced above, Introduction note 172. For problems related to the dates of Ethiopian and Slavonic books of *Enoch* and their manuscripts see Charlesworth, *OTP*, pp. 102–10.
- 317 For the intention of the late Jonas Greenfield, (which never materialized to my best knowledge) to write such a study see the remark of Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah*, p. 142.
- 318 This seems to be the situation with the rituals of initiation in the study of the Torah analyzed by Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, see above, Chapter 1 note 146.
- 319 See, for the time being, Idel, 'The Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo', and 'From Italy to Germany and Back'. So, for example, the interesting variants of the myth of the fallen angels, which reflect in my opinion much earlier traditions, have not yet been taken into consideration in the scholarship on this topic. See e.g. above, note 234.
- 320 See, nevertheless, the important discussion of Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1988), pp. 176–89 and see also my discussions in the Introduction.
- 321 See Israel Ta-Shma, 'Heikhalot Genuzim', *Tarbiz* 56 (1987), pp. 433–7 and Schaefer's response in his *Hekhalot-Studien*, p. 3.

### CHAPTER 3 Son as an Intellectual/Eschatological Entity in Ecstatic Kabbalah

#### 1. Abraham Abulafia's version of R. Nehemiah's passage on Metatron as Son

The two different Ashkenazi traditions regarding sonship discussed previously represent, in my opinion, detailed elaborations on earlier mythologoumena that reached Jews in Europe by channels that are yet unknown, as well as innovative applications of radical exegetical techniques. The skeleton of the 70 names of Metatron is a clear example of an earlier theme interpreted in a new cultural setting, substantially different from the presumably Palestinian background that produced it, and featuring perhaps additions of details in its interpretation. In the Ashkenazi regions, such linguistically oriented traditions were only rarely adopted within broader speculative systems, but the Ashkenazi authors remained more faithful to the ancient anthropomorphic, apocalyptic, ritualistic, and concrete modes of religion found in some of the earlier forms of Judaism. Living in relative isolation from the Jewish, Arabic and Christian forms of philosophy, the early Ashkenazi masters expanded upon the earlier Jewish material but did not enter forms of what I propose to call 'intercorporeal' enterprises.<sup>1</sup> They were less interested in syntheses between their kind of Judaism and other forms of more systematic thought, like the Jewish mystics and philosophers in the Near East, in Spain and Provence, though some of them, like R. Eleazar of Worms, were influenced to a certain extent by philosophers like Sa'adyah Gaon and R. Abraham ibn Ezra. Similarly they were not conditioned by the need to react to such theological developments, as were some of the masters in Spain and Provence, who flourished during a certain type of cultural renaissance in their Christian environments. However, those traditions elaborated by the Ashkenazi authors reached both Provence and Spain from the mid-thirteenth century, and were there integrated within larger schemes or forms of order.<sup>2</sup> In such cases, deep transformations of earlier material, much greater than those undergone by the pre-Ashkenazi traditions in Ashkenaz, became visible.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the cultural situation of Alexandrian late antiquity returned in the Middle Ages in Europe, when the Greek and Hellenistic heritages, mediated and transformed by Muslim thinkers, encountered Ashkenazi traditions, resembling more the Palestinian-rabbinic traditions,

and a new form of allegoresis permeated the writings of Kabbalists who offered such a synthesis. The Arabic sources, which penetrated the Andalusian province from the south, and consisted of a broad series of speculative writings, interacted in northern Spain and southern France with the northern, Franco-German tradition, which drew much from materials that reached them from Italy. The geographic arena in which Kabbalah made its first steps stands therefore at the intersection between two different Jewish traditions, the thinkers active there preferring sometimes one over another. The 'southern' stream of traditions consisted first of a series of more purist philosophies like Neo-Platonism and Neo-Aristotelianism, which had a profound impact on Jewish philosophy, and thus also on Kabbalah. However, from the second part of the thirteenth century more 'occult' material was translated into European languages at the court of Alfonso Sabio, the learned king of Castile, a great part of it by Jews, which also affected Kabbalah. In addition to this, Ismailiyah material, containing Neo-Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean elements, and also some elements stemming from Jewish-Christian groups (as claimed in some of Henry Corbin's studies), also arrived in Spain, and contributed something to the burgeoning kabbalistic literature in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Unlike the somewhat casuistic nature of the style of the Ashkenazi passages analyzed above in Chapter 2, authored by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, R. Eleazar of Worms, and pseudo-R. Eleazar, we have ample discussions which point to a historical figure that claimed to be himself the Messiah, who adopted and subsequently developed some of them as part of his messianic *scenario*. In the writings of R. Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (1240–c.1292), the founder of the school of ecstatic Kabbalah, we find several Ashkenazi and other earlier themes in contexts that stress their messianic valence and connect them frequently to his persona.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see immediately below, Abulafia was indubitably influenced by those Ashkenazi materials, especially insofar as the topic discussed here is concerned, though he offered an interesting synthesis between those linguistic elements on the one hand and philosophical speculations, most of them stemming from Maimonides' thought, and some of his philosophical Arabic sources, on the other. An author of three commentaries on Maimonides' alleged 36 secrets found in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Abulafia fused some Heikhalot traditions and some of R. Nehemiah's descriptions of Metatron with medieval interpretations found in Arabic sources of Aristotle's concept of Agent Intellect. In the book *De Anima*, ch. 3.5, Aristotle used the phrase *nous poetikos*, whose precise meaning in his system is not certain. This is why there is plenty of debate on this term in the history of Western philosophy, starting with the earliest commentators of the Stagyrite. Three major interpretations emerged, all of them having

something to contribute to the thought of the Kabbalist that we are going to analyze below: the Agent Intellect as the active part of the human consciousness, a theory that was embraced in the Middle Ages by Latin scholasticism; the view that this intellect is identical to the divinity, as found in Alexander of Aphrodisias, an important commentator on Aristotle; and last but not least, that this concept refers to the last of the ten separated cosmic intellects, a position that will occupy us much more immediately below.

In the Arabic forms of thought, the Agent Intellect, 'al-'Aql 'al-fa'-'al – some scholars use the term Active Intellect – is conceived to be a pure comprehensive form that emanates all the forms in the sublunar world, in the way in which the Greek philosophical concepts of *eidos* and *noetos* are used. The underlying background of many of Abulafia's discussions of hypostatic sonship is his acceptance of this concept, which shaped much of his thought in matters of what can be called eschatological noetics. I see in the passage below one of the most fertile examples of what I call 'intercorporeal exegesis', namely of the interpretation of the content of one literary corpus by means of another set of concepts stemming from another literary corpus. In our case the interpretation of the earlier Jewish speculations about angels in general and Metatron and Yaho'el in particular, by means of a fundamental term stemming from Maimonideanism: the Agent Intellect (though its sources are much earlier), understood in the way in which the Arabic neo-Aristotelian tradition understood it: the source of all the forms within the sublunar world, and the source of all the noetic processes. From this point of view, the Agent Intellect is the main source of the process I called in the Introduction 'informment'.

Abulafia studied some books on medieval philosophy, especially Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, several years before becoming a Kabbalist. It seems that while he was already a Kabbalist he became acquainted with additional philosophical writings, at least one of them Neo-Platonic, a Hebrew version of the Proclean *Liber de Causis* and probably also Pythagorean speculations. His main teacher in matters of the *Guide of the Perplexed* – though not the only one – was R. Hillel ben Shmu'el of Verona, with whom the young Abulafia studied in Capua at the beginning of the 1260s, and through him he could also have become acquainted with Latin scholasticism. In 1270 he started his kabbalistic studies in Barcelona, where he experienced revelations concerning his mission to speak with the Pope in Rome in 1280, and beginning in 1273, he wrote three commentaries, following traditions he reported that he received orally, on the 36 secrets he believed were hinted at in the *Guide of the Perplexed*.<sup>4</sup> In each of these commentaries, the second of these secrets is the secret of the equivocality of the term *Ben*: following Maimonides' *Guide* 1.7, Abulafia's recurring

assumption is that the term *Ben* hints at intellectual operation related to understanding, and he connects this term to the words *Binah* and *Havanah*, namely with the human actualized intellect. Though this individual understanding of the son as one's intellect recurs many times in Abulafia, as we shall see below, let me start with the hypostatical intellectual son, as portrayed by this Kabbalist.

In Abulafia's most important and widespread, and perhaps the last of these commentaries on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, entitled *Sitrei Torah*, written in 1279 or 1280 in Capua or in Rome, we find an interesting attempt to bring together the different ideas related to Metatron in the various Jewish traditions, and the concept of *Ben* as a supernal entity:

The thing that is actualizing our intellect from its potentiality is [itself] an intellect detached from any materiality, which is called in our language by many names, and it is the prince of the world, and Metatron, the angel of the [divine] Face ... and its name is *Shadday*, like the name of its master<sup>5</sup> and its cognomen is Metatron ... and it is wise, [and] speaking, the universal spirit, which has been called by the philosophers the Agent Intellect.<sup>6</sup> ... and the divine Spirit, and the *Shekhinah*, and the faithful Spirit, and the Kingdom of the Heaven [*malkhut ha-Shamayyim*] ... and in our language the intellect has been designated by the [terms] *Mal'akh* [angel], and *Keruv* [cherub], and in some places it will be called 'Elohim, as we have said concerning the fact that 'his name is like that of his master', and behold that the sages have called it Enoch and said that 'Enoch is Metatron'<sup>7</sup> ... R. Eleazar of Worms<sup>8</sup> said that he [i.e. Metatron] has seventy names, as I have been shown by our holy rabbis concerning this in *Pirquei de-Rabbi 'Eli'ezer* and by others in the works of R. Akiba<sup>9</sup> and R. Ishmael<sup>10</sup> which are well known ... and in order to arouse your mind to it, I will write a few of those things which arouse man's intellect towards the prophetic Kabbalah, and I will inform you of what he said of him at first. Know that the first of the seventy names of Metatron is *Yaho'el*, and its secret is *Ben* [son] and its essence is 'Ana', and its name is 'Eliyahu and it is also the explicit name, *Yod*, *Yod*, *Vav*<sup>11</sup> which is the double name<sup>12</sup> ... and behold, it also 'is the Redeemer' [*hu' ha-Go'el*]<sup>13</sup> and it is 'in the whole'<sup>14</sup> of 'your heart' [*libbekha*] and it is the ruler of the world<sup>15</sup> just as the heart [*ka-lev*] rules over the entire body, and its secret is 'in the see' [*be-yam*] ... and it operates on earth [*be-'adamah*] and he likes [*mehabbev*] any divine ['Elohiy] man. Those are the words of the Hasid. And he took also another way and he added many things to

that, that I did not mention, and he said that 'before it [Nikheho] shall you encamp by the sea' this is Metatron whose name is Enoch. And all those words and those similar to them are part of the words of the sages of Kabbalah. They possess wondrous secrets that are inappropriate to write down.<sup>16</sup>

This is a complex and rich passage that draws from many sources, whose concatenation will preoccupy us below. From the point of view of the dissemination, this passage is found in a widespread book extant in dozens of manuscripts. Moreover, as I shall try to show in Chapter 5 below, there is good reason to assume that we may discern its impact on Pico della Mirandola's famous *Oratio de Dignitate Hominis*. What seems to me to be the most outstanding element in the passage is the fact that it appears in a commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*: a book that refused to mention the name of Metatron, or to speak about Yaho'el, written by an author who rejected Christianity, is interpreted as pointing to the theory of the Agent Intellect, no doubt a central concept in the book, as referring to all those terms that do not occur in Maimonides' book. First and foremost Abulafia draws here upon a passage from a still unparalleled version of the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, which he explicitly attributes at the beginning of his citation to R. Eleazar of Worms, and when ending the quotation he refers to *he-Hasid*, a term pointing to R. Eleazar's teacher, R. Yehudah he-Hasid. Let me pay attention to the fact that this quotation does not occur in the two earlier commentaries on the secrets of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, a fact that may point to the encounter with the content of this passage relatively late in his career. We dealt at length with another version of this passage that attracted out attention so much in the previous chapter. Here I am concerned only with details found in Abulafia's special version and with their integration within his messiano-philosophical scheme. The correctness of his attribution of the text to R. Eleazar has been recently questioned<sup>17</sup> and, as I pointed out in Chapter 2 above, the author is quite plausibly R. Nehemiah the Prophet, though the true identity of the author is not relevant for the purpose of understanding Abulafia's view. It suffices to point out that for the ecstatic Kabbalist this was a text written by an Ashkenazi figure that preceded Abulafia by at least some decades.<sup>18</sup>

What should be emphasized is the fact that it is in a commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, a book which strove to obliterate the morphonominal aspect of the verses from Exod. 23.20–24, that the opposite tradition stemming from the Ashkenazi master has been proposed as very important. Since it is hard to believe that Abulafia was not sufficiently aware of the main propensity of the *Guide*, we may assume that the very occurrence of the above passage represents some form of cultural choice the ecstatic

Kabbalist made between the priority he gave to the Andalusian tradition, and the Ashkenazi one, or if we want to formulate it differently, between philosophy and what he conceived to be Kabbalah.

There are several differences between the manuscripts that preserved this early thirteenth-century Ashkenazi text (as we discussed in the previous chapter) on the one hand, and the specific manner in which Abulafia has quoted it on the other hand. Below I shall analyze the version found in *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, where the explicit claim of the author is that he adduces a *verbatim* quotation and not a paraphrase. What should be emphasized is the last part of the passage: Abulafia conceived the Ashkenazi passage as part of a kabbalistic tradition, a fact that may reflect his understanding of Kabbalah as related to divine names and angels, and not necessarily with sefirotic traditions. Written in 1280, this passage reflects therefore a perception of Kabbalah similar to that conceived of in the Ashkenazi provinces, and less so in Spain, before Abulafia's time.

Abulafia's version of the Ashkenazi text links, by means of gematria, a number of concepts relevant to our discussions above: *Ben* = 'Ana' = 'Eliyah = Yaho'el = hu' [ha]-Go'el = ba-kol = libbekha = yod yod vav = YHWH+YHWH = ba-Yam = mehabbev = be-'adamah = 'Elohiy = 52. There can be no doubt that the gematria technique was essential in creating the above equation, as much as the eventual conceptual relations between its members. What is conspicuously absent in the Ashkenazi discussion as quoted and analyzed in the previous chapter when compared to Abulafia's version is the presence of even a hint at the intellectual-hypostatic status of Metatron, a stand so characteristic of Abulafia's own writings in general. The archangel is described there solely by using terms stemming from the stock of the more traditional and mythical forms of late ancient and early medieval Judaism. The name Yaho'el is known from the ancient Jewish apocryphal literature, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as it is in other late antiquity literatures, as seen above. Moreover, as Gershom Scholem has noticed, very ancient material related to Yaho'el has survived for more than a millennium and surfaced, as seen above, in Ashkenazi literature connected to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo.<sup>19</sup> Is this also the case in terms of the relation between Yaho'el and a concept of redeemer? Unfortunately, given the present stage of research in Jewish angelology, any answer can only be tentative. In any case, variant [b] of R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* quoted in the previous chapter is much closer to a redemptive understanding of Yaho'el, which is also closer, conceptually, to the version preserved by Abulafia.

One may emphasize the importance of the version preserved by Abulafia, though at the same time one may doubt its relevance for reconstructing a much older tradition. This skeptical attitude is especially

germane when the cardinal phrase, *hu' [ha-]go'el* – he is the redeemer – is absent in the Ashkenazi versions. Moreover, it could be claimed that relations between the disparate elements put together by the Ashkenazi author, using such a flexible device as gematria, may not reflect any earlier correlation. However, important as the artificial nature of the numerical technique is for establishing an association between the above terms, the linkage established between them should nevertheless be addressed in the manner that is formulated in the above passage and that became influential, as Abulafia's quotation demonstrates.<sup>20</sup>

Let me begin with the observation that though the phrase *hu' [ha-]go'el* is not found in any of the Ashkenazi manuscripts of this passage I am acquainted with, the whole context of the sentence adduced by Abulafia describes Yaho'el as being present at various critical moments in the history of the Jews such as the exodus from Egypt, and this angel was the messenger that saved the Jews at the Red Sea. As seen in the previous chapter the name Yaho'el has been sometimes identified with the anonymous angel that, according to the Hebrew Bible, led the people of Israel in the desert, as the nexus between its theophoric name and the biblical view of the presence of the name of God within that angel demonstrates.<sup>21</sup> Again, as Scholem has observed – and this issue is very important for our discussion here – the assumption that Metatron's name is like that of its master reflects in fact a similar statement presumably related originally to Yaho'el.<sup>22</sup> The angel of the divine presence, by dint of the dwelling of the divine name within it, is a redemptive entity by definition, and I see the use of gematria that connects it to a redemptive figure as more than a technical issue, reflecting a logic regarding the redemptive role attributed to Yaho'el in Abulafia's earlier source. The Ashkenazi text assumes however that Metatron, at least via the name Yaho'el, is also related to the idea of Sonship, *Ben*, and is strongly connected to the divine name either in the theophoric name of the angel Yaho'el, or because of the significance of the much less clear formula *YWD YWD WaW*, or because 52 is twice the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton.

However the eschatological aspect of this constellation of allusions is crucial for our discussion here: Metatron is portrayed according to Abulafia's quotation, explicitly as the redeemer, which I accept as reliable and preserving an earlier tradition. The fact that the phrase *hu' go'el* – he is the redeemer – does not occur in any of the Ashkenazi versions of R. Nehemiah's *Commentary of the Seventy Names of Metatron* is indeed an interesting quandary, but insofar as we may speak about the accuracy of Abulafia's quotations in general in his many writings, he is an author who quotes his sources carefully. Thus, I assume that his quotation preserves the eschatological element that was found in his Ashkenazi source, and the

ecstatic Kabbalist, who conceived himself to be also a Messiah, has been attracted by its eschatological valence.

Special attention should be paid to the phrase *Manhig ha-kol*, the ruler of all, that occurs in Abulafia's version of R. Nehemiah's passage. Though not a new phrase, as we have pointed out in the pertinent footnote, in Abulafia it assumes a new meaning. Though Enoch/Metatron was also conceived as some form of cosmokrator, especially as the Prince of the World, as seen in Chapter 1 above, in fact he was conceived much more as a judge than a ruler over the cosmos. With Abulafia, this expression exchanges meaning with those attributed to the Agent Intellect in the Neo-Aristotelian tradition. Ruling means in the philosophical texts the emanation of forms upon the matter that is prepared to a certain form, or the illumination of the human intellect during the process of cognition. This is a more Greek form of cosmokrator, or perhaps linguistically speaking even better, pantokrator, which is concerned less with religious functions of judgment, but more with ontological processes. This implies also a more cosmic mode of sonship, reminiscent of the cosmic Christ in the fourth and fifth centuries. We may describe the emergence of Abulafia's passage discussed above as combining two vectors. On the one hand, a tradition that can be called 'southern', starting with Aristotle's *nous poietikos*, as interpreted by the fifth-century pagan philosopher Marinus, who added to it the concept of angel. Al-Farabi's passage added the Qur'anic terminology of 'faithful spirit' and 'holy spirit'. R. Yehudah ha-Levi and Maimonides presented this view in their writings, without adding too much to it. It is from the last three authors that Abulafia drew the philosophical dimension of his passage. However, he added to it a variety of elements that stem from earlier traditions that can be described as belonging to the northern tradition, which is essentially based on R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, dealing with divine names and gematrias related to the name of Metatron.

Let me succinctly describe the development of the Metatronic tradition as it emerges from the discussions above. First and foremost, it relates to the list of the 70 names in the Heikhalot literature. Second, we see attempts to develop this list found dotted through the early Middle Ages, like the composition known as *Re'uyyot Ezekiel*, which is close to Heikhalot literature. Third we should remember the Ashkenazi commentary on all those names, and even more than the 70 that appear in R. Nehemiah ben Solomon's treatise discussed in the previous chapter. Fourth, we must relate to Abulafia's interpretation of a passage, which is framed in Neo-Aristotelian terms, as discussed above in this chapter. R. Nehemiah introduced plenty of gematrias as part of his interpretations, while Abulafia introduced the Maimonidean views to be discussed immediately below, while adopting most of the linguistic speculations found in the Ashkenazi source, which he

applied not only to the biblical or traditional texts but also to philosophical terms. This philosophical exegetical grid was applied in a much more generous manner to Jewish traditional texts than is found in Maimonides, but in Abulafia's case it has been brought together with radical techniques of interpretations, numerical and combinatory, that have almost no parallel in the writings of the Great Eagle.

The book *Sitrei Torah* – from which I quoted the above citation – is a commentary on secrets believed to be concealed in a Jewish philosophical book. This is, however, one of the few extant commentaries based upon a strong linguistic understanding of the *Guide*, which put heavy emphasis on traditions found in earlier forms of Jewish mysticism. Written in 1280 in Capua not far from Rome, this is one of the most widespread commentaries on the *Guide* to judge by the numbers of the manuscripts in which it has been preserved. Thus, this commentary became an important conduit for many earlier views of sonship as analyzed above. Much of the material presented in *Sitrei Torah* is written in an objective manner, and the quotation above is one such example. However, Abulafia was neither a philosopher nor a common type of interpreter. Let me now introduce two other instances of the reverberation of the Ashkenazi text in Abulafia's mysticism and ponder upon the tone of the previous passage.

In *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, a lost prophetic book that preserves revelations Abulafia received in the very same years when he wrote his *Sitrei Torah* (though its commentary, which alone is extant, was written after the latter), he describes his mystical paths as very difficult for students to follow at the beginning of their mystical journey and explains that this is the reason why they have been hidden. Yet now, he claims, the time has come to reveal these paths, because the date that all the prophets foresaw as that on which knowledge of the Name or of God would be available has arrived. The revealer is described as:

*Ben* [Son] *Koah Go'el* [power of redeemer], *ben* [son] *Hayyim* [life], *ben* [son] *Hakham* [wise], and it is 'Eliyahu [Elijah] *ha-Navi*' [the prophet], *ben* [son] *ha-Navi*' [the prophet], and [then] Enoch stands on the seat of glory [*be-kisse' ha-kavod*], because 'Enoch is Metatron'.<sup>23</sup> This is the reason why all the sages are obliged to raise [others] to the knowledge of the Name, because it is the aim of the divine worship, and it is perfecting the others, and the value of all the other worships are like that of the handmaiden<sup>24</sup> in comparison to the queen, their lady.<sup>25</sup>

This cryptic text is based upon the following numerical calculations: *Ben* [52] *Koah Go'el* [68] = *ben* [52] *Hayyim* [68] = *ben* [52] *Hakham* [68] = 'Eliyahu [52] *ha-Navi*' [68] = *Ben* [52] *ha-Navi*' [68] = *be-Kisse'* [83] *ha-kavod*.

[37] = 120. Thus, beyond the main gematria of 120, it is obvious that the equation between *Ben* and 'Eliyahu = 52, found in the earlier sources discussed above, is stable and permeates the meaning of the text. The mentioning of Enoch/Metatron in this context illustrates the continuing impact of the older Enochic tradition, now explicated in a much more eschatological manner. It represents the older subtext, found in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, to which three other important spiritual elements are however added: the prophetic element, *ha-Navi*'; the eschatological one: the power of the redeemer; and the mystical/apotheotic one: the reference to Enoch standing on the seat of Glory. I wonder whether in this context the reference to the knowledge of the name is not connected to the two Tetragrammata mentioned in both R. Nehemiah's text and in Abulafia's book *Sitrei Torah*.

However, the thrust of the passage is not merely one more exercise in abstruse calculations, adding more terms to the earlier numerical equations. Though this is indubitably an exercise in exegetical ingenuity, it is however much more than this. In the direct continuation of the above passage, Abulafia writes that:

This is the reason why God raised the spirit of Raziel by His spirit by his knowledge this secret<sup>26</sup> in truth, and this was not possible but when he will separate himself from his country and motherland, namely the separation from the earthy and natural matters, in order to give birth<sup>27</sup> and after much time. And he said: This is [already] twenty years that the age of twenty years arrived both according to the meaning and to the numerical valence. And behold he is of the age of forty. And behold the additional twenty years. And see that *Yehoshu'a bin Nun* is a youth [*na'ar*] and since he was almost sixty years then this is a testimony for my words. And in addition *Nun* is fifty.<sup>28</sup> And the *Yod* that Moses added to his name as it is written 'And Moses called to *Hoshe'a bin Nun* [by the name] *Yehoshu'a*<sup>29</sup>, this amounts to sixty and its secret is *Hoshe'a bin Nun*, and he is that built *Fonon* ... and its operation is by [or in] thought, and whoever knows this the intellect will be acting within him, and the redeemed person will contemplate congregations, *Yehoshu'a bin Nun* ... He was killed as an individual<sup>30</sup>, *Hur* the son of Miriam ... and behold *Hur* is *Ruah* ... and behold because *Hur* has been killed *Raziel* said that now he returned and was alive, and this is *Ruah YHWH*.<sup>31</sup>

This is a complex passage and for our purpose here only some of its aspects are important and will be addressed. It is obvious that it is Abulafia himself that is the subject of the revelation. This is clear from his use of the term

*Raziel*, which amounts in gematria to 248 like Abraham, Abulafia's first name. However, even more personal than this name are two other facts: first is the gematria: *she-banah Fonon = ha-sekhel po'el bo = Yehoshu'a bin Nun = u-fo'alo be-ma'hashavah = bi-qehillot yitbonan ha-nosh'a = Neherag bi-fraṭ = Hur ben Miriam = 549*. The term *Fonon* points in some of Abulafia's writings to the town of Capua, since in gematria both amount to the figure 192. Abulafia spent some time in Capua and wrote his *Sitrei Torah* there, and perhaps also *Sefer ha-Hayyim*. Those writings, or his teaching of four students there, have presumably been interpreted as the building of the city. Thus, we have here some form of commentary related to events in Abulafia's life and not only to his name. At the time of writing this passage he was around the age of 40, a fact that is mentioned explicitly in this passage.

However, the gist of the passage is not exhausted by disclosing the numerical correspondences, but by pointing to their meaning. In this case, as in many others in the commentaries he wrote on his prophetic books, the essence lies in the spiritual life that is hinted at by the numerical games. Let me decode some of these implications. The simplest clue is found in the Hebrew sentence *bi-qehillot yitbonan ha-nosh'a*, 'the redeemed person will contemplate the congregations'. This is a precise anagram of the consonants that constitute the syntagm *Yehoshu'a bin Nun*. There can be no doubt that the term 'congregations', *qehillot*, stands in Abulafia's thought for the Agent Intellect as it amounts to 541 like its Hebrew name *Sekhel ha-Po'el*,<sup>32</sup> and the occurrence of the expression *Sekhel po'el bo* in the immediate vicinity demonstrates the correctness of this reading. Conceptually speaking, this affinity has been understood by Abulafia as pointing to the existence of all the forms within the cosmic Agent Intellect, according to Arabic and Jewish understandings of this concept. Therefore, we have again a view that combines Neo-Aristotelian gnostology with linguistic speculations, just as in the *Sitrei Torah* passage discussed above.

This view is complemented by separation from land and country; which has a double meaning: on the one hand we have Abulafia's biographical departure from Spain, his motherland, in 1260 and again sometime in the middle of the 70s and, on the other hand, on the spiritual level, we have the separation of the spirit from the corporeal. This spiritualization of his biography is important for our discussions here because it allows us to understand his own approach to the esoteric material he is importing from earlier sources and applying then to himself. This seems to be the case also insofar as the discussions related to his understanding of *Hur*, mentioned in the passage above. His description as the son of Miriam does not leave any room for doubt that this figure must be related to Jesus Christ. Moreover, the fact that he is described as 'killed' certainly points in this

direction. Thus, we have a juxtaposition between the Christian vision of Jesus, *Yeshu'a*, and the Kabbalist's vision of *Yehoshu'a*.<sup>33</sup>

As Abulafia put it quite explicitly, *Hur* is the opposite of *Ruah*, spirit, which appears in this context as the spirit of God. The view that *Hur* was the son of Miriam and had been killed is not the Kabbalist's invention. It appears in Rashi's commentary on Exod. 24.14 and 35.30, and in some of his followers' commentaries in the context of the Israelites' worship of the golden calf.<sup>34</sup> *Hur* has been killed in order to facilitate the idolatrous worship, and according to some Ashkenazi traditions, his descendant, Bezalel ben Uri ben *Hur*, built the tabernacle in order to atone for that sin.<sup>35</sup> It seems, therefore, that the immediate source for the ecstatic Kabbalist was some text belonging to Hasidei Ashkenaz, similar to that found in a passage where not only the episode of *Hur*'s death occurs, but also the inversion of *Hur* to *Ruah*, as in Abulafia.<sup>36</sup> Yet was Abulafia interested in this accident of hoary antiquity for the sake of creating one more gematria? Its Christian overtone is manifest, as mentioned above, in the mentioning of Miriam, Mary, in this context. Indeed, the earlier Jewish texts mention Miriam, Moses's sister, as the mother of *Hur*. However, as we are going to see in our analysis of the passage that comes immediately after the last quotation, to be found in the next section of this chapter, the Christian elements are even more obvious. If the thrust of the passage above is Abulafia's own life as an allegory for certain spiritual developments, what is the possible meaning of *Hur* ben Miriam as a more actual, less spiritual matter? I assume that the contemporary counterpart of Jesus was the Pope, who died of an apoplexy just some months before this passage was written, while Abulafia attempted to obtain an audience with him in order to discuss matters regarding his vision of true religion, namely ecstatic Kabbalah. I wonder therefore whether the separation from the land, namely corporeally, does not parallel the death of *Hur*, and historically speaking, both the death of Jesus and that of the Pope preceded the birth of the human intellect, allegorized by the son, that may stand for the organ that is redeemed and contemplates the Agent Intellect. Thus following Maimonides' Neo-Aristotelianism, Abulafia shifted the importance of resemblance between son and father from corporeal isomorphism, as is the thrust of the discussions in the biblical and rabbinic traditions regarding the image mentioned in Gen. 1.26, to the spiritual resemblance, or contiguity between the supernal world as intellectual and the perfect man as actualizing his passive intellect. It seems that the resort to a hypostatic intellectual being seen as a son also created the understanding that the human capacity, the quintessence of sonship, is the human intellect. Thus, a phenomenological similarity – though not connected through a direct historical link – between Abulafia and Philo seems to be prominent.

A somewhat similar position, emphasizing the similarity between soul and the divine sphere, is seen among theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists in Spain, who were his contemporaries, but under the impact of Neo-Platonic psychologies. However, while the discussions related to the pre-existent soul assume a congenital divinity that should be discovered and polished by religious deeds, with Abulafia, following Maimonides' Neo-Aristotelianism, the human potential intellect should be actualized by acts of cognition. This emphasis on intellectual actualization, through the technique of combinations of letters and divine names, is much more universalistic than those of other Jewish treatments of sonship. This point should be clarified, especially in the context of Abulafia's thought. First and foremost, by resorting to this term, I attribute to it no value judgment. Particularism and universalism are both forms of *imaginaire*, intended to shape identities, and each alternative has its strengths and weaknesses. However, for a better understanding of universalism as envisioned by Abulafia, it should be pointed out that this is a fairly elitist approach, which excludes more people from attaining the status of 'Israel' than most of the particularistic approaches I am aware of. Thus removing the national criterion, based on the matrilinear definition of a Jew as adopted in rabbinic tradition, as the son of a Jewish mother, Abulafia would consider only a few people accomplished mystics, though he indeed attempted to disseminate the techniques of achieving such a status.

The confrontation with the Pope that did not take place (despite the fact that Abulafia endangered himself by insisting on seeing him against his will) because the Pope suddenly died, left an indelible impact on Abulafia. He not only describes the situation in his *Sefer ha-'Edut*, the book of the testimony of his willingness to die to fulfill the divine mission to go to the Pope, written immediately after the death of the pontiff in 1280, but still in 1285/6 in his *Sefer ha-'Ot*, which will attract our attention below, he mentions the death of his enemy in Rome because of his 'rebellion'.<sup>37</sup> History becomes a plot that must be understood allegorically in order to make sense of it, and this is even more crucial when the biographical events are those of a figure who believes that he is the Messiah. This allegorical approach to the events of Abulafia's life is one of the two main ways to understand it, and we shall return to a more linguistic oriented understanding later on in the chapter.

In his own *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, written several years after the book *Sitrei Torah* – which is different from R. Nehemiah's book printed as *Sefer ha-Hesheq* (discussed above) which deals with the 70 names of Metatron – Abulafia confesses that he would keep secret and disclose only some very general principles of Kabbalah, unless:

What is compelling me is a divine ['*Elohiy*] issue, and some of his secret has been revealed [in the expression] 'Enoch the son of Yared'<sup>38</sup> who came in the form of an intellectual preacher and spoke within us<sup>39</sup> and brought consolation upon our heart and we have been consoled – we would remain silent, just as our ancient masters, blessed be their memory. And it is known that '*Eliyahu*, whose name is *Yaho'el*, will not reveal himself to the wicked, but to the righteous<sup>40</sup> one alone ... who are the 'counters of His name' [*Hoshevei shemo*] too. And likewise Enoch, the son of Yared, will not reveal himself but to men of truth, those who hate greed, those who are wise men and acquainted with this divine lore alone, and do not believe anything else. And know that '*Eliyahu* and Enoch'<sup>41</sup> will come together at one time, having one advice altogether, and they are the harbingers in truth ... and they will disclose sciences which are very alien today for the wise men of Israel, who are acquainted with the lore of the Talmud.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, again Abulafia confesses that he received a revelation from *Enoch ben Yared*, which is no other than Metatron qua *Yaho'el*. It is this revelation that convinces him to disclose kabbalistic secrets, which have conspicuous eschatological overtones, as the mention of the advent of Elijah and Enoch demonstrate. It is therefore his Kabbalah, referred to above by the term 'divine lore', that ensures the reception of a revelation and then the disclosure of Kabbalah. It is of paramount importance to pay attention to the fact that in this case it is not the angel Metatron that is the source of revelation, but Enoch ben Yared. This means that it is not the ancient patriarch who is speaking to the medieval mystic as a certain type of *redivivus*, nor his hypostatic angelic parallel, Metatron, but rather Enoch ben Yared. It is by means of the gematria of the consonants of this name that those who calculate the numerical values of letters of the name, the so-called 'men of truth', are understood to receive a revelation.

The triad Enoch, Elijah and *Yaho'el* found in *Sefer ha-Hesheq* is reminiscent of R. Nehemiah's sources mentioned above, and the recurrence of this triad in those sources has been analyzed by Liebes as a reverberation of Jewish-Christian traditions.<sup>43</sup> The occurrence of these names together may reflect the impact of the earlier sources on Abulafia's thought nine years after he wrote his *Sitrei Torah*. This is the case in another book written in 1289, the commentary on the book of Exodus, where Abulafia describes the impregnation of the world by the Holy Spirit as generating prophets, a phenomenon similar to a woman who conceives with her husband and

gives birth to a son that comprises two holy names, which are the same name, *K'W K'W*, which is *Ben*, and also eighty six<sup>44</sup>

amounts to *Ben*, and the sign is that 'And YHWH has blessed Abraham with all [*ba-kol*]',<sup>45, 46</sup>

We find here several elements which stem from R. Nehemiah's booklet on the names of Metatron: *Ben* = 26 + 26 = *ba-kol*. Though the name Abraham is found in the verse, I have little doubt that Abulafia thought also of himself in this context, and if this is indeed the case, we have another instance of a nexus between the Kabbalist and sonship. Also interesting is the parallel drawn here between the birth of a son and prophecy; the implication seems to be that a prophet is the son born out of the penetration of the Holy Spirit which means, in the allegorical interpretations offered by Abulafia, that the human potential intellect became an actual intellect by the impact of the Holy Spirit, an allegory for the Agent Intellect. Of utmost importance for my claim that those objective-exegetical passages refer in a hidden manner to events in the life of the ecstatic Kabbalist is the occurrence of the name Abraham, Abulafia's proper name, in these passages.

Let me turn now to a passage found in Abulafia's apocalyptic book entitled *Sefer ha-'Ot*, which corroborates my thesis:

My Lord, tell me the interpretations<sup>47</sup> of the wars I have seen in a vision.<sup>48</sup> And he showed me an old man, with white hair, seated upon the throne of judgment<sup>49</sup> . . . and He told me: 'Go and ask that man who sits on the mountain of judgment and he will tell you and announce to you what are those wars and what is their end, because he is of your nation.'<sup>50</sup> And I have ascended to the mountain of judgment and come close to the elder man and I fell on my face towards the earth before his legs, and he placed his two hands upon me and he stood me upon my legs before him and said to me: 'My son, blessed is your coming, peace unto you'<sup>51</sup> . . . And my name [is] *Yaho'el*, that I have agreed<sup>52</sup> to speak with you already several years<sup>53</sup> and this is the reason your name will be *Ro'u'y'el*<sup>54</sup> the visionary, the son of *Meqor'el*<sup>55</sup> . . . and the name of the fifth [*Hamshiy*] king is *Meshihiy*,<sup>56</sup> and he will be a king after the end of the time of the four kingdoms.'<sup>57</sup>

Abulafia built his apocalyptic vision on the basis of an allegory dealing with wars between different kings who are designated by means of quasi-angelic names. The vision he has is conceptually close to the apocalyptic tradition; its meaning, however, points to a psychological experience which can be decoded by resorting to medieval Neo-Aristotelian epistemology. For our specific purpose here let me remark that there can be no doubt that the fifth king is the Messiah. The fourth one is the elder man, described as belonging to the nation of Abulafia. Yet the elder man presented himself as *Yaho'el*. I

take the two characterizations as pointing to 'Eliyahu whose consonants are, as seen above, a permutation of *Yaho'el*. Indeed, 'Eliyahu, the fourth king, precedes the advent of the Messiah – who is the fifth king – just as the prophet is a harbinger of the Messiah in the more popular eschatology.

If we accept the statement attributed to *Yaho'el* at face value, this angel had already been revealing himself to Abulafia for many years. Moreover, he addresses the mystic as a son, an issue that is reminiscent of the adoption theory in Abulafia's thought, as well as the occurrence of the term *ben* discussed earlier in this section. The discussion in *Sefer ha-'Ot* between Abulafia (whose personal name was Abraham), and *Yaho'el*, is reminiscent of the sole other conversation I know between this angel and a human being, found in the tenth chapter of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; again, the person is named Abraham, serving as the partner of *Yaho'el* in a revelatory dialogue.<sup>58</sup> Both in *Sefer ha-'Ot* and in the ancient *Apocalypse*, the revelation takes place on the mountain.<sup>59</sup> Since I do not think it is plausible to explain the nexus between *Yaho'el* and Abraham in these two cases as a mere coincidence, nor is it plausible to derive Abulafia's story about his mystical encounter solely from the Hebrew material that I am familiar with, most of which is of Ashkenazi origin, I suggest allowing for the possibility that Abulafia was acquainted with a version of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* that presumably no longer exists, perhaps one from a lost Greek source found in Byzantium or associated with some extant Arabic traditions related to this ancient treatise.<sup>60</sup>

As it has been pointed out, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* preserved only in ancient Slavonic reflects a Hebrew original.<sup>61</sup> The single instances when *Yaho'el* is mentioned together with Abraham in Jewish tradition, aside from the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, are in the Ashkenazi material discussed above, which belong to R. Nehemiah, and a passage in Abulafia's older Ashkenazi contemporary R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon's *Commentary on the Torah*, where the term *ba-kol* was interpreted (again by means of gematria) as pointing to *Yaho'el*, described as a magical name that belongs to the Prince of the Face.<sup>62</sup> However, I doubt if Abraham Abulafia's account of his experiential encounter with *Yaho'el* stems solely from an acquaintance with these passages. Moreover, I find no affinity between Abulafia and R. Efrayyim ben Shimshon regarding other topics.

The view of Metatron as *Zaqen*, namely elderly, appears in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*,<sup>63</sup> and is related to the theory of the double nature of the Messiah as wounded and beautiful, which is perhaps influential on Abulafia's view of Metatron as both an old man, *sheikh*, and a *na'ar*, as we shall see in more detail below. The appearance of the redeemer-figure in Abulafia's quotation is, quite probably, part of the original vision of the Ashkenazi text and its source, corroborated

by the eschatological implication of the figure of Elijah as well as the possibility of the use of the phrase *Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim*, namely 'Yeshua', the Prince of the Face, which has been identified by Yehuda Liebes as a reference to a certain vision of Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup> Liebes's proposal, originally based on the Ashkenazi text, which does not contain the phrase *hu' [ha]-go'el*, is therefore corroborated by Abulafia's version under scrutiny here. In my opinion, both Abulafia's passage, where the formula *hu' go'el* is found, and R. Nehemiah's writings in which there is a plausible hint at *Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim*, reflect a hypothetical and more complete version, which presumably combined the two phrases. If this conjecture is correct, then an early text dealing with Metatron as identical to *Yaho'el*, *Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim*, *Ben*, *Go'el*, and the High Priest existed before all the current versions were articulated, but it underwent at least two forms of censorship, yielding the two versions. According to such a hypothetical situation, in one case the phrase *hu' go'el* has been removed, in the other *Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim*. How early such a hypothetical text may have existed is very difficult to approximate. Whether or not this text reflects an early, pre-Christian Jewish concept of the angelic son who possesses or even constitutes the divine name is difficult to ascertain. Its late Christian or Jewish-Christian formulations were addressed in the preceding chapters.

Let me now address the occurrence of the term *Ben* in this context. The justification proposed by the Ashkenazi manuscripts is not only a matter of numerical equivalence, but also relates to the term *Ben 'Adam*, in Hebrew 'man' or more literally the 'Son of Man', as Metatron is the translation of Enoch who was a man.<sup>65</sup> In fact, this justification is sufficient when considered according to the type of associative reasoning which is so characteristic of the Ashkenazi texts based on gematria. Nevertheless, it seems that this description warrants a second look. The *Ben* in the expression *Ben 'Adam* may be a reminder of the human extraction of Metatron qua Enoch, namely of his status before the translation. However, this explanation offered explicitly by the text may reflect an earlier and different understanding of the nature of the Son. It may stand for an earlier perception of an ontological hypostasis possessing messianic overtones named the 'Son of Man' and known in ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypse, which is reflected in the later sources relating to the achievement of Enoch when he becomes Metatron. In any case, Abulafia's resort to the expression 'divine man' – *'iysh 'Elohiy* – at the very end of the quotation from R. Nehemiah's book is quite illuminating, since it involves some sort of theosis. It should be pointed out that this phrase recurs also in other instances in ecstatic Kabbalah.

So far we have dealt with themes stemming from the apocalyptic tradition as they were shaped in Abulafia's discussions. Yet he took an

approach that is far from a simple appropriation or rejection of some of the older elements. He assumed the existence of different levels of redemption: the external and less important level for the individual, and the spiritual and more significant level. For him, sonship deals on the esoteric level with the transformation of the mystic by means of the actualization of the intellect, produced by the illumination of Metatron, the Agent Intellect understood as a cosmic intellect. While in the earlier sources Enoch becomes an angel through the elevation of his body, for Abulafia someone may become a son in spirit.<sup>66</sup> Different as these forms of sonship are, the Ashkenazi passage and Abulafia's numerous discussions expressed these 'sonships' in connection to the same earlier figures, 'Eliyahu and Enoch, and in the context of earlier traditions.

Let me draw attention to another passage stemming from *Sefer ha-'Ot*: 'And I looked and I saw there [in the heart] my image [*tzalmi*] and my likeness [*demuti*] moving in two paths, a vision in the form of two Tetragrammata.'<sup>67</sup> The original words translated as *Terei K'W*: the first word is an Aramaic one which means two. The second *K'W* should be understood as pointing by gematria to 26. I take this figure to stand for what is commonly perceived as the numerical value of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton. The two Tetragrammata are related to originally anthropomorphic concepts, *tzalmi u-demuti* since both *Terei K'W* and the anthropomorphic terms amount in gematria to 636. Thus it is conspicuous that Abulafia, like his Ashkenazi predecessors, assumed a close affinity between the two topics: the divine name and more precisely the two Tetragrammata, and the mode of the divine manifestation within the image and likeness of man. However, as Abulafia mentions in many instances, the two terms that point to biblical anthropomorphism should be understood in a spiritual sense, as a matter of intellect and imagination. Again a theoretical discussion found in texts written two generations beforehand, the theory of the significance of the two divine names becomes part of Abulafia's most profound experience. In other words, the morphonominal structure of the theophoric mediator is reduced to the presence of divine names and spiritual qualities within man, but obliterating the morphic aspects. We may understand the above discussion as reflecting an instance of linguistic iconism, similar to that of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo in his book *Sefer ha-Navon*, or earlier in the Gnostic *Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*, mentioned in the Introduction and in Chapter 2.

Since it is quite evident that Abulafia was acquainted with the gematria  $26 + 26 = 52 = Ben$ , it is possible to assume that the meaning of the passage from *Sefer ha-'Ot* is that he saw in his soul not only his *tzelem* and *demut*, but also a son. To be sure Abulafia, like Maimonides, was not concerned with corporeal shapes when he refers to *tzelem* and *demut* but rather, with their

allegorical interpretation in the vein of Neo-Aristotelian psychology: for him *tzelem* stands for the human intellect, while the term *demut* points to human imagination.<sup>68</sup> In other words, while some discussions in Ḥasidei Ashkenaz are based upon an anthropomorphic theology – anti-anthropomorphic statements found in those writings notwithstanding<sup>69</sup> – the much more vigorous Maimonidean influence on Abulafia changed the meaning of the affinities between divine names and anthropomorphic phrases, discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The son may be the appearance of an intellectual entity in someone's imagination.

## 2. Between linguistic esoterics and philosophy

In the passage from *Sitrei Torah* quoted above Abulafia resorts twice to the phrase 'in our language'. Though the entire book has been written in Hebrew, including the passages related to philosophy, which will preoccupy us more in this section, Abulafia resorts to the expression 'in our language' because he seems to be aware that the philosophical terminology, though correct, is nevertheless alien. When using this phrase I assume that he refers more to the existence of numerous, particularly Hebrew terms for the Agent Intellect. This means that for him this concept is very important in Jewish tradition, and many different terms refer to it allegorically. This means that Hebrew terms, and Jewish tradition in general, refers in different terms to the same underlying concept, an approach that simplifies the more variegated tradition to a rather skeletal axiology. In a way, it seems that Abulafia attempts to envision the Hebrew terminology as the esoteric tradition, whose esoteric meaning is supplied by the philosophical terminology. This is a typical approach especially since Maimonides, though Abulafia made much larger-scale use of this exegetical principle.

Let me therefore turn now to another major aspect of the passage quoted from *Sitrei Torah*: the philosophical elements the ecstatic Kabbalist inserted. Abulafia combined the Ashkenazi passage in the special version he was acquainted with, with a quotation from a philosophical book dealing with the Agent Intellect. This quotation contains elements that are found together in the Hebrew translation of Abu Nasr Al-Farabi's philosophical treatise entitled *Haṭḥalat ha-Nimtza'ot*.<sup>70</sup> In the Arabic text, there is already a fusion between the Neo-Aristotelian concept of the cosmic Agent Intellect and religious concepts like the divine and the faithful spirit, two terms that stem from the Qur'an. Thus, a philosophical gnoseology is grafted upon religious concepts of revelation in Arabic, long before the Maimonidean concept of prophecy is formulated, and Abulafia adduced Al-Farabi, one of Maimonides' sources, in order to strengthen both the philosophical and the religious factors under consideration. What he did was adduce more

religious material stemming now from Ashkenazi sources than was found in Al-Farabi and in his Hebrew translation. Thus, into the synthesis found in this Arabic thinker arriving from the south, namely Turkey, via Andalusia and then Catalonia, Abulafia introduced elements that stem from another line of transmission reaching him from the German territories.

The Neo-Aristotelian description of the Agent Intellect as the last of the ten separated cosmic intellects found in Al-Farabi and adopted by Maimonides and then by Abulafia, assumes that this entity is the source of revelation, in the manner reminiscent of Metatron, also understood as the source of revelation in ancient Jewish mystical texts. This fusion of the two different traditions – the mystico-magical one related to Metatron, and the philosophical gravitating around the Agent Intellect – is quite characteristic of the way in which Abulafia's Kabbalistic system operates in general. In a similar vein, we read in this Kabbalist's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, a book written in the same year as his other important book *Sitrei Torah* – namely 1280, in Rome – where he resorts to a magical tradition, that:

Yefeyfiyah [the Prince of the Torah] . . . taught Torah, that is, the entire Torah, to Moses our teacher<sup>71</sup> for forty days and forty nights, corresponding to the formation of the fetus in its mother's womb, [the time necessary] to distinguish between male and female.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it is possible for a person to enjoy the radiance of the *Shekhinah* in this world without food for forty days and forty nights, like Moses and Elijah.<sup>73</sup> And the secret of the names of both of them is known to you, and he combines one with the other: first Moses, and then Elijah, and their combination emerges as a Divine Name [*Shem ha-'Elohiy*; an anagram of the consonants of *Mosheh* and *'Eliyah*], and it is in its secret<sup>74</sup> [meaning] the name of the son, and he is the son of God [or the name] and its secret meaning is *ba-neshamah* [in the soul]. And the invisible letters of *MoSheH* are *Me-'Ayin*, which declares that 'I am from God' [or from the Name]<sup>75</sup> . . . *'Eliyah* is *'Elohiy*<sup>76</sup> and it is said 'for he is mine' . . . firstborn, and the gematria of *'Eliyah* is *Ben* and see that his secret is 'Son of Man'.<sup>77</sup>

This is again a synthetic passage, which brings together a variety of sources, like *Shimmushei Torah*, R. Nehemiah and theories of sonship, all of them interpreted in a spiritual manner. Abulafia resorts to the imagery of corporeal birth in order to allude to spiritual rebirth. On his interpretation, the Hebrew consonants of the names of Moses and Elijah point to a phrase that means the 'divine name' and that serves as the means by which someone may become the spiritual Son of God, namely an intellect. To return to the constellation of ideas related to the theophoric mediator: in this passage the

nexus between the concept of the Son of God and the name of the son is conspicuous. However, it should be pointed out that these affinities are basically numerical: *shem ha-ben* = *ben ha-shem* = *Mosheh 'Eliyahu* = *shem 'Elohiy* = *ba-neshamah* = 397. It is less the structure of reality that concerned the medieval Jewish philosophers, or the correspondence between the various parts of the canonical writings, that the main school of Ḥasidic Ashkenaz pursued, that Abulafia discovers by means of his calculations. The ecstatic Kabbalist was much more concerned with contemplative values, which he reinforces through discovering those numerical correspondences. The centrality of the divine name is paramount in Abulafia's writings and indeed this name recurs in those calculations. The concept of son is inserted in the calculation without any proof-text. The names of the two biblical figures are plausibly introduced because of their theophoric valences: in the case of Elijah this is evident, while the name of Moses – *Mosheh* – is understood as *ha-Shem*, namely the name.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly enough, Abulafia identifies the phrase 'Son of Man' with both the concept of son in general terms and with the Son of God.

The historical event, namely the 40 years or days mentioned in the Bible in connection to the two figures, becomes an allegory for the growth of the spiritual capacity, which is no longer connected to the ancient texts but reflects present developments. Elijah is not only a name for an ancient prophet, an angel who reveals secrets and reveals itself on many occasions; it is also and in quite a paramount manner the human intellect that is born by resorting to a certain mystical technique. The main manner in which Abulafia 'discovers' the relevance of the biblical literary material is the deconstruction and reconstruction of language and, in the specific case discussed above, the names of the two figures. The analysis of language is, however, a rather free manipulation of the linguistic material, which does not offer anything like an insight into the context of the proper names under scrutiny.

Closely related to the last passage is a discussion found in a book written six years later, his longest treatise *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*. There Abulafia interprets the verse from Prov. 30.4 (where there is a rhetorical question 'Who knows what is his name and the name of his son?')<sup>79</sup> as follows:

The purpose of the existence of earth [or land] is the prophet . . . and whoever desires to know God, desires them [the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet]. What is his name [*Mah Shemo*]? – His name is Adam.<sup>80</sup> And what is the name of his son? [*u-mah Shem Beno*] – 'and Adam' [*Ve-'AdaM*]<sup>81</sup> is the name of his son, because it is the name of his intellect that is called 'his name' from [the

root of] understanding [*me-havanah*]. *Mah Shemo*<sup>82</sup> [amounts to] *Shem ha-'Elohiy* [the divine name], *Yehoshu'a* [Joshua], *Shlemyahu*, [that who has the peace of God] *ha-Lashon* [the language], *'Esh u-Mayim* [fire and water], *u-Shekhinah* [and *Shekhinah*], *ve-Safah* [and language], and what is the name of the son is understood from his name.<sup>83</sup>

The question to be asked in order to understand this passage is who is Adam? Only by answering this question is it possible to understand who the son is. If Adam is merely a man or the first man, his son is his intellect. This is certainly a plausible interpretation within the system of Abulafia's thought. However it seems that there is an alternative, which can be fostered by a comparison to the passage we brought from *Sefer Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*. In both passages the issue of the son appears in the context of the syntagm *Shem ha-'Elohiy*, and in both cases the term *Shekhinah* appears. However, it is only in the early book that the syntagm 'Son of God' appears, and this seems to me a better clue also for understanding the last passage. According to such a reading, the first Adam is God while the second Adam is the son, which is an intellect. The similarity between the two designations of Adam points to the deep affinity between them. Indeed, as we are going to see below, a similar strategy is used by a follower of Abulafia's, who resorts to the double 'I' in order to point to some form of identity, again in a context dealing with sonship.

The intellectualization of the term Adam and its interpretation as hypostases of either the divine realm – God and the Agent Intellect – or of human intellect that is actualized represents a sharp transformation of the classical traditions in Judaism before Maimonides by resorting to his exegetical approach. In a manner reminiscent of Origen's position in *De Principiis* – where a Middle-Platonic view impacted by the *Wisdom of Solomon* is adopted and transforms the Synoptic views of Jesus as the Son of Man, following both the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel<sup>84</sup> – Abulafia adopts the Neo-Aristotelian view that creates new forms of paradigmatic thinking in Judaism. Greek forms of metaphysical thought encountered themes related to sonship found in the Jewish and Christian contexts and transformed them in a radical manner.

Rather intriguing is the manner in which Abulafia understands the name *Yehoshu'a*. No doubt he adduced it because of the gematria of 391, and it is plausible to assume that it was understood as a divine name as it was preceded by the syntagm *Shem 'Elohiy*. Moreover, there can be no serious doubt that in this case some form of eschatology should be involved in its interpretation, as well as the role to be played by the angel of presence or the Agent Intellect.<sup>85</sup> Let me return in this context to the earlier discussions of

Abulafia regarding *Yehoshu'a* at the age of 60, namely elderly, but nevertheless referred to as *Na'ar*<sup>86</sup>, youth. This duality reflects Abulafia's vision of Metatron. According to a passage in *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, revelation arrives at the son after the reciting of divine names:

Our tradition is that the influx comes to the perfect man after you finished the first verse, when he utters the twenty-four names . . . whose sign is *dodi*<sup>87</sup> [my beloved], and 'the Voice of my beloved knocketh',<sup>88</sup> then you shall see the image of a youth or the image of a *shekh*, for *shekh* in the language of the Ishmaelites means 'elder', and he is Metatron and it is also youth, and its name is also Enoch. And the hint is [found in the verse] 'Train up a youth [*na'ar*] in the way he should go [*Darkko*]; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.'<sup>89</sup> Add [the numerical value of] *Hanokh* to [that of] *Darkko* and you will find the secret of Metatron, since just as *Darkhenu Koho* [Our way is his power] also *Kohenu Darkko* [our power is his way].<sup>90</sup> And when you will see him, strengthen your heart and understand his words, 'Take heed of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is within him.'<sup>91</sup> And he is old and the secret of his name as seen to you is Metatron. 'And he is a youth', 'and hearken to his voice'.<sup>92</sup> Behold his name is Shadday, and he is Metatron, the prince of the Names, [*sar ha-shemot*] who speak by the permission of the name [or God] [*reshut ha-shem*].<sup>93</sup> See that in the twenty-four names there are seventy-two letters. And when he speaks, answer him: 'Speak<sup>94</sup> oh master, for your servant [*avedekha*] listens.'<sup>95</sup> '*Av dakh*<sup>96</sup> is the angel [*ha-mal'akh*] that announces to you 'the secret of *YHWH*' and his name is Gabriel. And he is speaking from the first verse<sup>97</sup> that you are reciting by your mouth and he shows to you the wonders of prophecy, because there is a secret in it: 'the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision [*mar'eh*], and will speak to him in a dream [*halom*].'<sup>98</sup> Because *mar'eh* amounts to Gabriel,<sup>99</sup> and also *Halom* [dream] amounts to *Hanokh*,<sup>100</sup> 'Even now, behold, my witness [*ediy*] is in heaven, and my testimony [*sahadiy*]<sup>101</sup> is on high'.<sup>102</sup> And this is the tradition indeed.<sup>103</sup>

The entire passage is bracketed by two mentions of the term *Qabbalah*, which in Abulafia's writings means both tradition in general and sometimes also an esoteric tradition. In any case, what seems to be of importance for our discussions here is the fact that Abulafia claims that this is a view he received from some source; it is not just his own view. Though the entire passage reflects the style of Abulafia, it may well be that part of it reached

him from some earlier source such as, for example, the Enochic exegesis that is part and parcel of the passage and is reminiscent of a similar exegetical technique found in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, as discussed in the previous chapter. In any case, what is quite remarkable here is the absence of any philosophical terminology that would indicate Abulafia's intervention in the formulation of an earlier, presumably shorter Ashkenazi tradition within which he added some new elements like the gematria of *Shekh*. The trace of such an Ashkenazi tradition seems to me evident in the interpretation he offers for the verse from the book of Job.<sup>104</sup>

The double nature of Metatron is evident and it corresponds to the way in which Abulafia portrays *Yehoshu'a* as young and old at the same time.<sup>105</sup> The numerical calculations, however, are the very core of the text and they represent a cascade of gematrias, some of which I have already decoded in the notes below. It is obvious that *na'ar*, one of the epithets of Metatron, amounts like *shekh* to 320. Two times *zaqen*, which means elderly, amounts to 314 like Metatron, and it is plausible that 314 plus six consonants of *zqn zqn*, amounts again to 320. Such calculations aside, the various fragments of verses and numerical equalities build up to an instruction on how to achieve a mystical experience, and what to expect to see and how to respond. If there are medieval Enochic texts that reflect the combination of the apothotic and the theophanic one, this is one of the most interesting of them. Let me point out the meaning of the last interpreted verse from the book of Samuel; there a human speaks with God. The moral servant, '*avedekha*, is transformed into a syntagm pointing to an angel. This is a linguistic form of angelification. From our point of view, the centrality of Metatron is quite obvious. As to *Yehoshu'a*, it seems that the way in which the name is portrayed points to a name he applies to Metatron. It should be mentioned that on the one hand Joshua is called also *na'ar*, and is thus connected again to Metatron, and on the other hand this is the Hebrew name of Jesus, and we may have some form of oblique connection between Jesus and Metatron. Though I will not draw any further conclusion from such an oblique inference, I would like to point out this possibility, so that new material may corroborate it or eventually disapprove it.

On the basis of the similarity between the two preceding quotes, we may also better understand the first quotation: it too deals with both a linguistic relationship between different concepts, which is explicit, and with a vision that assumes that there is an ontological meaning to this affinity, which is an intellectual essence, shared by father and son. This reading is reinforced by the intellectual nature of the *Shekhinah*, as we learn from the quotation adduced above from *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, a passage strongly influenced by Al-Farabi's theory of the cosmic intellect.<sup>106</sup> Let me point out that the coherence between the various components of the double sonship

can be discerned also in Abulafia's discussions: God, the Agent Intellect, and the mystic as actualizing his intellect, are all part of an intellectual continuum. No doubt that the 'Father', namely God, is an intellectual entity and as such it is exemplary for the Son, the Agent Intellect, which in its turn is exemplary for the sons, namely for the human actualized intellects.

Let me adduce one of the very few texts where a medieval figure defines himself, though not in a totally explicit manner, as a Messiah. In his commentary on his own prophetic book *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, part of which was discussed in the first section of this chapter, Abulafia reports about a prophecy, namely a revelation he had, in a third person form. The following passage is a translation of a rather dense and obscure text, and we shall address in our analysis only some of the aspects pertinent to our topic:

And He said that the *Mashiyah* will arrive imminently, for he is already born. And he continued to discourse on the entire subject, and said 'I am that individual.' And by [means of] the 'seven luminous windows' he indicated the secret of the seven names, and that who runs is [tantamount to] the order and the permutator. It is He who speaks to Raziel and informs him that he is the seventh of the prophets.<sup>107</sup> At that time he was commanded to go to Rome and do all that he did, and it is clear that this secret was revealed to him. And he said that during the fortieth year this matter returned to him and he was shown the image of a 'Son of a King', anointed for Kingship, and he is the one well known. His secret is the form of *BQM*, the form of *ShDY*, the Name of Sufficient Power, and his secret name, in the '*AL-BM* [method]<sup>108</sup> is *YSSh YSSh* . . . For forty years Israel was in gloom; light and darkness, day and night, two, four, the retribution of the limbs, Raziel ben Shmuel is familiar with the blessing and the curse, is acquainted<sup>109</sup> with the bastard 'Son of the menstruating woman', [namely] he is acquainted with Jesus, [and] Muhammad, the Measure of the Moon in the Frontier of the Sun. Upon them he will build and quarter, in the triangle and from his words you will comprehend wonders, and the honey he gives to taste is the 'wisdom of the Names'.<sup>110, 111</sup>

Raziel stands no doubt for Abulafia's first name because, as already seen above, its consonants amount to 246 like Abraham. The first 'He' stands either for the Agent Intellect or for God who dictated the prophetic text that has been interpreted by Abulafia, presumably also with the help of the source of his revelation. There is one important point worth mentioning here that concerns, again, the affinity between mystical biography and messianic activity. As pointed out above, the most important year in

Abulafia's literary career and messianic activities was 1280, the year of his journey to the Pope and the writing of some of his major works, including *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* and *Sitrei Torah* as well as some of his prophetic treatises.<sup>112</sup> It is interesting to note that all this occurred in Abulafia's fortieth year. According to some Jewish traditions (and Abulafia himself attests to this effect in his writings), this is the year that a person reaches the height of his intellectual capabilities. Indeed, I assume that the phrase *ben ha-Melekh*, namely the 'Son of the king', stands for the human intellect, often referred to by Abulafia as a son, while the king is the Agent Intellect. So, for example, we learn from a passage belonging to ecstatic Kabbalah that God told the Kabbalist, either Abulafia – an assumption that seems to be quite plausible – or one of his followers, using a variety of biblical verses:

'Thou art my son, this day I have begotten you'<sup>113</sup> and also<sup>114</sup> 'See now that I, even I am he', and the secret [of these verses] is the union of the power – i.e. the supernal divine power, called the sphere of prophecy – with the human power, and it is also said: 'I I'.<sup>115, 116</sup>

The formula 'I am' represented in the above text by the 'I I' which may be translated as 'I am I' is obviously a reference to an experience of mystical union, reminiscent of Sufi ecstatic exclamations.<sup>117</sup> Its appearance in the context of the classical verse concerning the concept of sonship is crucial: the father and the son are not two entities that may never be identified, but rather two modes of existence of an entity that is essentially speaking homogeneously: both God as father or the Agent Intellect as an intellect, and as son, namely the human intellect.

The resort to the verse from Ps. 2.7 at the beginning of the quotation is symptomatic of many of the scholarly discussions of the adoption-theme in ancient sacral royalty ideology.<sup>118</sup> However, while the ancient king is understood to be the corporeal offspring of a divine power, Abulafia and his school would emphasize the intellectual affinity between the higher and the lower entities. It is a spiritual birth or a second birth that is reflected here, allegorically portraying the emergence of the human intellect *in actu* and its mystical union with the supernal intellect, an event that is not only eschatological, in the psychological sense, but that also implies a form of intellectual *theosis*. It does not seem coincidental that precisely in the fortieth year of his life Abulafia embarked on these extraordinarily intensive activities. Here we can feel how a certain period of life can be considered from an intellectual as well as mystical standpoint as a time of critical development, as well as the beginning of vigorous messianic activity. From this perspective, Abulafia's biography can be seen as a model of the integration of an intense and extraordinary mystical life and adventurous

messianic activity, which included an attempt to meet with the Pope.<sup>119</sup> It is, therefore, quite plausible that in the writings of the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah a messianic process is understood to occur, inter alia, in the realm of the psychological as well as external events. It is important to point out the manner in which the ecstatic Kabbalist is referring to himself as the Messiah: he is using his proper name in gematria: *Razi'el* = 248 = 'Avraham, while the name of his father, Shmuel, is explicit. He also confesses that 'I am that individual' in the context of the discussion that the Messiah was already born.

Last but not least: he mentions the vision of the 'Son of a king', who is no other than Abulafia himself. This is an interesting instance of sonship, which is assumed by certain historical and messianic figures in the Middle Ages. On the basis of Abulafia's use of the traditional term *ben David* in order to point to the Messiah, as seen in one of the quotations above, there is no doubt that the 'Son of the king' is no other than the 'Son of David'. In other words, he experienced a vision in which he appears as the anointed one. From this last point of view, Abulafia is at the same time a prophet of his own messianic status and the Messiah himself. He does not hesitate here to use the first person form of discourse, though this is not his main form of expression. His explicit confession that he is the Messiah, already made at the beginning of the 1280s, therefore coincides with his attempt to see the Pope, and it adds further proof to the messianic nature of Abulafia's activity in Rome, itself triggered by a prior revelation that took place in Barcelona.

Let me now analyze a seminal passage in the ecstatic Kabbalist's commentary on a prophetic treatise, *Sefer ha-'Edut*, written soon after 1280 and dealing with Abulafia's willingness to endanger himself by going to visit the Pope despite the latter's warnings against the Kabbalist's insistence to see him:

And the meaning of his saying: 'Rise and lift up the head of my anointed one' [*meshihiy*] – refers to the life of the souls. 'And on the New Year and in the Temple' – it is the power of the souls. And he says: 'Anoint him as a king' – rejoice him like a king with the power of all the names. 'For I have anointed him as a king over Israel'<sup>120</sup> – over the communities [of] Israel, that is the commandments. And his saying: 'and his name I have called *Shadday*, like My name'<sup>121</sup> – whose secret is *Shadday* like My Name, and understand all the intention. Likewise his saying, 'He is I and I am He' and it cannot be revealed more explicitly than this. But the secret of the 'corporeal name' is the 'Messiah of God'. Also 'Moses will rejoice', which he has made known to us, and which is the five urges, and I called the corporeal name as

well ... now Razi'el started to contemplate the essence of the Messiah and he found it and recognized it and its power, and designated it as David, the son of David, whose secret is 'He will reign' [*Yimelokh*].<sup>122</sup>

On the one hand, this is one of the most messianic of Abulafia's descriptions and one of the most mystical statements found in Jewish mysticism on the other. As in many other instances, here he combines two types of discourse: the Ashkenazi linguistic discourse based upon gematria, and the philosophical discourse. Between the single quotation marks I have put those phrases I conceive to be part of the original book that is commented on by Abulafia himself, which presumably consists of the revelations he received. All the other parts of the text constitute Abulafia's interpretation.

Let me first address the nature of the 'original' statements, namely those that constitute the prophetic book before their interpretation by its author: Abulafia received a series of imperatives, which probably dealt with the installation and anointment of the Messiah in the Temple on the Jewish New Year. This scenario seems to be part of a detailed revelation, which took place in Italy at the end of 1279 or 1280, though the initial revelation, which triggered his messianic activity, occurred a little less than a decade beforehand in Barcelona, as we shall see immediately below. The period around 1280 was the most intense and original phase in Abulafia's literary creativity and it may have something to do with his then reaching the age of 40 and expecting dramatic changes to take place in the context of his intended visit to the Pope.

Let me start by deciphering the details of the cascade of gematrias used here. There are four strings of gematrias, and I shall start with the first three.

- (a) 869: 'the head of my anointed one' (*rosh meshihiy*) = 'the life of the souls' (*hayyei ha-nefashot*) = 'and on New Year's' (*u-ve-Rosh ha-Shanah*) = 'and in the Temple' (*u-ve-Beit ha-Miqdash*) = 'the power of the souls' (*koah ha-nefashot*) = 'anoint him as king' (*timshehehu le-melekh*) = '[God] may He be praised will anoint him as king' (*timshehehu ka-melekh*) = 'by the power of all the names' (*mi-koah kol ha-shemot*).
- (b) 541: 'Israel' (*Yisra'el*) = 'congregations' (*qehillot*) = 'the commandments' (*ha-mitzvot*).<sup>123</sup>
- (c) 703: 'The corporeal Name' (*ha-Shem ha-gashmiy*) = 'the anointed of the Name [or of God]' (*Mashiyah ha-Shem*) = 'Moses rejoiced' (*yismaḥ Mosheh*) = 'five urges' (*hamiyshah yetzariym*).

The first gematria string alludes to the connection between the appearance of the Messiah and spiritual development; the second alludes to the Agent

Intellect, which is the cause of this spiritual development; and the third alludes to the Messiah himself, who is identified with the Agent Intellect. In *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, we may learn about the identity of the Messiah: 'Begin to attach the three spiritual Divine names and afterwards attach the three material names of the patriarchs.'<sup>124</sup> Abulafia refers here to the parallel between the corporeal names – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and the spiritual ones – 'Elohim, 'Adonay and YHWH.<sup>125</sup> Further on in the passage cited, Abulafia writes that 'the ends of the names of the patriarchs in reverse order are *bq'm*, which in the system of 'a't b'sh (i.e. inverted letters) is the consonants of *Shadday* [ShDY]; 'And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the name 'El *Shadday*'.<sup>126</sup> In the passage from *Sefer ha-'Edut*, he speaks about the 'material name', which must be an allusion to one of the patriarchs as well as to Shadday, which is likewise associated with the patriarchs.

Let me turn to the last sentence in the quotation from *Sefer ha-'Edut*, which is one of the most important sentences for the present study: the reference to 'David ben David'. To the best of my knowledge, this is a phrase unparalleled in Jewish literature; though Ben David is a common designation for the Messiah, I am unaware of a designation of the Messiah as David, the son of David. It should be observed that the consonants of this phrase, when written in a plene manner in Hebrew, namely *DaViYD* amount to 100 like *Yimelokh*, this being the fourth string of gematria. This may point to the mythical aspect of the passage: the Messiah will be a king. However, the repetition of the name David may point to the similarity or even identity of the two Davids, in the vein of the affinity between the supernal and the human intellects. This intellectual affinity is, most probably, the significance of what Abulafia understood as the essence of the Messiah and his strength. In other words, though the apocalyptic Messiah is described regularly as a source of power, magical and militant altogether, the esoteric strength is understood to be on the intellectual level. This allegorical reading of the eschatological terminology of mythical or apocalyptic Messianism is found in an anonymous treatise, written in my opinion under the influence of ecstatic Kabbalah:

The great salvation that is the true salvation and the perfect redemption which after it will never again be an exile, will transpire through the agency of two angels . . . One is called Elijah and the other – the 'Son of David'. 'Elijah' is an allusion to the intellectual power whereas 'Son of David' alludes to the prophetic power . . . the power of prophecy, that is allegorically rendered as the Son of David, will not indwell unless all the bodily powers and all the instincts will be terminated, in other words will be

subjugated and acquiescent to the powers of intellect and prophecy.<sup>127</sup>

Elsewhere in this book the intellectual influx is described as 'the redeeming angel' that dwells in men, using the messianic verse from Isa. 11.2.<sup>128</sup> The anonymous Kabbalist interprets elements found in popular eschatology, the arrival of Elijah before the Messiah, represented here by ben David, in a spiritual sense. Elijah represents the intellectual achievement, while the messianic stage is interpreted as a revelatory one, the power of prophecy. Let us compare this sequel to specific events in Abulafia's spiritual life. In 1286, he confesses that:

at the time I was of the age of 'EL<sup>129</sup> years in Barcelona, I was awakened by God from my sleep, and I studied *Sefer Yetzirah* with its commentaries. And the hand of God was upon me and I wrote books of wisdom based upon them, and wonderful books of prophecy, and my soul was alive within, and the spirit of the Lord moved my heart, and the spirit of holiness was raised in me. And I saw wonderful and terrible visions, by means of wonders and signs, and in general, there were about me spirits of zealousness . . . Therefore, I was like a blind man for *T'V* years, and Satan stood on my side to confuse me. And I was driven for *Y'H* years by the visions I saw to fulfill the words of the Torah and bring the second curse to a conclusion, until God granted me some knowledge. And God was with me as my aid from the year 'EL until the year *M'H* to safeguard me from any trouble. And at the beginning of the year 'EliYaH the prophet, God desired me and brought me into the holy sanctuary.<sup>130</sup>

The manner in which Abulafia chooses to describe his spiritual career is remarkable. He resorts to several forms of divine name in order to point to phases in his life. The revelation in Barcelona is described as taking place in the year 'El. 'El means 31, which may point to the fact that the first revelation Abulafia had in Barcelona took place late in 1270 or early in the Jewish year of 5031. 'El is, however, also the name of God. Thus, in Hebrew the phrase 'Ben 'El Shanah' is ambiguous by purpose: it means 'I am of the age of 31', but also 'I am the Son of God'. That Abulafia could have in mind 'EL as a distinct unit in addition to its gematria value is clear from his further resort to divine names. It seems therefore that what we may have here is a hint as to when Abulafia likely started to conceive of himself as the Son of God.

This is followed by a period of intense creativity, when he wrote books of different sorts and had revelations, but was also visited by negative visions.

This period lasted 15 years, to which he refers in the ordinary manner, by the letters *T'V*, which amount to 15, but also in an alternative manner *YH*, which amount to the same period of 15 years. However, the second form of reference constitutes a divine name, *Yah*. He then goes on to claim that God helped him until the year 1285, and he refers to this year by *MH*, which amounts to 45. I assume that in this case he also resorts to a form of divine name: the plene spelling of the Tetragrammaton amounts to 45. This plene spelling was common knowledge and has been used also by Abulafia himself, as seen above.<sup>131</sup> Then he turns to the year in which he writes, 1286, and uses the form '*ELYH*', related to the shorter form of the name Elijah the prophet, which is a double divine name: '*El* and *Yah*. Thus, we may assume that Abulafia not only assumed for himself theophoric names, and gave theophoric designations to some of his students, but that he also portrayed God's interventions in his spiritual life as following a scheme organized by units of letters that constitute divine names. Moreover, the entire passage is permeated by the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton. Therefore, it is not only the angel and the prophet that are theophoric, but also the rhythm of personal history of the Messianic figure.

In another prophetic book, Abulafia describes an experience he had in a much more direct manner:

And when I, *Zekharyahu ben Ma'aliy Ma'alumi'el ben YHWH, YHWYHW*, who is reciting the name *YHWH*, heard the words of *YHWH*, My Lord and the Lord of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, His servants, I fell on my face on the ground and my heart was [both] afraid and joyful. And *YHWH* raised me up in order to praise the name of his Glory, in privacy and in public.<sup>132</sup>

Indubitably *Zekharyahu* is a theophoric cognomen for Abulafia's first name, Abraham, since both names amount to the same numerical valence 248. The term *Zekharyahu* means 'the one who recites – or remembers – the name of God' and it is explained immediately afterwards when the recitation of the divine name is mentioned. This is a technical type of recitation, intended to achieve a mystical experience that culminates with the sense that someone becomes the Son of God. This is not recognition of the hidden nature of man but the actualization of something found in potential, namely the human intellect.

The precise meaning of the words *Ma'aliy Ma'alumi'el* is less transparent, but they amount to 377, a figure identical to the name of Abulafia's father, *Shmu'el*. However, what seems to be exceptional is the explicit description he uses for himself as the Son of *YHWH YHWYHW*. I cannot explain why Abulafia adopts these forms, but there can be little doubt that the doublets are evident in both the forms *Ma'aliy Ma'alumi'el*,

and the *YHWH YHWYHW*. There is an inner repetition of units in each syntagm, and thus a similarity between the two syntagms. Thus, a parallelism between the unit that represents the proper name of his father, *Shmu'el*, and the two forms of the Tetragrammaton emerges, which is important for understanding the second occurrence of the term *Ben*. If in the first case we may assume that Abulafia conceived himself as the corporeal son of a human father, he then also becomes the spiritual son of the divine power represented by the Tetragrammaton. At least in this context this description is part of an interactive situation, in which God is portrayed as revealing Himself to the mystic and as encouraging him to spread the glory of the divine name. In any case, this text is reminiscent of the phrase used in the same period *Ben 'El*, discussed above.

Let me attempt to explain the manner in which Abulafia understood his becoming the salvific son of God: by reciting the divine name, which is a major component of his mystical technique, a mystic is able to actualize his potential intellect and become, like God or the Agent Intellect, an intellect *in actu*. The human intellect emerges as the result of the absorption by the human intellectual capacity of the intellectual influx coming from above. The mystic as such becomes quintessentially an intellect and thus a Son of God. This sonship means at the same time the redemption of the individual's potential intellect, and his possible transformation into a redeemer of the other, what is ordinarily called a Messiah. Abulafia definitely believed that he was both. What is important here is the fact that Abulafia refers to the mission of disseminating the gnosis of the divine name in public, and this is one of his statements pointing to an exoteric or even propagandistic activity.<sup>133</sup> In other words, Abulafia has interpreted R. Nehemiah's text dealing with divine names, with Elijah, Metatron, *Yaho'el*, and with redemption, by recasting the angelic themes in noetic terms that stem mainly from medieval Neo-Aristotelian worldviews.

The most conspicuous expression of this intellectualistic approach to the term Messiah is found in Abulafia's *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, his commentary on the book of Exodus, a book written in Messina in 1289. There he describes three levels of people: the righteous, the pious and the prophets. The souls of the latter, which are also the highest human category, and of the Kabbalists who resort to some form of mystical technique that involves actualization by breathing and recitations of the divine names, will not

be impregnated from the above-mentioned son that is called Messiah and the redeemer of the blood and the deliverer of the [human] attributes, and the powers, and spirits, and the souls, but if she [the soul] will adorn herself as a bride burning of strong desire, and extreme will, with volition and craving and great

fondness and increasing love, higher than all her powers, in order to cleave to the power that is emanated upon her from her lover.<sup>134</sup>

The son in this passage is the intellectual hypostatic Messiah, which is the cosmic Agent Intellect, understood in many of Abulafia's discussions, as we have seen above, as Metatron. The human soul that prepares to receive the impact of the supernal power is described in feminine terms, and my assumption is that after the reception of the power it is then transformed into a masculine entity, the son of the Agent Intellect. This is a daring passage, which demonstrates that Abulafia was not reluctant about resorting to a concept of hypostatic son as indicating the Messiah, close as this view may be to Christianity. It seems that this passage describes a devotion to the supernal Messiah that is an impersonal Son of God, and is none other than the Neo-Aristotelian intellectual emanation separated from matter. The practice that is used in order to generate the impregnation is identical to Abulafia's mystical technique. It is important to stress the affinity between sonship and redemption, which is quintessential in some of the discussions articulated by the ecstatic Kabbalist. Indeed, the hypostatic/intellectual status of the Messiah is evident in a much earlier treatment of the Messiah in one of Abulafia's writings:

the term *Mashiyah* is equivocal, [designating] three [different] matters; first and foremost the truly Agent Intellect is called the *Mashiyah*<sup>135</sup> . . . and the man who will forcibly bring us out of the exile from under the rule of the nations due to his strong contact with the Agent Intellect – he will [also] be called *Mashiyah*. And the material human hylic intellect is called *Mashiyah*, and is the redeemer and has influence over the soul and over all elevated spiritual powers. It can save the soul from the rule of the material kings and their people and their powers, the lowly bodily desires. It is a commandment and an obligation to reveal this matter to every wise man of the wise ones of Israel in order that he may be saved because there are many things that oppose the opinions of the multitude of the Rabbis, and even more differ from the views of the vulgus.<sup>136</sup>

The Hebrew phrase translated as 'due to his strong contact' is *me-rov hidabbeqo*. Here, as in the quotation from *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, it is conspicuous that the term, intense cleaving, has explicit messianic overtones. Or, to put it differently: the human Messiah may be conceived of as the perfect philosopher and identical to the intellectual ruler of the Greek political tradition, especially the Platonic one. The double register of Abulafia's eschatology remained conspicuous long after the charged year of

1280. In his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, written in 1289 in Messina, he explains the two levels of meaning as follows:

'Enosh whose secret is 'asino which means in Italian an ass and it is said<sup>137</sup> 'Extol him who rides upon the clouds, *Yah* is his name.' And it is said further on the Messiah that his secret is *Yah* . . . as he is a pauper riding upon an ass and upon the 'donkey-foal [*'ayr*] the son of the she-asses', and he is a 'youth, the son of letters'<sup>138</sup>, and its name is Sandalfon and Metatron, and it is called *ya'ar* [wood], so that he will guide the small city [*'iyr*] . . . and he is called *na'ar* because he guides many cities, namely many bodies.<sup>139</sup>

This is a rather cryptic passage which juxtaposes the different form of activity of two archangels: Metatron and Sandalfon, as pointing, respectively, to the intellectual guidance and the corporeal one. Metatron is allegorized by the *na'ar*, an epitheton of this angel in late antiquity Jewish literature, but also as the son of letters. This is an interesting vision, which assumes that the intellectual realm, Metatron as an intellectual entity, is derived from the linguistic one. The words *Ya'ar*, '*ayr*' and '*iyr*' amount in gematria to 280, which is the gematria of Sandalfon. The Hebrew consonants of *ha-mashiyah* amount to *be-Yah Shemo*, namely 363. Last, but not least, '*enosh*' or '*asino*' amount to 357 while *mashiyah* amounts to 358. Such forms of speculation show that the superiority of the linguistic over the intellectual realm is well documented in Abulafia's writings.<sup>140</sup> However, it should be stressed that just as his theory of sonship is a rather universal one, since it is predicated on an act of intellection, the linguistic discussions also have conspicuous universalistic propensities, as Abulafia resorts to many languages in order to decode the secrets he is interested in. In the specific quotation discussed here the use of Italian exemplifies this, and we shall return to these two aspects of universalization later on in this chapter.

This may appear to be a rather audacious concept, but it is less so if we remember that Abulafia conceived himself to be even higher than Moses,<sup>141</sup> and that one of his other prophetic books belonging to the same cycle is called *Sefer Berit Hadashah*, namely the 'Book of the New Covenant'. Elsewhere in his prophetic books he asserts that a 'new religion', *dat hadashah*, has been revealed, which is a religiosity based on the knowledge of the divine name.<sup>142</sup> More straightforwardly he wrote in *Sefer ha-Haftarah*, in the name of God:

I innovate a new Torah within the holy nation, which is my people Israel. My honorable Name is like a new Torah, and it has not been explicated to my people since the day I hid my face from them.<sup>143</sup>

An important issue in our context is the possible, and in my opinion, the quite plausible influence of Christology on Abulafia's messianology. As I attempted to suggest elsewhere, awareness of the Christian views on the topic is evident in Abulafia.<sup>144</sup> In his early commentary on the secrets allegedly found in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* entitled *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*, which is basically extant in Latin, he said about the Christians 'they called Wisdom son and related it to the [divine] son'.<sup>145</sup> It should be mentioned that according to other views of Abulafia and his followers, the real son is the human intellect.<sup>146</sup> Yet the occurrence of the New Year as an important date for a form of installation of the Messiah as king is reminiscent of the Near Eastern ritual of the royal man.<sup>147</sup> It is quite difficult to describe Abulafia's views in the regular theological terms used in Christian theology: his approach is not a simple dynamic monarchianism but something closer to what is designated in Christian theology as a 'modalistic monarchianism'.

Again, another passage of Abulafia's seems to be similar to ancient traditions, which were presumably part of the stream of traditions I mentioned above. In *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* we find a description of the mystical experience, which reverberates later on in other kabbalistic books:

It will appear to him as if the entire body, from his head to his feet, has been anointed with anointing oil, and he will be the Anointed of God, and his messenger and be called the angel of God. The intention is that his name shall be like the name of his master, *Shadday*, which I have called Prince of the Face.<sup>148</sup>

Unlike the numerous instances in Jewish literature in which the couple of entities possess the name of God and the theophanic mediator, here the situation is different. The couple involved here is the human mystic and his master, the cosmic and impersonal Son, known as Agent Intellect. The latter has been described in many cases in his writings as Metatron, especially in *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, written in the same year in Rome, where the passage of R. Nehemiah has been cited. Rather than a theophanic situation, this is an apotheotic description in which the mystic is transformed during his experience so that he is united, in an intellectual union, with the theophanic mediator. In other words, the Abulafia that assumes to himself the status of Son of God, a personal sonship, also emphasizes the importance of the impersonal Son that engenders the personal one. The existence of the concept of the theophanic and theophoric mediator creates the condition for an apotheotic experience. In our case, this is not only a pure intellectual union but one during which the mystic acquires two new types of status: he becomes an angel of God which in this specific context means an emissary of the divine realm, and thus he becomes a messianic figure. In addition to acquiring these qualities, he undergoes a form of corporeal transformation,

which is represented by the feeling of delight and of being anointed. Though this is not a first-person confession, it seems plausible that Abulafia is nevertheless describing something he underwent. Yet, I also discern in the above description the influence of an Enochic tradition dealing with the act of unction that is related to the process of angelification. In *2 En.* 22.8 the apotheosis is related to unction and to some form of adoption since Enoch becomes the Son of Man:

And the Lord said to Michael, 'Go, and extract Enoch from [his] earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory. And so Michael did, just as the Lord had said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference.'<sup>149</sup>

This passage is part of a larger discussion in which Enoch describes his own apotheosis and his becoming a glorious entity who constantly sees the face of God and receives all the secrets from God. In other words, he becomes a Prince of the Face. Since I have not found the issue of unction in the Hebrew material, which preserved Enochic traditions prior to Abulafia, it may be that we have here an instance of external influence, stemming from material that was circulating as part of the stream of traditions mentioned in the Introduction. In the next chapter I shall elaborate on the possible impact of the pseudepigraphic composition on the book of the *Zohar*. I should stress the messianic tone, which accompanies the transformation into an angel, especially on the basis of the messianic background of the identification of Enoch with the 'Son of Man' already in *1 En.* 9.17-19; 71.<sup>150</sup> I should further mention that in a few instances in Abulafia's writings, the angel Michael occurs together with Metatron.<sup>151</sup>

Last but not least: this experience is achieved by a technique that consists basically in recitations of the divine names. As such, the angelification process described here is reminiscent of the angelification of the person who receives the tradition of the divine name, according to a passage of R. Eleazar of Worms that was discussed in the previous chapter. In general it is possible to find in Abulafia an emphasis upon the similarity between God and Metatron based upon sharing the name *Shadday*.<sup>152</sup> As seen above, Abulafia transferred the medieval interpretation of the rabbinic statement, 'His name is like that of his master' from the God/angel couple, to the mystic/theophoric mediator couple. However, this does not mean that he obliterated the importance of the first and authoritative view. By his

transference, Abulafia created a hierarchy of three entities, rather than two, all called by the same name, and they are God, Metatron and the mystic. In a way, this view is reminiscent of the passage analyzed in the previous chapter dealing with *we-'Elohiy*, *Yaho'el*, *'Eliyah*. It seems that the awareness of a triple hierarchy, reminiscent of that found in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary of the Seventy Names of Metatron*, analyzed in Chapter 2, is found in a passage from *Sefer ha-'Ot*:

And the end of delivery and the day of redemption has arrived  
 But no one is paying attention to this issue to-day to know it.  
 There is no redemption but by means of the name of *YHWH*  
 And His redemption is not for those who do not request it  
 In accordance to His Name.  
 This is why I, *Zekharyahu*  
 The destroyer of the building  
 And the builder of the destruction  
 Has written this small book,  
 By the name of *'Adonay* the small [name]  
 In order to disclose in it the secret of *YHWH* the great [name].<sup>153</sup>

The theophoric *Zekharyahu* sees himself as acting under the impact of the 'small *'Adonay*', clearly a reference to the expression the 'small *YHWH*', which is understood as pointing to Metatron, or *Yaho'el* in this prophetic writing, in order to reveal the secret of the 'Great *YHWH*'. Crucial as this statement is for understanding this book, it is not so clear what the relationship between the small name and the great one is. However, an analysis of a book written by R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Ḥarar, one of Abulafia's students in Messina, entitled *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, reveals that the name *'Adonay* represents in this kabbalistic school the power that governs the time of the exile, while the Tetragrammaton rules in the time of redemption.<sup>154</sup> In R. Nathan's book, like in his master's *Sefer ha-'Ot*, the rule of the two divine names in some historical periods is portrayed as exclusive, and this is the reason for the use of terms for destruction and building: the destruction of the exile is the building of the redemption. According to these texts, Abulafia's self-awareness of his status as a son is to be understood as depending on his assumption of the existence of a supernal son, which pre-exists the birth of the human candidate to sonship, who is 'adopted' if he strives to attain a prophetic or ecstatic experience, and we may therefore speak about a 'double sonship'. Therefore, we may discern, at least from the phenomenological point of view, a pattern that is shared by Philo, Paul and the ecstatic Kabbalist. This affinity is not necessarily the result of historical influence, though the first two may indeed reflect the impact of the former by the latter, but insofar as the third is concerned it may well be that we

have here the result of a similar cultural and intellectual structure: the impact of the Greek and Hellenistic worldview that emphasizes the cosmic, impersonal and the intellectual elements conceived of as son has been conjugated with the Jewish discussion of the personal sonship.

Last but not least: the process of angelification achieved by recitation of the divine name, which induces some form of assimilation of the mystic to the higher entities, is evident in an interesting passage from Abulafia's commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed* entitled *Ḥayyei ha-Nefesh*:

you recite the names by your mouth. However, you must sanctify them and honor them, for they are the kings of the existence and the angels of God [or of the name] that are sent to you in order to raise you up, higher and higher . . . 'so that all the nations of the Lord shall fear you for the Name of the Lord is called upon you'.<sup>155, 156</sup>

Unlike the theory of R. Eleazar of Worms, which has been described in the previous chapter, which assumes identity between the divine image and the divine name as part of the very structure of man, for Abulafia the divine name should be pronounced by the mystic, as we have already seen above in the passage from *Sefer ha-'Ot*. Man becomes a Son of God through some form of adoption, in fact by adhering to the intellectual influx descending all the time, an influx sometimes also described as a son, and this event depends upon man's intellectual activity, and not on the mystical presence of an image within him that is a divine name. Or, in other words, the question is what is the precise meaning of the 'nation', whom all the other 'nations' will fear? The identity is described as construed here not by means of the intellectual activity, as in many other cases seen above, but by means of the recitation of the divine names, or combinations of their letters. In my opinion, this type of activity is not nomian, namely it is not part of the rabbinic ritual that was conceived of as binding most of the Jewish communities in the post-biblical period, but a special mystical technique, which I describe as anomian, which may be used, in principle, by anyone, Jews or others. Though the letters of those names are indeed in Hebrew, a special and specific language, I assume that Abulafia, who was ready to preach his mystical message in public and also to Christians, would not prevent gentiles from resorting to his mystical techniques.

Let me now address Abulafia's attitude toward the traditional narratives related to the apotheotic figures of Enoch and Elijah. It is quite plausible that in the biblical, pseudepigraphic, Talmudic and rabbinic traditions, the ascent on high was conceived of as concrete and was mainly connected to the body of the ascendant. However in Jewish philosophy and in Abulafia, the corporeal ascent has been obliterated, providing a change in the axis of

values which gravitated around the spiritual elevation in lieu of the bodily one. This shift creates a quandary insofar as the biblical discourse is concerned. Without explicitly attempting to remove the mythical aspects of the biblical narratives, the medieval sources, which addressed these issues, seem uneasy with the ancient description. Rather subtly, they distanced themselves from the plain sense of the Scriptures, as we learn from one passage of Abulafia's:

There is no need to ask us difficult questions concerning the issue of Enoch and Elijah, since no one knows the essence of this issue. However, if you will say that the tradition testifies according to its plain sense and even the gentiles believe that they will descend from heaven at the time of [the advent of] the savior, we shall not debate it. But we shall say to him that this issue did not happen to a part of mankind but to two persons of the species. And perhaps it was for the purpose of a great thing, but it is quite strange since in the human species there were much nobler individuals than those two, according to the testimony of the [holy] books and nevertheless no one said about them that they live that kind of life like those two, as the tales of the multitude tells about these issues. Thus they [the stories] will be obliterated because of their being in a small minority and we shall not believe anyone who brings a proof from them, as it is not an intellectual proof but an imaginary one.<sup>157</sup>

In a subtle manner, Abulafia distances himself from the more common belief in the plain sense of corporeal ascent on high. For him, the body and its limbs, and, in my opinion, though implicitly, also the commandments performed by means of the body, were not the main organ for imitating God, as seen in some classical forms of Judaism, but rather the intellect was, as it is an entity that does not move from one place to another. The Son is therefore interpreted accordingly as the cosmic intellect, which is always active and omnipresent, and constitutes the representative of God as an intellect. We may speak here about an exchange of qualities between the Greek concepts of the Agent Intellect on the one hand, and the Jewish theories of sonship and angelology, on the other hand. While the former supplied the conceptual framework the latter supplied the particular language, which has been strongly interpreted. This synthesis is not a simple bringing together of the different conceptual worlds, but creates a theory that reflects some concepts on the more abstract and esoteric layer, and their exoteric expressions, in both the written form and in the revelations, in their linguistic and imaginary forms. Unlike the earlier instances of the exchange of qualities, like in Philo's vision of the Logos and

Son, or in Paul's discussions of Logos and Christ, Abulafia's synthesis was done in Hebrew, namely the language in which the traditional terms have been formulated, not in that of the interpreting conceptual grid.

### 3. Abulafia's numerical interpretation of the Trinity

As we have seen above, and in some of the sources to be discussed in the next section, Abulafia evinces a strong proclivity for interiorized religiosity. This 'spiritualization' of Judaism means that he interpreted some important aspects of this religion as reflecting, on their exoteric level, an inner process that can be understood better by resorting to philosophical psychology. In principle, this approach was expanded also to other Jewish canonical texts, like the Talmud and Midrash, in some cases the views of the book of *Bahir*, and to a certain extent to language in general. Even the Christian Trinity could be understood, according to Abulafia, by resorting to the Aristotelian triad of intellect, intellection and intelligibilia, as we shall see below. This is also the case with his numerical interpretations, which he applies first and foremost to the Hebrew Bible, but in some instances he also does so with the post-biblical material. In this section I would like to draw attention to a discussion of the three aspects of the Christian Trinity, understood by means of the manipulation of numerical valences of letters that constitute some of the names of these divine persons. In his 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, the ecstatic Kabbalist wrote about the first *sefirah* called in *Sefer Yetzirah* by the name *Ruah ha-Qodesh*, the Holy Spirit, as follows:

The first, which is one [*'aleph*], is the Holy Spirit, and was called one *sefirah*, and together with the second [the letter *Bet*] one, their meaning will be '*AV*' [*'AB* = father]. And from the third [figure] up to the tenth [figure, when all of them are added] mean *Ben* [42], and their meaning altogether is '*Adonay*' [= 65], and whoever thinks otherwise is cutting the branches and he will be accounted for ... and the secret of *Ha-'AV*, *Ha-Ben* [65 = the Father, the Son], amount to *Ben David Ba'* [69 = the son of David comes] and 'he brings the prophecy [*ha-nevu'ah* = 69] in his hand'. And indeed 'he is the son' [*hu' ha-ben* = 69] and 'behold he is the father' [*ha-'av hino* = 69].<sup>158</sup>

It is obvious that the three entities mentioned here are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, what the ecstatic Kabbalist attempts to do is to show how the procession from the Holy Spirit, to the Father, and then to the Son, is not a matter of a theological tenet – the order of the persons in this discussion is nothing like Christian orthodoxy – but reflects some form of numerical order. Letters in Hebrew have a double meaning: as linguistic

units they form words, and as figures they add up to numbers. Thus, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet points to the Holy Spirit according to *Sefer Yetzirah*, where the phrase *Sefirah 'Ahat* is understood by Abulafia as 'number one'. When the second letter *Bet* is added to the first one, the word '*AV*' emerges, namely Father. Then, when the letters from three to ten are added, the figure 52 emerges, that is *Ben*, son. Thus, the idea is that within the ten *sefirot*, namely the three first letter/numbers, the Trinity is found. This Trinity should be understood as a unity, and any separation between them is conceived of as being heretical. When the definite forms of the Father and the Son, in Hebrew characters, are calculated *ha'-Av ha-Ben* they amount to 65, which is the numerical value of the divine name '*Adonay*', spelled elliptically, without the *vav*. Having construed the word *ha'-Av* together with *ha-Ben*, he changes the order of the letters *ha'-Av* to *Ba'*, and formulates the sentence 'the son of David comes' which amounts in gematria, like 'he is the son' and 'behold he is the father', to 69. This means that the Son comes, described in Jewish traditional terms as '*Ben David* comes', an explicit messianic statement, drawing on the Talmudic discussion found, for example, in *BT Yebbamot*, fol. 63b, or in the book of *Bahir*, is connected here to the son, though according to Abulafia, also to the father in some way. As we have seen above in the passages from Abulafia's commentaries on his prophetic books, it is he who is the subject of expressions that also occur here, like *Ben David*. The arrival of the messianic Son is related here to the renewal of prophecy, an issue that recurs in Abulafia's works written long before the passage above. Since the text under scrutiny here does not speak about the past, referring thus to the coming of Jesus, but about the present, or perhaps the future, and since we know that Abulafia conceived himself as both Messiah and prophet on the one hand, and as a Son of God on the other, as we have seen above, it turns out that there are good chances that the hidden topic of the discussion is the arrival of the Holy Spirit to Abulafia himself and his sonship. Indeed, the book from which the above passage has been quoted is the most autobiographical among his writings, and most of what we know about his life is derived from various parts of this book.

However, this personal interpretation of the passage should be understood as part of a continuous present that is characteristic of Abulafia's esoteric thought. His esoteric-spiritualistic interpretations are atemporal, since they reflect intellectual processes taking place, in principle, all the time, and Abulafia conceives himself as part of this ideal spiritual life. Thus, though personal vis-à-vis Abulafia, it is impersonal at the same time, since he conceived himself not only as someone who redeemed himself, but also as someone that taught others how to redeem themselves. In terms of sonship, Abulafia's systems cannot assume the existence of just one divine

Son that occupies the place of the Son of God, like in Christianity, but assumes that an experience of sonship is not limited to the one and unique Messiah.

Let me draw attention to the specific structure of the passage above: though it is conspicuously built upon a series of gematrias, there can be no doubt that they occur in a sort of crescendo move: each unit is followed by another that is greater from the numerical point of view. Each later stage is construed as more complex than the earlier one, so that the later stages reflect some form of short narratives: the three are one unit, that should not be disrupted, or the son of David comes. However, the ascent of the numerical valences may reflect a view that is closer to a Pythagorean triangle, which serves as the basis of the calculation of the Tetraksys, a view found also elsewhere in Abulafia's writings. However, if we adopt the Pythagorean model to understand the text, the final sum of the earlier numbers is quintessential:  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ . What about the sum of all the numbers mentioned in the text we have translated above:  $1 + 3 + 52 + 65 + 69 = 190$ ? Is this number meaningful in Abraham Abulafia's writings? The answer is positive: this number is understood as pointing to the time of the end, as it is 'referred' in the gematria *Qetz* [end] = 190 = *Ne'elam* [hidden] = *penimi* [internal] = *Naqam* [revenge], a date that stands in Abulafia for 1290, the year of redemption.<sup>159</sup>

Let me point out that this treatment of sonship, as based on a numerical speculation, differs from the Neo-Aristotelian emphasis on the son as intellect, and from R. Nehemiah's more angelic and mythical approach. This is a third approach to sonship, which, though it appears only once in Abulafia's writings, still deserves attention in a survey like the present one. In any case, it is fascinating to see how Abulafia inserts the Christian Trinity within the ten *sefirot* of *Sefer Yetzirah*, understood as numbers, while a few years later, in his epistle *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, he attacked the theosophical Kabbalists on the grounds that theology was worse than the Christian Trinity. The answer may be that his critique addresses the ontological understanding of the sefirotic realm characteristic of the Kabbalists from the school of Nahmanides, while Abulafia conceived a Pythagorean approach as being theologically speaking, innocuous. The freedom of treating the Trinity in such an unorthodox manner, by subordinating the Father, and in fact also the Son, to the Holy Spirit as the representative of the transcendental One, tells us about the way in which Christian material has been absorbed. There was no fear of engaging it, even when such a discussion was not quite necessary; there was no derision, but a feeling that the Trinity was not more Christian than Neo-Aristotelian or Pythagorean.

In this context it is appropriate to address the relative proportion that this passage, and the underlying knowledge of Pythagoreanism, should be

given in understanding Abulafia's writings. When compared to Hasidei Ashkenaz and Neo-Aristotelianism, the Pythagorean themes are marginal, though not negligible. In the way I see the gist of Abulafia's writings, with their emphasis on Maimonidean references, the above discussion is a minor, though fascinating issue. It does not play a significant role in the picture that Abulafia wanted to present, just like the theosophical-theurgical themes that are adopted by the ecstatic Kabbalist mainly in order to show that he is acquainted with them, while he in fact subverts the original meaning as found in the writings of his contemporaries.

#### 4. Reverberations of Abulafia's views on sonship in ecstatic Kabbalah

Abulafia's discussions of intellectual sonship should be understood against the specific background of his messianic claims. Though in the Hebrew Bible concepts of sonship were not related to eschatological aspirations, it seems that at least in the Qumran literature, such a relation appears, and it becomes fundamental in the visions of divine sonship in Christianity. Whether the advent of the Christ was an eschatological event in the objective world or not is a matter of belief, and even the death of the Son of God did not dispense the messianic claims related to him. On the contrary: the nexus between sonship and Messianism remained a powerful component of the belief of billions since late antiquity. This is part of the belief that sonship confers on the divine Son extraordinary powers, healing or magical for example, the eschatological one being perhaps the most important.

Also, Abulafia's treatment of the topics of sonship and Messianism did not remain solely in his own writings, widespread as some of the books cited above were in manuscripts. The failure of his messianic mission did not detrimentally affect the discussions of the concept of the Son of God in kabbalistic writings written under his influence, and we shall see below statements found in the writings of some of his followers, who took over his intellectual-linguistic synthesis. In most of the following discussions I shall survey some additional examples of treatments of sonship found in Abulafia's school. Those analyses will show that even without the strong personal convictions of the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah, the gist of his thought can be easily detected, though there are divergences between the master and his followers. So, for example, an anonymous Kabbalist who was presumably a disciple of Abulafia writes that when someone 'adds *Yod* to 'Eloha you will find 'Eliyahu, who is *Yaho'el*, who is *Ben*'.<sup>160</sup> This succinct reference to the son may be seen as just a simple mathematical computation. However, when it appears in a kabbalistic school that placed a strong emphasis on the experiential approach to religion, I wonder if all that can be found here is mere gematria. Given that the name of the author is unknown,

it is difficult to speculate about the implications of the recourse to the concept of *Ben*, but to judge on the basis of Abulafia's appropriation of this concept for his own self-perception, the possibility that the anonymous author has seen himself as a son should not be ignored. Though the idea that this Kabbalist too conceived of himself as the Son of God may be mere conjecture, the fact that in this treatise a mystical technique is also described renders this possibility plausible. I shall revert to another passage from this treatise immediately below.

Let me turn to a much later echo of Abulafia's vision of intellectual sonship. Early in the nineteenth century, R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, a Lithuanian Kabbalist active in Jerusalem, who was fond of Abulafia's Kabbalistic thought, wrote as an interpretation of the verse from Exod. 4.22, as follows:

The son who is stored since the six days of creation ... is the secret of 'Israel, you are my firstborn son' whose secret is *sekhel ha-po'el*.<sup>161</sup>

In many of Abulafia's books the *gematria* of *Yisra'el* = 541 = *sekhel ha-po'el* is found, but it is evident especially in his *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, a book known to R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, and I assume that in this short sentence we have one more example of the influence of ecstatic Kabbalah on this prolific kabbalistic master.<sup>162</sup> Long after the emergence and the diffusion of the kabbalistic systems to which R. Menahem Mendel subscribed, especially the Lurianic one, it seems that Abulafia's theory of intellectual sonship remained influential in various circles. Especially interesting is the view of the pre-existence of the son. It may flow from the view of the pre-existence of the idea of Israel, according to some rabbinic statements, and then may have been transposed on the son. Nevertheless, the formulation as we have it deals expressly with the son's pre-existence. It should be pointed out that this Kabbalist is part of one of the most orthodox Jewish camps, the so-called *Mitnaggedim*, whose descendants built the neighborhood known as *Me'ah She'arim* in Jerusalem, a place where his writings are preserved and printed to this very day. This is just one more example of both the impact of the ecstatic Kabbalah on trends of kabbalistic thought up to the nineteenth century, and the openness of the biggest traditionalists among the kabbalists to concepts related to sonship.

More influential, however, was another passage stemming from ecstatic Kabbalah. Following Abraham Abulafia's understanding of the hypostatic Son as Metatron and separate intellect, as discussed above, one of his disciples, the anonymous author of a kabbalistic handbook *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*,<sup>163</sup> assesses that:

the secret of the word *Bereshit* is the Prince of the World and it is like a loved son of the father, who is always close to him and he is the first building<sup>164</sup> . . . the first two letters point to *Bar* and *Rab*, and also according to the path of combination without calculations point to a sublime topic *Bar Rab*. The meaning of *Bar* is son . . . since just as the son is close to the father, this son is close to his father. However, God forbid that you shall say that this affinity is because of consubstantiality between them, as it is the case of the father and son, but the existence of the one is distinguished from the existence of the other, because this son exists by dint of the existence of all the other creatures, but its rank is higher than the other and according to the love [God loves] him, he is called the son of the house,<sup>165</sup> not because there is any consubstantiality whatsoever like that of father and son. And understand that this was the error that some of the gentiles erred, and even some of the intellectuals could not withstand the subtlety of this issue, because the senses overcame them and they lost the meaning, and you should understand it. And according to these ranks it is said:<sup>166</sup> 'My son, my firstborn Israel', just as he called to the supernal Israel 'firstborn son', he [also] called so to the mundane Israel, and understand it by a great intellect, that in accordance to the closeness and rank the term Son was used, not otherwise, and do not be mistaken about it.<sup>167</sup>

Let me start with a comment on the nature of the twofold Israel. On high, this name points to the Son of God, and it serves as the Prince or the Angel of the World, a description that is characteristic in some sources, starting with the Talmud, of Metatron. It is the Son of God solely in an allegorical manner – as the term 'like' points to – since it does not point to an organic linkage between God and it, but rather is the closest entity to God as both are spiritual entities. The anonymous Kabbalist tries to differentiate between his theories of the son on the one hand, which is close to that of a philosopher like R. Levi ben Abraham (discussed below), and the Christian one on the other hand.<sup>168</sup> I assume that he subscribes, following Abulafia, to an intellectualistic vision of the supernal world that mediates between God and the sublunary world. Likewise, I assume that the secret of the supernal Israel has something to do with the gematria of *Yisra'el* as the Agent Intellect, *srkhel ha-po'el*, a numerical equivalence we discussed above. In my opinion, the lower Israel should also be understood in an intellectualistic manner, which means that in this case the true Israel is those people who actualized their intellect. In Abulafia's circle such an interpretation was quite plausible, as we learn from the manner in which *Knesset Yisra'el* has been

interpreted (see below). In any case, the basic pun in the passage above is that *Bar*, the son, is close to the father, represented by the word *Rav*, which means in fact master or teacher, the same consonants as *Bar*, but in an inverted order.

Let me turn to another treatise that has been ignored in modern scholarship. In the anonymous book '*Or ha-Menorah*, a work written in an Abulafian vein, probably early in the fourteenth century in the Byzantine Empire, we find the following passage: 'the power of speech, called the Rational Soul, which received the Divine influx, called *Knesset Yisra'el*, whose secret is the Agent Intellect, which is also the general influx, and which is the mother of the intellect of the world'.<sup>169</sup> Interestingly enough, this feminine understanding of *Knesset Yisra'el* may be consonant with theosophical Kabbalah, and run against the 'masculine' interpretation related to the Agent Intellect (if we insist on the politics of reading these texts according to the gender agenda, which is not necessary in this case). Nevertheless, we may assume that when the term 'mother' is used, the human intellect here below is implicitly a son.

In fact we have a spiritualistic understanding of Israel, different from the Christian theory of *Venus Israel*, but also equidistant from the biblical corporate personality, as the Christian theory is. In both cases, the organic vision of Jewry has been changed for a perception based upon a spiritual factor that defines Judaism. Moreover, the allegorical interpretation of the meaning of Jew, *Yehudi*, as pointing to one who confesses or acknowledges the importance of the name of God, points to a non-halakhic and in my opinion also much less particularistic definition of who is a Jew.<sup>170</sup> The lower Israel reflects the nature of the supernal Israel, namely the Agent Intellect, and both assume an intellectual nature. It should be mentioned that the interpretation of the first two letters of the book of Genesis – i.e. *BR* – as Son is found already before *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*, sometime at the end of the twelfth century in a passage by Alexander of Neckham.<sup>171</sup> In any case, the anonymous Kabbalist was anxious to distinguish his interpretation of the *Bar* from what he describes as a mistaken one, apparently a Christological understanding of the first words of the Hebrew Bible as referring to the Son. However, the irony of history is that this warning did not help and it is precisely this passage that found its way into Christian Kabbalah by means of a Latin translation prepared by the Sicilian convert to Christianity, known as Flavius Mithridates, around 1485. As Chaim Wirszubski pointed out, the passage from *Sefer ha-Tzeruf* had an impact on Pico della Mirandola's discussion on the Christological Son of God at the end of his *Heptaplus*.<sup>172</sup> Interestingly enough, in one of the manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Tzeruf* we find Latin notes, and the passages translated above are marked, an issue that requires further investigation in order to establish whether there were also

additional Christian thinkers who studied this text, inviting a Christological reflection.<sup>173</sup>

Another anonymous student of Abulafia's, a Kabbalist who authored the important ecstatic treatise *Ner 'Elohim*, adopted the intellectualistic vision of redemption, resorting to a rather surprising theophoric syntagm:

[the figure of] 363 is the secret of the Son of a Man [*Ben 'Ish*] . . . and its secret is *Kavshi'el* . . . and it is the Messiah that conquers by his power all that is under him . . . And know that in him everything is [found] because within him the intellect is found. Therefore see that the name of *Kavshi'el* is governing and ruling over each and every power. And it is an intellect and has a name of a beast, as it is written: 'There is a beast in the firmament whose name is Israel and on its forehead the [name] Israel is engraved.'<sup>174</sup> And behold it is the Agent Intellect, and it sees but is not seen.<sup>175</sup>

The impact of Abulafia's attribution of a messianic role to the Agent Intellect, its relation to the concept of Israel, and the spiritualization of Messianism, is obvious. Thus, the attribution of the secret, namely the gematria of *Ben 'Ish*, the Son of Man, to the entity called *Kavshi'el*, parallels the vision of the Agent Intellect as the Son of Man, as seen above. Thus, it seems that *'Ish* stands for God, just as the name of God stood for the Agent Intellect, while *'Adam* stood for God in one of the above quotations adduced from *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*. More intriguing however is the appellation *Kavshi'el*, a theophoric name whose meaning is explained as the ruler or the governor, in its spiritualized understanding, over the powers within man. There can be no doubt that the root involved in this theophoric angel is *KBSH*, to conquer. However, I wonder whether there is not also another pertinent connotation: the word *Keves*, in Hebrew 'lamb', is spelled with the same consonants despite the fact that these consonants are reflecting an entirely different root. The association of an angelic, theophoric and messianic role to quite a rare angelic name may point to some attempt to take into consideration the Christian eschatology as well. In any case, another less consistent follower of Abulafia's, R. Isaac ben Samuel of Acre, attributes a messianic valence to the Hebrew *Seh*, also 'lamb' or 'sheep', as a symbol referring to Metatron.<sup>176</sup> One of their contemporaries, perhaps the famous Kabbalist R. Moses ben Shem Tov de Leon, invented an entire Midrash related to a certain R. Gadi'el the infant, who played an eschatological role after he was killed, and Scholem is presumably right when he points out the Christian background that informed some aspects of this figure.<sup>177</sup>

There is one more general observation to make related to the tendency of Abulafia and his followers to avoid the terminology of righteousness that

is so prevalent in early Christianity and in the rabbinic axiology, and even more so in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* as well as elsewhere in his writings.<sup>178</sup> For Abulafia, the righteous refers to a positive though relatively low rank on the scale of religious development. Higher than the righteous is the sage, the *Hakham*, who parallels the philosopher, whereas even higher than him is the prophet. It is the prophets that Abulafia calls the sons, on the ground of the permutations of the consonants of the word *Mitnabbe'im* – which means 'they prophesy' – which generate the words *'Atem Banim*, 'you are the sons', an expression found in Deut. 14.1, one of the most important proof-texts for the divine sonship of the people of Israel.<sup>179</sup> It is the act of intellection that is crucial for prophecy rather than concrete religious deeds, namely the commandments that count for the attainment of ultimate perfection, according to this thinker.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, as we have seen in the passage quoted above from *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, the prophet is understood to be the Son of God. By such a linguistic deconstruction, it is no more all the people of Israel that are the Sons of God, as biblical and rabbinic authors, including the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists, claim but only the few 'prophets', namely those who have actualized their intellect.

Let me summarize an aspect of our discussions above that should be emphasized: Abulafia explicitly resorted to the locutions 'Son of God', 'Son of *YHWH*' and 'Son of the Lord' as well as other occurrences of the term *Ben* in the context of Abraham, as seen above. The occurrence of these three explicit expressions, in addition to interpretations of the Son in the context of God in the quotation from *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, and the view of the Messiah as a son in his *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, point to a willingness to make use of this type of expression. Confident as he was that he was the Messiah and superior even to Moses,<sup>181</sup> Abulafia was not afraid to point to a similarity between his messianic claims and those of Christianity. His feeling of the superiority of his spiritual eschatology over the Christological concept of redemption facilitated a resort to earlier traditions found in the book of R. Nehemiah and perhaps even led him to adopt lateral influences of contemporary Christianity, in shaping its account of sonship, as well as his understanding of Messianism. These two concepts have been understood allegorically, rather than genetically, which means that no one has been born a Son of God or was predestined to be the Messiah, just as no nation was for Abulafia the collective Son of God in a genetic sense.

Let me point out some absences in Abulafia's accounts and their significance. In the vast majority of his discussions the intellectual apotheosis, which amounts to a drastic transformation of the mystic's mind, does not involve a description of a corporeal elevation on high nor sitting on a seat of Glory at the right hand of the divinity.<sup>182</sup> Since it is not

the body of the mystic that is translated on high but, according to the ecstatic Kabbalist, rather his mind, and this only in a metaphorical manner, in his view the mythical themes characteristic of Christian sonship, of Heikhalot literature – implicitly – and of R. Nehemiah's writings become allegories for intellectual events. In my opinion, an examination of the topic of sonship in Abulafia's thought shows that it is the spiritual sonship that is conceived of as superior to the genetic one, and as such the term son means, esoterically, not the corporeal son, but rather the student that develops his mind. This axiology, that prefers the spiritual to the corporeal, represents a deep tendency in Abulafia's thought also insofar as many other topics are concerned. As such, Abulafia may be understood as offering in his exegesis not only one more meaning to the already existing one, but as imposing a hermeneutical speculative grid that dislocates the concrete meaning of Son and installs another kind of axiology, the intellectual one. Son is an allegory for understanding, and procreation is the reproduction of intellection, not by genetic offspring.

### 5. On sonship and the Agent Intellect in Jewish philosophy

Our major concern in the earlier discussions was with views found in bodies of literature attributable to Jewish mysticism. However, in many cases Jewish mysticism has been nourished by views stemming from other forms of thought, philosophy being one of the most productive among them, a point mentioned several times above. Jewish philosophers were much less concerned with theories of sonship, which is why so little may be extracted from the huge philosophical corpus on this topic. So for example, R. Abraham ibn Ezra, the mid-twelfth-century Jewish influential thinker, describes the faithful Moses as the son of the house, perhaps as part of an attempt to return to him his unique status after Christians attributed sonship to Jesus.<sup>183</sup> His contemporary, R. Yehudah ha-Levi, described Adam as the Son of God,<sup>184</sup> and Seth, who inherited his status, not just as a son but as the Son of God too.<sup>185</sup> No doubt this special type of relationship to God has much to do with the inheritance of some sort of occult substance described as the divine issue, 'Amr 'Ilahi, or *ha-'Iniyān ha-'Elohi*, which is passed over in a family up to the sons of Jacob and then to all the Jews, and is the main explanation for the gift of prophecy.<sup>186</sup> It should be mentioned that this theory of sonship appeared in an author profoundly influenced by Muslim thought, both Sufi and Ismailiyyan.

For the Neo-Aristotelian Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages, the chief mediating hypostasis was the Agent Intellect. Inner development in the Greek philosophical tradition culminated in the Neo-Platonic thinker Marinus, who already interpreted it as an angel. His special understanding of

the Agent Intellect was accepted by Al-Farabi. This term has not been attributed by Arabic and Jewish philosophers to an individual intellect, as Aristotle perhaps did, or his Christian followers writing in Latin thought, but instead it has been understood as the last or the tenth separated intellect, as some traditional designations found in the Arabic and Jewish literatures did. However, in some instances, the nexus between this tenth cosmic intellect and the angel Metatron is established, and some of the attributes of the ancient angel have been transferred to the philosophical concept. This transference is cardinal to Abulafia's whole intellectual Messianism, as seen above, though it could take place much more modestly in a philosophical treatise that may be independent of Abulafia's writings. Let me compare Abulafia's discussions about the Messiah as Son, as Metatron and as Agent Intellect, and those of a contemporary Jewish philosopher, since the two elements of the synthesis were well known in Jewish tradition at the end of the thirteenth century. So, for example, R. Levi ben Abraham, a familiar and controversial figure that flourished at the end of the thirteenth century in Provence, wrote in his book *Livyat Hen* as follows:

'Tell me what is His name'<sup>187</sup>: because granted that His essence is incomprehensible but to Him, it is written [His] name in lieu of His essence. 'What is the name of His son'<sup>188</sup>: hints at the separate intellect, that acts in accordance to His commandment, and it is Metatron, whose name is the name of his Master,<sup>189</sup> and he [*Metatron*] also has difficulties in comprehending His [God's] true essence [*'ammitato*] and to conceptualize His essence [*le-tzayyer mahuto*]. 'That you shall know' refers to His Son. Despite the fact that it is hard to comprehend the essence of the Agent Intellect, but it is possible to know him and adhere to him when someone is separated from his body . . . the [separate] intellects are called His son, because of their proximity to Him and the fact that He created them without any intermediary.<sup>190</sup>

No doubt we have here a philosophical version of the theophanic-theophoric mediator, which serves at the same time what I called the apothotic vector. From this point of view, this text is reminiscent of the main synthesis offered by the ecstatic Kabbalist, and historically speaking it is possible that Abulafia's stand influenced the Provencal thinker. What seems to be unique to this text is that not only the last, or tenth separate intellect, is called here son, but all the other, higher intellects are conceived of as such. This medieval passage shows that, unlike the Ashkenazi discussions in the second chapter and their reverberations in Abulafia as seen above, one need not automatically resort to Christological sources in order to describe the separate intellect(s) as the Son of God. It brings together, in a manner

reminiscent of Abulafia's discussions, the son, discussions of the divine name and discussions of the separated intellects. Let me draw attention to the fact that according to this thinker not only the Agent Intellect is called son, but also all the other cosmic intellects. This is no doubt part of the view that the entire spiritual realm is constituted of the separate intellects and is homogenous, so that it is difficult, according to the Neo-Aristotelian ontology, to distinguish between intellectual entities.

A similar view is discernible in an older contemporary of Abulafia's, in a passage that is printed in the mid-thirteenth-century R. Moses ibn Tibbon's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (though his authorship is questionable):

As long as the material intellect is *in potentia* and did not attain the 'kingdom of God' and was anointed with the holy unction, it was called Solomon alone. Then he is not a king neither the 'son of David', as it was said that "the Son of David" will not come until all the souls of the body will be exhausted',<sup>191</sup> neither the king of Jerusalem . . . and the beloved [in the Song of Songs] is the *Causa Prima*, and the first agent or His emissary and His angel, 'whose name is like the name of its Master', which is identical to the Agent Intellect, and is Metatron, and it was counted at the end as the 'Lesser YHWH', because of the name of its Master, because it has been said that 'My name is within it'.<sup>192, 193</sup>

While sonship is not mentioned here though veiled in the concept of the Messiah son of David, we may perceive the strong connection between the great angel Metatron, the Agent Intellect and the Messiah. A similar view, which brings together the Lesser YHWH, Metatron and the realm of the separate Intellect, is found in another, somewhat later Provençal thinker, R. Isaac Albalag, who does not however resort to the messianic theme, as Abulafia did. He describes the First Cause as the Great YHWH, and the Agent Intellect that is the *causatum*, and the Lesser YHWH.<sup>194</sup> In a way, two divine names that appear in some of the discussions above return even though sonship is not alluded to in Albalag's passage, in contrast to the view of R. Levi ben Abraham.

The interpretation of Prov. 30.4 found in another Provençal thinker, R. Levi ben Gershon, known in the West as Leon Hebraeus or Gersonides, in his *Commentary on Proverbs*, refers to the Agent Intellect as the Son of the First Cause,<sup>195</sup> similar to an interpretation by the famous nineteenth-century commentator R. Meir Leibush known as *ha-Malbim*, ad locum. However, there is a great deal of difference between them: while for the two philosophers and the later commentator the above interpretation is more of an exegetical exercise describing the supernal intellectual realm through a

use of traditional Jewish terms, Son, for the ecstatic Kabbalist it is much more a matter of the relationship between that supernal world and the human intellect, and in a more precise manner, between that intellectual world and Abraham Abulafia himself. The concept of the 'son' in the kabbalistic texts above reflects not only the extension of the supernal intellect within a certain specific man prepared to receive this influx in his own mind, but also, and predominantly, a redemptive entity. Every philosopher is, in principle, a good candidate to become a Son of God, though Kabbalists thinking like Abulafia would say that they also have detailed techniques to facilitate this adoption. Much more than in the case of philosophy, the kabbalistic discourses about sons should be understood against the very specific background of the author who used them. Someone who believed that he is the Messiah would much more easily resort to the epitheton of 'son' as a proper definition for himself.

Another passage, apparently influenced by Abulafia or by one of his followers, like R. Joseph Gikatilla's *Sefer Ginnat 'Egoz*, is found in a book written by a philosopher living in Castile in the second part of the fourteenth century, R. Samuel ibn Moṭoṭ. In his *Sefer Mikhlol Yofi* he wrote:

Know and understand that *Ben David* is the king Messiah, by the influence of the Agent Intellect onto the human intellect when the latter is *in actu*. And he called the other material powers [by the name] 'souls in body' namely '*Ben David* comes', namely the intellect is not able to cleave to the Agent Intellect, until the exhaustion of all the souls from the body, which are the material powers.<sup>196</sup>

Beyond the conceptual resemblance between this passage and Abulafia's eschatological allegory, in Moṭoṭ's *Mikhlol Yofi* the gematria *Yisra'el = Sekhel ha-Po'el = 541* appears.<sup>197</sup> This and some of the other examples adduced above, and many others that could not be quoted in this framework, demonstrate that the history of the term 'Agent Intellect' in Jewish philosophy should evidently be studied in the light of the Greek and Arabic traditions, but also in the light of the inner structure of Jewish thinking, as represented by earlier rabbinic and mystical concepts, including the use of gematrias, though they are extraordinarily rare in philosophical discourses. However, it should be noted that it is not only in Jewish philosophical tradition that the concept of 'son' is less represented when compared with kabbalistic literature, as seen above and even more so in the following chapters, but it plays quite a marginal role even when it appears in the philosophical sources. We shall return to this issue in the context of the Italian Renaissance in the late fifteenth century in Chapter 5 below. I adduced the above discussions in order to illustrate the reticence of the

Provençal philosophers to resort to a theological position found on their horizon, as the citation from R. Levi ben Abraham demonstrates. As we shall see in the next chapter, the philosophers' older contemporaries among the Kabbalists, active in Castile, were much more open to a variety of continuations, discussions and appropriations of sonship.

For a later philosophical use of the concept of intellectual sonship in the mid-fifteenth century, we may turn to R. Abraham Bibago, who discusses the new birth and renewal as related to sonship and intellection in a rather fascinating manner:

'Renew as an eagle my youth'<sup>198</sup> this is the absolute innovation that happens by the dint of this intellection that will gain this degree that he is as if born then and was like a new creature in accordance to the [verse]<sup>199</sup> 'You are My son, this day I have begotten you', that has been said on the divine union indubitably. However, the human intellect is like the son which flows down from the world of the intellect, and afterwards, just as there is a relation between the son and his father, so it is possible that there may be cleaving of us to the world of the intellect. Thus, when God said to me 'You are My son' i.e., I will give you understanding brought down in the world 'this day I have begotten you' and that day you cling to Me, you will be born in a renewed and eternal birth. And this is meant by his saying 'renew as an eagle my youth'.<sup>200</sup>

This passage, like R. Nehemiah's passage on the Son, has a small history of its own, as I found it copied anonymously in two other philosophically oriented texts.<sup>201</sup> It demonstrates that philosophers also regarded intellectual sonship as a matter of intimacy, and the term *Ben* as constituting the best way to describe in Hebrew the union of the human intellect with the divine one. This union is described here however, more in a Neo-Platonic framework, as use of the term '*Olam ha-Sekhel*, 'the world of the intellect', rather than the more common Agent Intellect, shows. This union however is rather different from the loss of the individual intellect to the supernal intellectual world. It assumes some form of addition of the human intellect to its source, but it is still seen as a rebirth. In a way it is reminiscent of what has been called 'myriopostasos', in the controversy over the possibility of union involving the famous mystic Gregory Palamas in mid-fourteenth-century Byzantium, an adjective that is related to the addition of myriads of hypostatic 'sons of Christ' to Christ. Here the opponents to Palamas were Aristotelian thinkers, who criticized the more Neo-Platonic attitude of the Byzantine Hesychastic mystic.<sup>202</sup> Let me point out that the Jewish philosophers mentioned above, following a variety of earlier speculative

positions, avoided or ignored the Ashkenazi material and their approach is less synthetic or eclectic than Abulafia's.

Let me address now an example of the use of the philosophical terminology mentioned above to express unitive spiritual experiences. Alfonso da Valladolid, the former Abner of Burgos – whose floruit was in the first part of the fourteenth century and who seems to be the first who openly combined Kabbalah and Christianity while writing in Hebrew – describes the category of incarnation claiming that some rulers, like Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylonia, Hiram the king of Tyre, or Tiberius the Caesar of Rome, conceived themselves as a deity, '*Elohut*. He then adds:

And so also some philosophers made themselves a Deity like that who said that 'There is nothing under my garment [rather] than God [*'Elohaq*]', and another said that 'I am the Truth' and as another said 'I am the Agent Intellect, Let me be praised and exalted'.<sup>203</sup>

In fact Abner describes famous Sufi ecstatic statements as if philosophers pronounced them. Here I am concerned with the third declaration alone: the identification with the Agent Intellect is described as a form of deification, by what Abner calls in his epistles 'individual incarnation', as distinguished from the 'general incarnation' that he understands as pantheism. The statement about the Agent Intellect is, however, a very strong reading of a *shatahat* that does not mention this concept at all. Thus the 'individual incarnation' related to sonship of God is connected here to a vision of the Agent Intellect, in a manner reminiscent of the way in which Arabic philosophers conceived the relationship of this intellect with the intelligizing man. It may be that the vision of the Agent Intellect has been understood here as reflecting an entity identical to God, as is the case in a major interpreter of Aristotle's writings, Alexander of Aphrodisias, though Abner himself mentions another commentator of Aristotle's, Themistius, in this context. In any case, according to this expanded version of the third ecstatic exclamation, we see cultic demands made to the person who becomes an Agent Intellect. Abulafia never resorted to such radical claims, his vision of the Agent Intellect being part of a mystical experience, with strong unitive overtones, and related to concepts of sonship, paralleling the later position of Abner of Burgos. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that both Abulafia and Abner offer a mystical reading of views they adduce from Muslim philosophers, the former emphasizing more the spiritual adherence of the human intellect to the cosmic one, the latter putting the accent on the descent of the Agent Intellect into the human body. Moreover, while Abner regards the philosophers he quotes – in fact the Sufis – as polytheists, restricting particular or individual incarnation and thus sonship to Jesus

alone, Abulafia's view of sonship, elitist as it indeed was, is conceived of as much more open. Both, however, attempted to insert a certain mystical vision of sonship into philosophical sources, which did not operate with it. Moreover, it is quite plausible that both authors resorted to Sufi material in order to make their point. As seen above, Abulafia used the formula 'I I' while Abner used three ecstatic formulas.

### 6. Nathan ben Sa'adya Ḥarar and Abulafia: Between Ashkenaz, philosophy and Christianity

In short, we may discern Abulafia's awareness of and convergence between some of the main Jewish traditions in which the term 'son' also means a divine or supernal being: one of these traditions he quotes explicitly from R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, a rather particularistic approach to the identity of the Jews; the other, the philosophical one, consists of a view similar to that represented by R. Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche, Abulafia's younger compatriot, and later on by Gersonides, ibn Moṭoṭ and Bibago, an approach that is much more universalistic. Though he does not mention the philosophers as a source of his theory of intellectual sonship, at least his explicit resort to Al-Farabi – a thinker whose thought was a major source for Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages – as a general framework for his discussion of sonship is a crucial fact and is unparalleled by any other Kabbalist that does not belong to his school. And last but not least, as mentioned above, he plausibly was aware of the Christological understandings of sonship, especially of the claim that was closest to his way of thinking: that the Son is the act of intellection, while the intellect was conceived of as the Father, and the intelligibles as the Holy Spirit.<sup>204</sup> Abulafia had been acquainted with an individual who suggested this interpretation of Maimonides' theory of intellection<sup>205</sup> and even accepted it, with the condition that the three terms be conceived of as devoid of any corporeality. This passage, which deserves a separate analysis, which cannot be carried out here, is a rare case in which a Kabbalist is ready to agree with a form of Trinity and interpreted it in a philosophical manner,<sup>206</sup> despite the sharp opposition he articulated against the more common form of sonship based on the tenets of incarnation and resurrection.<sup>207</sup> From this point of view, the Pythagorean interpretation of the Trinity we adduced above follows the same pattern: if understood as incorporeal or unrelated to the myth of incarnation, Trinity is not necessarily devoid of its theological merits. In short, Abulafia's philosophical understanding of emanative supernal sonship, as well as that of the Jewish philosophers mentioned above, undermines dramatically the more organic picture found in the

earlier non-philosophical understandings of sonship in Judaism, in which God is seen as a participant in the very act of conception, or that based upon the assumption of a primordial spiritual affinity between the soul and God, close to Neo-Platonism, found in some of the theosophical-theurgical kabbalistic writings to be discussed in the next chapter.

As in other cases, Abulafia's kabbalistic thought on sonship represents a synthesis between the first two traditions mentioned above, which he uses in order to criticize the third, namely Christianity. In our case, and in my opinion, this is the gist of his system in general: the linguistic material from Ashkenazi traditions, both that of R. Eleazar of Worms's and that of R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, is conceived of as religiously superior to the intellectual structure of thought he inherited from the Neo-Aristotelian Andalusian tradition, and perhaps even some Pythagorean elements, whose precise sources are not always clear.<sup>208</sup> In the end, I find it quite plausible that the ecstatic Kabbalist was aware also of Jewish apocalyptic writings and adopted some elements from them which were used in order to describe his exoteric eschatology while interpreting them in accordance with the philosophical and esoteric gnoseology.<sup>209</sup> This practice neutralizes the uniqueness of the apocalyptic and external events, as they are understood to represent inner processes, which may occur beyond historical circumstances. This point seems to me to be an interesting one from a broader perspective. Christianity, which in most of its forms since the second century works with a double assumption, one being what I call the centrality of the ultimate hypostatic son, which appeared in time and history in a unique drama, and the other being the trans-historical possibility of redemption for all human beings opened through the atoning effect of the historical vicarious self-sacrifice. Though the trans-historical aspect is also found in Abulafia, under the impact of Maimonides and other sources dealing with the cosmic Agent Intellect, the special historical and personal fatum of an ultimate son has no correspondence in his system. It is true that his spiritual mentor Maimonides works with an assumption parallel to a Christian view of the ultimate status of the revelation of Jesus, or of the status of Muhammad in Islam, but regarding in his case the centrality of Moses and the immutability of the law he brought. However, the latter is, in his system, not a savior figure. Abulafia is much less interested in the uniqueness of Moses' role, and from this point of view, the structure of his thought differs from that of both Maimonides and Christianity. Unlike those two religious approaches, or that of Islam in relation to Muhammad, for the ecstatic Kabbalist the personal aspects of the life of the legislator, as well as those of the redeemer, were much less important. For him perfection was not a matter of the glorious and sealed past, but a possibility that may be actualized in the present. Abulafia's theory of the hypostatic son, the Agent

Intellect, though possessing a redemptive function, is a completely trans-historical and totally depersonalized entity. Though considering himself a personal and thus an embodied son of the Agent Intellect, he assumed that he is indeed the messenger of the trans-historical impersonal Son, a prophet or a Messiah, both part of what I called the wider phenomenon described above as 'double sonship'. This self-understanding has much to do with his allegorical interpretations, which explain different biblical verses as dealing with the same entity or event, which is an intellectual one.<sup>210</sup>

In this context let me draw attention to another important topic noted above, whose significance should be emphasized again here: the gematria of *Yisra'el* = *shekhel ha-po'el* = 541, which occurs in the context of sonship at least in two explicit cases above. The designation of the supernal son, the cosmic Agent Intellect by the name Israel, or according to other texts discussed above, *Knisset Yisra'el*, represents a linguistic nexus between the sons below, namely the intellectuals who become adopted sons, and the hypostatic-cosmic intellectual son, described sometimes also as a redeeming power or, to resort to the traditional phrase, the 'redeeming angel'. This double meaning, the eidetic – not morphic in this case – and the nominal, represents some form of affinity between the lower and the higher, just as the anthropomorphic image of man is reflected in the Christian image of the savior. Just as the solidarity between the humans and the mediator in Christianity contributed to the appeal this religion had on larger audiences, Abulafia's intellectual approach describes also a sort of solidarity, which is more elitist and intellectual.<sup>211</sup> In quite a significant way, the supernal sonship is meaningful because it creates the necessary theological conditions for the emergence of the lower sonship. However, in most of the cases in which the Agent Intellect is involved, sonship is connected to both cosmological and noetic aspects rather than with genetic and national issues, and from this point of view it is reminiscent of the sonship related to Logos in Philo. So, for example, the Agent Intellect is conceived of as a seal – again an image quite reminiscent of Philo's view of Logos as a seal – which imprints forms, in the sense of *eidōs* on both matter and soul, an imprint that gives form to matter and brings it closer to the spiritual world.<sup>212</sup> This resort to the image of the seal is important since the Agent Intellect is conceived of as divine, and thus also what is imprinted may be conceived of as divine. In any case we have here a matter of double sonship.

Or, to put it in other words, it is plausible that hypostatic intellectual sonship is conceived of as paradigmatic and significant for the human feeling of a filial relationship, based on human acts of intellection. In fact, this noetic solidarity is forged in order to ensure the supreme status of some values, be they righteousness in the *Heikhalot* literature in the case of Enoch/Metatron, in the supreme status of sacrifice in Christianity, or in the

paramount religious importance of intellection in writings of Abulafia and those of the philosophers we mentioned above. From this point of view, the interpretation of the Agent Intellect as Israel represents a universalistic approach, in comparison to the more particularistic approached found in the Hebrew Bible, in the rabbinic literature and in the theosophical-theurgical schools to be analyzed in the next chapter. Though writing in Hebrew, Abulafia comes closer to the way in which Philo of Alexandria understood both sonship and the concept of a supernal Israel.<sup>213</sup> It should be pointed out that Abulafia preached his views also to Christians, and his attitude toward them differs drastically from all his kabbalistic contemporaries in Spain, an issue that requires a special inquiry.<sup>214</sup>

Last but not least in our context: in several instances, Abulafia interpreted the name *Yisra'el* as compounded of two linguistic units: *YeSh* and *Ra'l*, words that are understood as meaning 'there are two hundred and thirty-one' namely all the combinations of two letters out of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>215</sup> This is a continuation of a version of *Sefer Yetzirah* that described the creation of the world by means of those combinations of two letters. These combinations have already been used in both Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and in Abulafia for a variety of other topics, magical and mystical.<sup>216</sup> This deconstruction of the linguistic elements that constitute the name *Yisra'el*, originally connected either to an individual personality, or with a nation, contributes to the articulation of a novel approach to both personality and nation: both emulate the intellectual development achieved by combining letters as part of a technique, and marginalize the organic processes that constitute the individual and the corporate personality. This deconstruction of the very term that describes the name of the Jewish nation is both a leitmotif in Abulafia's writings, and quite important since it reflects two different levels of activity: the sphere of letters, which is somehow a linguistic counterpart of the Agent Intellect, and the human person who combines those letters, perhaps as part of an imitation of the Agent Intellect.<sup>217</sup> This affinity creates another type of connection between the lower and the higher Israel. The combination of letters is, as mentioned above, based on *Sefer Yetzirah*, and its practice is constituted of linguistic units that do not function semantically as part of Hebrew or any other language. Also from this point of view, the term Israel has been de-particularized, since there is no reason to assume, on the basis of Abulafia's writings, that he would deny the possibility that a gentile may also resort to the practice of combining letters, as indeed happened in the case of Ramon Lull, probably due to the impact of early forms of linguistic techniques based on *Sefer Yetzirah* or of the Jewish sources related to it, which nourished Abulafia's thought.<sup>218</sup>

Let me turn now to another important exegetical technique that may

also be described as deconstructing the normal semantic structure of units found in Hebrew language in order to make a strong intellectual reading of sonship, based upon an allegorical approach. The following discussions concern the views of R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Ḥarar, a Kabbalist who studied with Abulafia in Messina in Sicily, at the beginning of the 1280s, and the author of an ecstatic kabbalistic treatise entitled *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, written most plausibly later on in the same decade in Sicily. It should be mentioned that this island was, culturally speaking, one of the most multicultural places in medieval Europe, as Byzantine, Muslim, Aragonese, Italian, and Jewish elements competed with each other. This is a relatively short book, dense and sometime enigmatic, whose succinct discussions demand careful decoding. He too resorts to the gematria  $26 + 26 = 52 = Ben$ , which stems ultimately from the Ashkenazi views found in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, probably as mediated by Abulafia. The Kabbalist resorts to a Hebrew phrase that he put together, *Ya'aqov ben Rivqah* [Jacob the son of Rebecca] = *Ya'aqov YHWH Rivqah YHWH* = *Yisra'el = Sekhel ha-Po'el = 541*.<sup>219</sup> Though the concept of intellectual sonship is clearly mentioned here in the context of the Agent Intellect, the meaning this Kabbalist attributes to this numerical equation in this case is far from being evident. In the notes that accompany the Italian translation of the passage I offered a brief interpretation according to which Rebecca is the human soul, and Jacob, her son, is the human intellect that emerges from that soul. On the other hand (without referring to this interpretation, or to my available discussions on sonship already printed elsewhere in my writings), Elliot R. Wolfson offered another interpretation. According to his opinion, Rebecca is none other than the cosmic Agent Intellect while Jacob is the human intellect.<sup>220</sup> On the basis of this interpretation, which promotes the former biblical figure to a sublime status not paralleled in her context by any other discussion I am aware of in the Middle Ages, he further speculates about the feminine nature of the Agent Intellect in this passage, as part of his broader thesis about the changes of gender in Kabbalah in general. Let me say that in my opinion new interpretations are always welcome, even if not always correct, since they challenge the existing scholarship, and open questions anew, especially when such challenges come from a well-known scholar and an independent mind like Wolfson. However, I find that this specific kind of interpretation constitutes a rather surprising turn, which is not proven by any philological effort, but relies merely on Wolfson's authority, independent in this case not only of my views – an independence that is good – but also of the views expressed in the interpreted text, which I find much less commendable.

First let us highlight an example that supports Wolfson's suggestion. In

Abulafia's *Sitrei Torah* we find the following interpretation of a Talmudic discussion:

'The donkey brays'<sup>221</sup> – The pure bodily matter<sup>222</sup>; 'your soul' [*nafshekha*] 'the magician' [*kashefan*], and it is the appetitive soul. 'Dogs barking' – this refers to the material powers, that is, the power of imagination and excitation, and the other powers, which are partly spiritual and partly material. 'A woman speaking [i.e., coupling with] her husband' – matter and form. 'And a baby' – intellectual power – 'suckling from its mother's breast' – the Agent Intellect.<sup>223</sup>

It seems quite plausible that the baby here is but another form of the intellectual son, who is born from the interaction between a lower intellectual faculty and the Agent Intellect, portrayed here as mother, in a manner reminiscent of Rebecca in the statement of R. Nathan. Elsewhere in the *Collectanea* of kabbalistic traditions compiled by R. Isaac of Acre, drawing from a lost book of the same R. Nathan ben Sa'adya, the latter writes in the context of the last *sefirah*, *Malkhut*:

She is a male in relation to the separated intellects and the souls of humans because the influx stemming from her to the intellectual soul is like the semen that comes from the male and inseminates the womb of the female and just as a person grows with time, so also his intellect that is the influx, grows with him.<sup>224</sup>

Thus, the last *sefirah* is described here as feminine in relation to the higher *sefirot* but masculine in relation to the lower realms. No change of gender is taking place; what is described here are metaphorical expressions that come to describe changing relations of an entity that itself is not described as changing. In a hierarchic structure like that which R. Nathan and R. Isaac of Acre operate with, each ontological level plays intrinsically different roles in different contexts, without involving a change in the nature of that level. Unlike Abulafia, who was less concerned with the different functions the Agent Intellect plays vis-à-vis the higher separate intellects – it is conceived of as including them all, especially because of numerical speculations related to it being the tenth – his two followers paid much more attention to the meaning of complex hierarchies.

To summarize these two competing interpretations: I assume that in R. Nathan's passage the name of the biblical Rebecca is an allegory for the human soul, and Jacob is the son that emerges as an intellect out of a lower entity, which is the soul, while Wolfson assumes that Rebecca is the cosmic Agent Intellect, and she gives birth to the human intellect as a son. Both interpretations rely on the same short text, which is predicated on the

recurring gematria 541 discussed above, but they diverge as to the explanation of the manner in which R. Nathan understands the emergence of the son: from below – my explanation – or from above, as Wolfson's approach presumably assumes. Or, to formulate it in a different manner, I offer an interpretation that is similar to what has been called in Christianity 'dynamic sonship', namely one that requires the active participation of the Christian in order to actualize his sonship, while Wolfson's view may be described as 'static sonship', which assumes that the status of sonship is a given from above.<sup>225</sup>

As we all know, interpretations of the meaning of numerical equivalences are often difficult issues, especially for a scholar who is not sufficiently acquainted with the details of the text he interprets, and without a prior detailed analysis of the context of such a numerical discussion speculations flower easily. Let me adduce, therefore, another passage by the same Kabbalist, which may point to the precise meaning of the above passage. R. Nathan writes immediately after the passage above, as an explanation of its meaning, the following statement about the 'union of the soul, which is the mother, with her true son [*benah ha-'amitti*], which is her intellect, by means of the [divine] names, to the Agent Intellect, and will become one thing, because Jacob, the son of Rebecca, is indeed Israel'.<sup>226</sup> This is no doubt a passage that not only follows the first one but explicates what is written in it, and it is strictly necessary for any interpretation of R. Nathan's stand. If we assume that indeed Rebecca was the mother of the biblical Jacob, she is, at least according to this Kabbalist, the human soul, namely an entity lower than the human intellect, perhaps the faculty that serves as the starting point for the event of emergence of an intellect found in the human body, but not the Agent Intellect itself. The term *Ben* points, as in the former quotation from this book, to the double divine name, which constitutes part of the technique to reach the Agent Intellect that culminates in an experience of mystical union between the two. We may decode the short sentence as follows: the human – Rebecca – soul generates the intellect – Jacob – which is transformed into the Agent Intellect, Israel, by means of the divine names.<sup>227</sup> R. Nathan therefore, explicitly interprets Rebecca in the manner I did. The lesson that I would like to draw from this comparative reading of the small passage is that even when the teacher or the view of the author points in a certain direction, the author is free, both in Abulafia and in R. Nathan, to go in a different direction, sometimes in the very same book. The interpretive freedom is obvious and any attempt to impose a more general theory, like the changes of the gender of the Agent Intellect, is predicated upon a more rigid assumption as to the basic assumptions of the Kabbalist. I wonder if Abulafia or R. Nathan were aware, or cared about the fact that by using a feminine term in a certain

interpretation, they commit themselves to a comprehensive theory of shifting the gender. Their exegeses were based upon what can be described as 'fugitive truths', to use Clifford Geertz's term, less on basic assumptions that they shared with each other, or even in the very same book. Even less so when we may find in Arabic sources descriptions of the Agent Intellect in feminine terms.<sup>228</sup> Neither would I see Abulafia as a paradoxical thinker, since again it assumes too much of a systematic approach. My assumption is that the syntheses he forged attempted to take into consideration approaches that are simply different, and created discrepancies between various treatments of the same topic in Abulafia's thought. In our case, the intellectual name of the son is not so easily reconciled with the emphasis on the linguistic aspects of his speculations about the son. The emphasis on a certain topic, and the repetition of treatments with variations, much less than the coherence between the various interpretations of such a topic, count more for understanding his thought, and it seems that such a central topic like sonship has been neglected in most of the descriptions of this figure.

However, this is not the only passage where R. Nathan deals with sonship and the divine name. It should be noticed that this Kabbalist speaks about the affinities between soul and intellect much more than Abulafia did, and we should understand his approach in a more Neo-Platonic manner than his master's thought. Probably following an earlier source, R. Nathan deals elsewhere in the same book with an erotic relationship between the soul and her servant, a negative figure described as Satan or the serpent, on the one hand, and between her and her 'true' husband, the intellect, on the other hand.<sup>229</sup> This is a veiled allegorical interpretation of the Paradise story in Genesis, as understood by some Midrashic treatments, and especially in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, with Eve as the main protagonist, though her name is not mentioned at all, and the Serpent as the only hero mentioned explicitly by name, Adam hinted at only obliquely. By doing so, R. Nathan follows a discussion found in Abulafia, where the process of insemination is described in both the context of Adam and Eve, and that of Metatron and Satan, as two immanent powers.<sup>230</sup> As a result of the latter type of relationship, namely with her true husband, she is inseminated by what he calls the 'holy spirit', *Ruah ha-Qodesh*, and gives birth to a 'lasting son' – *Ben shel qayyima*.<sup>231</sup> The resort to this term in such a specific context, in a book most probably written in Messina, may well reflect the impact of the Christian vision of the Immaculate Conception by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>232</sup> As we have seen above, in Abulafia's quotation from *Sitrei Torah*, and from other discussions of this topic, the Holy Spirit is an allegory for the Agent Intellect or its effluence.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, in the discussion about the two types of relationship of the mother, or Eve, and the two males, the letters of

the Tetragrammaton play, again, an important role in expressing the mutual relations between the three factors. I wonder to what extent this use of the Tetragrammaton is part of the process of conception, and reflects also the rabbinic view that God is a partner in such a process.<sup>234</sup> In any case, this description of the sexual relationship is to be understood as a parable for the process of intellection, as R. Nathan cares to mention.

Let us return to the issue of the son: he is conceived here as the offspring of the intercourse between the Agent Intellect, or its efflux, and the soul, the intellect *in actu*, by means of whom the mother can reach the union with the cosmic intellect. Rebecca and presumably also Eve, as many other feminine figures in the Hebrew Bible to be sure, are in ecstatic Kabbalah an allegory only for the more modest entity referred to as the human soul, not for the supernal cosmic intellect, whose gender has not been changed, at least not in this particular instance.<sup>235</sup> To illustrate the extent of the indifference to the question of gender in the above context, let me mention that elsewhere in the same book, Moses is described as giving birth to a 'male son' – *Ben zakhar* – after being for 40 days with God 'on high'.<sup>236</sup> Forty days is the period conceived by rabbinic authors as the time when the sex of the foetus is decided, thus reflecting some form of spiritual rebirth. Moses therefore descends when spiritually transformed – he is described explicitly as changing his nature from *Mosheh* to *ha-Shem*<sup>237</sup> – as a sort of actualized intellect allegorized by the shining face, upon which he will then put a mask, the power of imagination, when he has to speak with the multitude. Moses' soul is playing, most probably, the role of the feminine power, which is actualized by the contact with the divine sphere. What is shared by these three examples: Rebecca, Eve and Moses, is the feminine starting point that is then transformed after coming into contact with the higher intellectual realm. In my opinion R. Nathan does not mind putting Moses, before his ascent to the mountain, in the same category with both Eve and Rebecca, as intellectual potentiality that is then actualized.

R. Nathan's resort to the two Tetragrammata in the context of the two biblical protagonists Rebecca and Jacob is interesting: the biblical figures are construed as possessing some theophoric dimension, and the two spiritual faculties representing them are conceived of as sharing some divine quality. When the two have been united to each other, they are also united to the Agent Intellect. In any case, according to a view of Abulafia's, which is presumably hinted at by R. Nathan, the Agent Intellect is found also in man,<sup>238</sup> and this may be the meaning of the statement that Jacob, namely the human intellect, is also Israel, which as seen above is an allegory for the Agent Intellect. That would certainly account for the attribution of the divine name to Jacob, as the human intellect that becomes with time identical to the Agent Intellect. The human soul, namely Rebecca, is

therefore to be understood, at least if we compare R. Nathan to one of Abulafia's discussions, as the arena for the struggle between the two instincts, referred to as the two sons of Isaac and Rebecca: Jacob and Esau, or the angels Metatron and Sandalfon (the latter corresponding sometimes to Satan), understood as inner powers, respectively. This spiritual struggle, a real psychomachia, as well as the technical role of the divine name in attaining the unitive experience, represents active approaches, which are conceived of as quintessential for the emergence of the intellect that is related to the son.

Let me turn once again to the theophoric aspect of Moses's intellectual apotheosis in R. Nathan's book. Like Jacob and Rebecca in the first text, the transformed Moses, perhaps in the quality of being the 'lasting son', or the 'male son', is also designated by the Tetragrammaton:

this is the name by which he will be called 'YHWH our righteous one'.<sup>239</sup> And this is the matter of [the verse]<sup>240</sup> 'Behold an angel will walk before you'. And he said to him 'Do not betray him because My Name is within him.'<sup>241</sup> But Moses, blessed be his memory, did not want to be under his dominion, namely to change himself,<sup>242</sup> and become the attribute of mercy under [the dominion of] the attribute of judgment. This is why he said: 'If your Face does not walk, do not send us up from here.'<sup>243</sup> And this is a very sublime matter; many quandaries of the Torah will be solved when this is understood.<sup>244</sup>

The transformation of the lower man into supernal man is tantamount to being called by the Tetragrammaton and in this case also the process of becoming the attribute of mercy. While on high Moses unties his links to nature, referred to by the name '*Adonai*, governing the unredeemed world, and knots himself to the letters of the Tetragrammaton, this move allows a transition from the human to the divine, or from the attribute of judgment to that of mercy.<sup>245</sup> Being identified with this latter attribute, Moses refuses to subordinate himself to the angel who represents the attribute of judgment, an attribute that stands for the human power of imagination, in contrast to the attribute of mercy, which stands for the power of the intellect.<sup>246</sup> Let me point out that the last quoted passage reflects an interesting shift from an understanding of the verse from Exodus as a theophanic description of the divine rule over the Israelites, to an apothetic description of Moses.

This reading of sonship is part, to be sure, of the path of interiorization that is characteristic of Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah, and in more general terms though to a lesser degree of intensity, of the views of his contemporaries, the young Kabbalists Moses de Leon and Joseph Gikatilla, in addition to R. Nathan Ḥarar. The young Gikatilla was, like

R. Nathan, a former student of Abulafia's. Their views should be understood therefore by resorting to a detailed analysis of their specific thought, as they appear sometimes only in a given period of their literary activity, and even in their specific terms that may appear only in a certain book. It should be mentioned that the philosophical background, mainly Maimonides' thought, is a common general denominator of their reflections, though the mark of Ashkenazi numerical speculations can be discerned to various degrees in all their kabbalistic writings. Thus, if the intention of R. Nathan is to decode the meaning of the biblical figures, he does so, like Abulafia beforehand, by using an allegorical interpretation, which not only reduces dramatically the historicity of the events told in the Hebrew Bible, but also marginalizes the narrative of the sacred text, by ignoring the more dramatic aspects of the canonical text in favor of a more simple and abstract statement. The more mythical-literary structures of the Hebrew Bible have been transformed into mental events, and an interiorized religious path has been imposed, resorting to an exegetical technique that differs from the symbolic/mythical approach characteristic of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah.

Thus, a drastic difference can be discerned between what scholars call the symbolic mode of the main schools in Kabbalah to be discussed in some detail in the next chapter, and the thrust of the exegetical approach of ecstatic Kabbalah. Any sweeping analyses of kabbalistic complex texts in general, or even characterizations of ecstatic Kabbalah as a whole, as subscribing to a common denominator shared also by other Kabbalists – symbolism, changes of gender in our case, or phallogocentric views in many other cases<sup>247</sup> – are prone to become sometimes rather precarious academic enterprises. More flexible understandings based on detailed analyses that presuppose the importance of strong syntheses, of the inevitable emergence of conceptual nuances and even of substantial differences, and in some cases even heated controversies between rival kabbalistic schools, will do greater justice to the complex texts of the Kabbalists than an imposition of general theories.<sup>248</sup> It happens that even when a Kabbalist took care to explicate his gematria in a relatively clear manner and in the same context that it occurs, the strength of general theories is much greater than textual evidence, and these are imposed on the kabbalistic discourse. I would say, as I have attempted to show elsewhere in more general terms<sup>249</sup> as well as in this chapter, that even the books of the same Kabbalist, in our case Abulafia, should be analyzed in accordance with the different stages of his spiritual development, and I have tried to explain the emergence of the theme of sonship of God as the result of an encounter with R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's texts that took place in the late 1270s, which enriched Abulafia's Kabbalistic thought, and as seen above, also that of some of his disciples.

Scholarship can advance mainly when it is predicated on distinctions between different ways of thought, characteristic of different individuals or schools, which are first clarified by separate analyses, and only then more general conclusions may be drawn.

In any case, we have seen in both Abulafia and in R. Nathan the importance of the path of interiorization, a religious approach that is quite widespread in medieval Jewish sources, that sometimes drastically reduces the identity of the complex protagonists of the Hebrew Bible, as well as the series of post-biblical archangels and demons that were mentioned above, to simpler and inner mental processes. This strategy is derived from the philosophical treatments of ancient Greek thinkers, and in our case it transforms the ancient figures which belong to a certain nation and are described as acting in a certain specific period of time, and the specific Hebrew expressions of their lives, into trans-historical events that may take place in everyman, thus obliterating the uniqueness of the historical events and the specificity of their linguistic formulations, allowing for a more universalistic interpretation of Judaism. The linguistic deconstruction on the one hand, and the intellectual way in which the deconstructed text has been reconstructed, corroborate much more universal messages than those we find in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists, whose views will be analyzed in the next chapter.<sup>250</sup> None of them would concur with Abulafia's – and implicitly also R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah's – explicit and emphatic statement that the two main sources of his Kabbalah were *Sefer Yetzirah* and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, when these sources have been combined.<sup>251</sup> It is from the synthesis between some of the content of those two major sources, among others, which he massively adopted and adapted, that the complex hermeneutical approaches that allowed him to shape his theory of sonship stems. The linguistic element, as found in *Sefer Yetzirah* and its reverberations in the Ashkenazi culture, is related not only to mystical and exegetical techniques, but also to the prophetic elements characteristic of Abulafia's Kabbalah and experiences, like hearing messages, while Maimonides' *Guide* contributed much more to the psychological and ontological system that conferred meaning to Abulafia's experiences. Surprising as it may be for some readers, Maimonides was one of the main sources for Abulafia's mysticism, and especially of the specific manner in which he understood his experiences and sometimes also the Sacred Scriptures. To define one's mystical enterprise, and in fact his Kabbalah, in the manner Abulafia did, amounts to a recognition that it is a medieval phenomenon, determined by the opus of the Great Eagle, who died just two generations beforehand, a position quite exceptional among Kabbalists, who attempted to emphasize the hoary antiquity of their lore. It also acknowledges the role played by a certain specific personality in forging

what he conceives of as being the highest form of Kabbalah. It should be mentioned in this context that in Enochic literature, especially in 1 *Enoch*, there are strong inclusive expressions that point to a much greater openness toward the gentiles, at least in the eschatological future.<sup>252</sup> Acquainted as Abulafia was with some aspects of this literature, and operating according to his self-awareness in the eschatological era, his approach is incomparably more open than those of the other Kabbalists of his generation.

Thus, Abulafia's Kabbalah – and to a certain extent also R. Nathan's – reflects the synthesis not only between diverse types of spiritual sources, but also between different dimensions of his experiences: the mystical-ecstatic and the prophetic.<sup>253</sup> Abulafia's special contribution to Kabbalah consists therefore in both mystical elements, especially the ecstatic ones, characteristic of Philo of Alexandria, and of many pagan Neo-Platonic thinkers,<sup>254</sup> and of the prophetic mode, influenced by the Hebrew Bible and Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.

### 7. Some concluding reflections

One last comment on Abraham Abulafia's – and to a certain extent also on R. Nathan's – multiple cultural backgrounds beyond what has already been discussed above. Abulafia was indubitably an extraordinary example of an itinerant scholar, and there were few others who ought to be compared with him from this point of view. It is only the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century that created circumstances that forced the Spanish Kabbalists to roam in the same geographical areas where Abulafia lived and traveled two centuries beforehand.<sup>255</sup> Abulafia did it, however, for other reasons, either out of curiosity or, apparently later on, because of a sense of mission he felt as both a prophet and a Messiah, someone who was sent by a revelation to meet the representative of Christianity, the Pope.

Born and educated in Saragossa and Tudela in Aragon, the young Abulafia traveled to the land of Israel in 1260, married in the Byzantine empire either soon beforehand or immediately afterwards, studied Jewish philosophy in Italy around 1265, and some forms of Kabbalah in Barcelona afterwards, and then traveled again in numerous other places including towns in Castile and in the Peloponese part of the Byzantine Empire, before visiting Capua and Rome, and finally remaining in Sicily for most of the last decade of his life. In most of these locations he taught the *Guide of the Perplexed* and his specific type of Kabbalah, conceived of as part of the hidden message of Maimonides. Though presumably never present in any Ashkenazi provinces, he nevertheless adopted a variety of major Ashkenazi traditions,<sup>256</sup> and though never in Egypt or resident of a strongly Islamic environment, he

adopted Maimonides' Neo-Aristotelianism as the main conceptual framework of his thought and remained faithful to it, as he understood it, throughout his life. Though he never visited India, he was probably influenced by a Yogian practice of breathing, perhaps as mediated by Sufi material.<sup>257</sup> His views of sonship, closer from the phenomenological point of view to Philo's views than to anyone else before him, are not connected to a visit he paid to Alexandria, and perhaps even not to his knowledge – perhaps quite rudimentary – of Greek,<sup>258</sup> but resulted from the repetition, *mutatis mutandis*, of similar cultural processes that brought together Jewish and Hellenistic themes, and perhaps also to some traditions he was acquainted with such as the affinity between Yaho'el, Abraham and sonship. Thus, any attempt to reduce his thought to a certain single intellectual background or context will amount to a sharp oversimplification. Many complex cultural contexts should be addressed, sometimes operative simultaneously, by any scholar who wishes to do justice to his mystical thought.<sup>259</sup> It is especially important to point out that Abulafia inherited some themes stemming from the various schools of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, which in their turn inherited these themes from the Heikhalot literature, whose authors presumably inherited them from earlier mythologoumena, stemming from the later part of the Second Temple period. By detecting Abulafia's influences, as they were discussed above, we may define a certain tradition that developed over centuries in different centers of Jewish culture.<sup>260</sup> From many points of view, this line of tradition differs from the main line in Kabbalah, the theosophical-theurgical one, to be discussed in the next chapter, which draws from other sorts of Jewish and non-Jewish traditions.<sup>261</sup>

Abulafia was, no doubt, an idiosyncratic figure in the history of Kabbalah. Nonetheless the question is whether he was so exceptional in Jewish culture that we may learn nothing from the processes that nourished the emergence of his specific Kabbalah. The answer is that many Kabbalists indeed traveled, at least to a certain extent, from one city to another, and the emergence of their thought should be examined with the assumption in mind that acquaintance with many cultural contexts is necessary for a more subtle understanding of their writings. Geographical mobility, from time to time a situation that has been imposed on Kabbalists by external factors – like the expulsion from Spain mentioned above – which means inherently encountering multiple cultural contexts, is one of the most interesting facets of the history of Kabbalah. Attempts to locate one single, hegemonic and sometimes implicitly homogenous cultural background, and thus to situate culturally the intellectual identity of itinerant scholars, texts transmitted for generations and flexible conceptual systems, to a single type of cultural context, are prone to reduce much more complex cultural situations to historicist and thus simplistic explanations. History, like sociology, is a tool

that has quite a limited explanatory force in matters of religion, and explanations of important developments in this field should be envisioned beyond the small boundaries of a certain geographical area, as well as in some cases beyond the concrete factors in general.<sup>262</sup>

From another point of view, we operate in this study with more comprehensive or panoramic frameworks concerning transmission of religious knowledge, like those formulated by Moses Gaster, Simo Parpola and in a more limited sense, also Shlomo Pines,<sup>263</sup> Henry Corbin, Jean Seznec,<sup>264</sup> and H.I. Marrou, who emphasized the importance of some aspects of late antiquity for understanding various aspects of speculative views which developed in the Middle Ages. Less concerned with the impact of the classical culture of antiquity, these frameworks deal with more eclectic, synthetic and doxographical treatises, which frequently remain outside the concern of scholars in the field of both history of philosophy and history of religion. The resort to Pythagoreanism in order to explain better some aspects of Abulafia's thought, namely the meaning of commandments like phylacteries, may be one such example.<sup>265</sup> They assume the dissemination of certain mythologoumena and theologoumena in larger geographical areas, first in southern Europe and then in its other parts, and attempts at restricting the presence of a certain theme to just one limited geographical area and grounding scholarly analyses on it are hazardous, from this perspective; even more so when the theme under scrutiny, here sonship, is such a widespread one.

## Notes

- 1 For intercorporality as a crucial cultural situation, which facilitated strong forms of interpretations of the Jewish traditional writings by resorting to dramatically different bodies of literature, see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 251–2, 340–2.
- 2 On this issue see Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'. On forms of order in Greek thought see Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, pp. 96, 127–8. On the concept of renaissances and Jewish mysticism see Idel, 'On European Cultural Renaissances'.
- 3 On the messianic elements in his writings see Abraham Berger, 'The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia – A Tentative Evaluation', in eds, J.E. Blau et al., *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1959), pp. 55–61; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 58–100; Idel, '“The Time of the End”: Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology', in ed., Albert Baumgarten, *Apocalyptic Time* (Brill, Leiden, 2000), pp. 155–86.
- 4 On these commentaries see Chaim Wirzubski, 'Liber Redemptionis – the Early Version of R. Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalistic Commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed* in the Latin Translation of Flavius Mithridates', *Divrei ha-Akademia ha-*

- Le'umit ha-Israelit le-Mada'im* (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 1970), vol. 3, pp. 139–49; Alexander Altmann, 'Maimonides' Attitude toward Jewish Mysticism', in ed., Alfred Jospe, *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1981), pp. 200–19; and Idel, 'Maimonides' 'Guide of the Perplexed' and the Kabbalah', *Jewish History* 18 (2–3) (2004), pp. 197–226; Idel, 'Abulafia's Secrets of the *Guide*: A Linguistic Turn', in eds, Alfred Ivri, E.R. Wolfson & Allan Arkush, *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism* (Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 289–329.
- 5 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b according to the interpretations of Rashi ad locum, and on Exod. 23.21. For the transference of this dictum to the relationship between the mystic and Metatron see below in this chapter.
  - 6 It should be mentioned that in his Commentary on Genesis, entitled *Mafteah ha-Hokhmot*, Abulafia mentions philosophers who attributed to the Agent Intellect the Tetragrammaton and other divine names. See MS. Moscow-Guensburg 133, fol. 23b, and Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, p. 111. See also below, note 193.
  - 7 For the history of this dictum see Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron'. In fact a threefold hierarchy of names has been built up, by putting together two earlier dicta, that from *Sanhedrin* and one from the Heikhalot literature. For more on this threefold hierarchy see below in the next section. For some comparative reflections related to this statement see also Corbin, *Avicenne*, p. 77.
  - 8 This is a bibliographical mistake. The text belongs, as mentioned in Chapter 2, to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo. Interestingly enough, Flavius Mithridates's Latin translation of this book of Abulafia's mentions *Liber animae*, a title that fits R. Eleazar of Worms.
  - 9 Namely in the late *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*. See above Chapter 2 note 14.
  - 10 Namely in the Heikhalot literature.
  - 11 In gematria 52 as two times the Tetragrammaton, hinted at in the following phrase. A partial parallel to this passage is found in *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, a quotation to be adduced below.
  - 12 *Kefel ha-shem*. See the occurrence of the term *kaful*, double, above, Chapter 2 note 40. On the numerical identity between two Tetragrammata and 'Eliyahu see the early sixteenth-century follower of Abulafia active in northern Italy, R. Asher Lemlein Reutlinger. Cf. the important text printed by Ephrayim Kupfer, 'The Visions of R. Asher ben Meir called Lemlein of Reutlingen', *Qovetz al yad* 8 (18), (1976), p. 401. Interestingly enough, he was also addressed in a rare revelation he had from a feminine power, by the term 'My son'. See *ibid.*, pp. 399, 403. It should be pointed out that also in a few other instances medieval mystics have been described by God, or other entities that revealed themselves, as sons. See the designation of R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai as the son of the speaker, who is God, in *Sefer ha-Meshiv*; Idel, 'Inquiries', p. 188; and Scholem, 'The Maggid', pp. 76–7; and Joseph Karo described as the son, in the revelations of a feminine figure, sometimes described as a mother, in Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, p. 126.
  - 13 If the letter 'He' is removed, as is the case in MS. New York and in the quotation

in R. Reuven Tzarfati's book, the expression amounts in gematria to 52, just as the many other words following it.

- 14 *Ba-kol*. This word may point to an immanent type of theology. See also above, Chapter 2, in the first quotations from R. Nehemiah.
- 15 This royal description reflects both the Talmudic concept of the Prince of the World, and the kingly perception of this figure in 3 *Enoch*. See above, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 note 60. For the very same expression, *Manhig ha-'Olam*, in the context of Metatron see also in the book attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1568, fol. 21a, quoted also in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 259–60. On the concept of the ruler of the world in ancient Jewish texts see Segal, 'Ruler of This World', and Couliano, *Experiences de l'extase*, pp. 69–70. On Metatron as appointed upon the world see also a text analyzed in Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 272–3; Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, p. 92, and below in the Appendix, in the quotations from the Karaite author R. Aharon ben Elijah.
- 16 This quotation stems from the 'Secret of Angel and Intellect', 1.6, MS. Paris BN 774, fols 129b–130b; MS. New York, JTS, Mic. 2367 fol. 29a, and see the printed version of *Sitrei Torah*, ed. Gross, pp. 53–4. For more on this text see Wirstubshi, *Picodella Mirandola*, pp. 231–3, Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 85–94, and Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 303–4 note 64. See also the interesting reverberation of this passage in the short discussion where Abulafia related *Ben = Ba-kol* and Enoch, in a later book, 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 1.1, ed. Gross, p. 37. See also Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 118, and *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 85–7; for references to other manuscripts of this book where this passage is found see Daniel Abrams, 'Traces of the Lost Commentary to the Book of Creation by R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), p. 313 note 9 (Hebrew); and Elqayam, 'Sabbatai Sevi', p. 379. I do not accept Elqayam's assumption that Abulafia's interpretation of sonship in this specific passage is necessarily influenced by Christology since the concept of sonship is found explicitly in his Ashkenazi source. However, in other cases, Christian influences on Abulafia's soteriology can indeed be detected. See e.g. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 295–307 and also here below in several instances. It should be pointed out that the reference in the very same context to both the hypostatic Son and the divine spirit as identical entities does not fit any Christian theory I am acquainted with. For more on the term *Ben* and the fierce critique of the philosopher R. Zerahyah ben She'altiel Hen (Gracian) of Rome on this matter see Aviezer Ravitzky, *History and Faith* (Gieben, Amsterdam, 1996), p. 265; and Idel, 'Maimonides and Kabbalah', *Studies in Maimonides*, p. 69.

For an interesting appropriation of Abulafia's passage, see the manuscript version of R. Reuven Tzarfati's *Commentary on Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohu*, MS. Cambridge, Trinity College 108, fol. 123b. There the late fourteenth-century Italian Kabbalist attributes the passage to R. Yehudah he-Hasid on the one hand – following the title found at the end of the quotation in Abulafia – and to an oral tradition that he claimed to have received, on the other. There can be no doubt that this author was acquainted with Abulafia's *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, and no weight should be attributed to the idea that this late fourteenth-century tradition

possessed such an oral tradition since all the material found there is already mentioned in Abulafia's *Sitrei Torah*. As I shall try to show elsewhere, the New York JTS manuscript of *Sitrei Torah* mentioned above in this note (and copied in 1392 in Italy) includes also other material that is connected to R. Reuven, and should be taken into consideration for any serious analysis of the thought of this Kabbalist. Thus it seems that Abulafia's passage left an imprint on the Kabbalists in Italy, as we learn also from material mentioned in note 12 above. See also note 33 below. The passage has also been copied anonymously in the glosses added by R. Sabbatai Potto – a Byzantine Kabbalist of the early fifteenth century – on R. Menahem Recanati's *Commentary on the Torah*, MS. Paris BN 786, fol. 116b, and he mentions at the end, following Abulafia, that those matters and similar to them, are 'words of Kabbalah'. This is one more interesting example showing how, not only in ecstatic Kabbalah but also in the theosophical-theurgical one, Ashkenazi traditions were conceived of as 'Kabbalah'.

- 17 See, especially, Dan, 'Seventy Names of Metatron', and Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', p. 301.
- 18 It is hard to know when and where exactly Abulafia became acquainted with this treatise. Such an acquaintance could start at least in principle in Barcelona at the beginning of the 1270s, when he started to study Kabbalah, including some commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah* belonging to Ashkenazi figures, R. Yehudah he-Hasid and R. Eleazar of Worms (see Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati, the Kabbalist*, vol. 1, pp. 33–4), or perhaps later on in Italy, probably in Rome sometime shortly before 1280. I prefer the latter possibility. Cf., Idel, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back'. In any case, the name Yaho'el does not occur in the earlier discussions of the secret of *Ben* in the two other commentaries on the *Guide*, neither is it found in the early writings of R. Joseph Gikatilla, which were influenced by Abulafia, or in those of R. Moses de Leon, both Kabbalists who displayed in their youth different syntheses between numerical speculations and philosophical ones.
- 19 *Major Trends*, pp. 68–9; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 89, 186–7. It should be mentioned that the name Yaho'el occurs once already in the Heikhalot literature, as pointed out above in Chapters 1 and 2.
- 20 An issue that I cannot enter into here is whether Abulafia had access to a version of the Ashkenazi text where some additions had been inserted, and whether he was less acquainted with the 'original' Ashkenazi passage. This issue is, however, too complex to be treated in this framework, and not pertinent to our discussion. For the issue of censorship in a passage where the Messiah and *Ben* are mentioned in another text of R. Nehemiah see above, Chapter 2 note 13. On the Ashkenazi influence on Abulafia's Kabbalah see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 22–4.
- 21 Exod. 23.20–21. On the theology of the divine name in ancient Judeo-Christian tradition see our discussion in the Introduction above. Abulafia refers several times to these verses in the context of Metatron. See e.g. *Sitrei Torah*, ed. Gross, pp. 53–4, in a discussion that immediately follows the first quotation adduced above and, unlike Maimonides repeated attempts to obliterate the role of the

- angel and the divine name (see above, Introduction note 21), the ecstatic Kabbalist follows the tradition of R. Nehemiah, whose passage he quotes.
- 22 *Major Trends*, p. 68.
- 23 On this issue see Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron'.
- 24 This comparison recurs in the Middle Ages where it describes the relationship between theology – the lady – and philosophy – the handmaiden. *En passant*, this passage demonstrates that Abulafia envisioned his type of worship, based upon the knowledge and recitation of the divine names, as higher than any other form of worship, including the rabbinic commandments. Compare, however, the description of Abulafia as a hypernomian Kabbalist in Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 204ff and compare to Idel, 'The Interpretations of the Secret of Incest', pp. 159–89.
- 25 *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, MS. Munchen 285, fol. 21b.
- 26 I assume the knowledge of the divine name.
- 27 The meaning is not so clear and the translation is doubtful. The Hebrew term translated here is *Le-toledet*.
- 28 The letter *Nun* stands in Hebrew sources for 50. Thus Joshua bin Nun was understood as 'Joshua had the age of 50'. To it the letter *Yod*, which amounts to 10, has been added according to the verse from the Bible to be cited immediately below, which amounts to 60. Though imagined to be aged 60, Joshua has been described in the Bible as *Na'ar*, youth, an absurd fact that demands, in Abulafia's mind, another esoteric explanation, not in the plain sense of the Bible, namely an intellectual explanation. On the various connections between the name *Joshua* and Jesus in rabbinic literature see Lauterbach, 'Jesus in the Talmud'. It should be pointed out that in a few cases of Jewish exegesis of Exod. 23.21, dealing with the presence of the name of God within the anonymous angel, exegetes identified this angel as the angel of the host of the Lord revealed to Joshua, by adducing the verses from Josh. 5.15–16.
- 29 Num. 13.16.
- 30 This is a tentative translation of *neherag bi-frat*.
- 31 MS. Munich 285, fol. 21b.
- 32 See also below, notes 50 and 123. For the different views of the Agent Intellect, which served as sources of Maimonides and thus also of Abulafia, see the Herbert A. Davidson's important monograph, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of Active Intellect and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1992). On the role of this concept in the Jewish philosophical theories of prophecy see Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy, The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2001), index, under Active Intellect; and Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 345. It should be mentioned that most of the Arabic and Jewish understandings of the Agent Intellect in fact accepted an early medieval interpretation of Aristotle's *nous poetikos*, as articulated in a fragment reported in the name of the fifth-century Neo-Platonic thinker of Samaritan extraction, Marinus of Neapolis (Nabulus). See Walzer, 'Al-Farabi's Theory of Prophecy and Divination', *Greek into Arabic*, p. 210, and Davidson, *ibid.*, pp. 14–15, and now *Marinus, Proclus sur le Bonheur*, eds. Henri Dominique

- Safrey & Alain-Philippe Segonds (Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2001), pp. xxx–xxxv. For theories of the Agent Intellect in the interpreters of Aristotle see Barbotin, *La théorie aristotélicienne*, especially pp. 216–40. See above, Introduction note 176. It should be mentioned that mystical moments related to the processes of intellection involved in the theories concerning the Agent Intellect in the Arabic thinkers and their repercussions have been discussed by Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness* (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1963). For the interesting recurrence of the Great Angel understood as a cosmic intellect in a thirteenth-century series of philosophical commentaries on Talmudic legends, see Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*, pp. 48–60. For a discussion of the Agent Intellect, where ecstatic statements of al-Hallaj are quoted, see the view of Al-Ghazzali, as quoted by Abner of Burgos, in Gershenzon, *A Study*, p. 165, to be discussed below in some detail. It should be mentioned that in several of his studies Henry Corbin has pointed out the affinities between the Agent Intellect and a variety of other speculative traditions that have been combined with this concept. See e.g. his *Avicenne*, *passim*. It should be mentioned that Corbin, *ibid.*, describes Avicenna's philosophy as prophetic, a view that is pertinent also for Abulafia's system, *mutatis mutandis*. See Shlomo Pines's forward to my *The Mystical Experience*.
- 33 On *Yehoshu'a* as pointing to Jesus in early Christianity see Stroumsa, 'The Early Christian Fish Symbol', pp. 202–5. For an exalted vision of *Yehoshu'a*, see the anonymous discussion found in MS. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 98b, probably written by R. Reuven Tzarfati. See above, note 16.
- 34 See Bahya ben Asher's Commentary on Exod. 32.5.
- 35 See Ashkenazi and French commentaries entitled *Perush Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, and *Hazquni* on Exod. 31.1–2, and *Da'at Zeqenim* and *ha-Rosh* on Exod. 35.30.
- 36 See *Sefer Gematria'ot* of R. Yehudah he-Hasid, pp. 125–6.
- 37 *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 67.
- 38 *Hanokh ben Yered*. The numerical value of this phrase is 350, which is precisely that of *Mokhiah dabbraniy*, the intellectual preacher to be mentioned immediately below. See also the gematria of *Hanokh ben Yered* = 350 = *Shemy* [My name] = *Sekhel* [intellect] in R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, *Kivei Ha-G'mm*, ed. S.A. Stern (Jerusalem, 2001), vol. 2, p. 349. Well acquainted with Abulafia's thought – see also below, note 161 – he might have been influenced by a stand of the ecstatic Kabbalist.
- 39 *Banu*. On this issue see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 83–6.
- 40 Here it is one of the few cases in which Abulafia mentions the righteous as a meaningful category for his mysticism, apparently following the rabbinic passages concerning the reception of the divine name by the righteous. See above, Introduction, and in Chapter 1.
- 41 This is an old Christian tradition about the arrival of the two harbingers, before the second coming of the Christ and also witnesses. However, one cannot exclude the possibility of an earlier Jewish tradition that influenced the Christian one, and was marginalized in Jewish circles, to the extent that only Elijah remained the harbinger of the messianic message. Abulafia himself mentions this

- tradition in his *Sitrei Torah*, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 132b, and see Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 178–9; Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron', p. 227.
- 42 MS. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 13b; ed. M. Safrin (Torat Hakham, Jerusalem, 1999), p. 41.
- 43 'The Angels of the Shofar', pp. 176–7.
- 44 The numerical value of the name 'Elohim is 86, but in this context the number probably emerges from the plene spelling of *KaF Vav*: the initial letters are *KV* and the final ones are *PV*, namely 86.
- 45 Gen. 24.1.
- 46 See *Sefer Mafteah ha-Shemot*, MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 54b. On Ben as comprising two divine names see also 'Otzar *Eden Ganuz*, p. 84. No doubt this gematria taken from R. Nehemiah can be described as a leitmotif in Abulafia's writings after 1279.
- 47 Compare to Dan. 8.15–16.
- 48 *Be-Mar'eh*. It is quite reasonable to assume that Abulafia hints at his first name, *Abraham*, whose permuted consonants are identical to those of *be-Mar'eh*.
- 49 This description reflects the Aramaic verse in Dan. 7.9, one of the most important verses, which contributed to much of the speculation on supernal man and the Son of Man. See also the resort to the Daniel verse in the *Apocalypse of Abraham's* description of Yaho'el, 11.1–4.
- 50 It seems reasonable to assume that there is here a hint at the name Israel – the name of the nation – which is an allegory for the Agent Intellect, as its consonants *Yisra'el* amount to 541 like *Shekkel ha-Po'el*. See also Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, pp. 36, 38, 40, 41, 110, 120, and *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 338; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 144–5, as well as note 213 below. This universalistic approach to the source of the identity of Israel is reminiscent of Philo of Alexandria, whose views have been discussed in the Introduction. See also below, note 196. Compare to another interpretation of this gematria in Wolfson, *ibid.*, pp. 226–7. For the view of Agent Intellect as the 'primordial speech', namely reminiscent of the Logos in Philo, see Abulafia's epistle *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, p. 16, as discussed in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 83–4. Interestingly enough, a view that identifies the first creature, '*Alul ha-rishon*, with the Son, and the firstborn son, and Israel, is found in the early seventeenth-century, quite particularistic Jewish thinker, R. Yehudah Loew of Prague, known as the Maharal, in his *Netzah Israel*, ch. 11 (Yahadut, Benei Beraq, 1980), pp. 65–75. In his other book, *Tiferet Israel*, ch. 70, ed., Hayyim Pardes (Yad Mordekhai, Tel Aviv, 1979), pp. 542–7, the first creature is often called Israel, and in all those cases this author refers to the entire nation of Israel. On the views on Israel in the writings of this author see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, pp. 117–20, and Byron L. Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent, The Life and Works of Yehudah Loew of Prague* (Littman Library, London, Toronto, 1982), pp. 84–94, 98–101, 116–17.
- 51 Compare to Dan. 10.18.
- 52 *Ho'yil*. This is a pun on the consonants of *Yaho'el*. On p. 85 the same verb is used in order to point out the agreement of God to redeem. This pun stems also from an interpretation found anonymously in MS. London, British Library 752, fol. 45b (discussed above in Chapter 2), which belongs to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo.
- 53 Because of this sentence, it is possible that the occurrence of the name Yaho'el in books written in 1280 may reflect not only some appropriation of Ashkenazi material, but also some experiential aspects. See, *exempla gratia*, the occurrence of the words 'Ben Abraham, Yaho'el Raziel' in Abulafia's commentary on his *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, printed in *Matzref ha-Sekhel*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), p. 92. The meaning here is that the son is revealed to Abraham, as Yaho'el is to Raziel, which is, as will become clear in this chapter, but another name for Abulafia's proper name Abraham. This short reference may point out that several years before the writing of *Sefer ha-'Ot*, Yaho'el revealed itself to Abulafia, as it is claimed in the latter book.
- 54 In gematria 248 – like the consonants of Abraham, Abulafia's first name. This name recurs also on p. 85.
- 55 This name is numerically equivalent to the name Shmu'el, the name of Abulafia's father.
- 56 The consonants of *Meshihuy*, My Messiah, are identical to those of *Hamishiy*. This pun is already found in R. Efrayim ben Shimshon's *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, p. 11. See also R. Isaac of Acre's description of the ascending process of cleaving, which culminates with the fifth stage, what he describes as the union with the Infinite; cf. '*Otzar Hayyim*, MS. Moscow-Guensburg 775, fol. 233b.
- 57 *Sefer ha-'Ot*, pp. 84–5.
- 58 See the translation of R. Rubinkiewicz, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 697, par. 9 and Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 16–18. It should be mentioned that both in *Sefer ha-'Ot*, in the quotation cited above, and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the same angel causes Abraham to stand upon his feet, after he falls on his face. On falling on the face as part of a revelatory experience see Pedaya, *Vision and Speech*, pp. 47–70.
- 59 See ch. 9.8, ed. Rubinkiewicz, p. 693. On the possibility that the *Apocalypse* was known in Arabic see Steven M. Wasserstrom, 'Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Qisas al-Anbiya', in eds, Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes & Fred Astren, *Judaism and Islam, Boundaries, Communication and Interaction, Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner* (Brill, Leiden, 2000), pp. 237–56. For revelations on mountains see Sh. Arzi, M. Idel, Th. Landis & O. Blanke, 'Why Revelations Have Occurred on Mountains? Linking Mystical Experience and Cognitive Neuroscience', *Medical Hypotheses* 65 (2005), pp. 841–5.
- 60 See also above, Chapter 2. In the Ashkenazi material adduced there is, however, no first-person discussion between Yaho'el and Abraham as is the case in the late antiquity one and the medieval apocalypses.
- 61 See A. Rubinstein, 'Hebraisms in Slavonic "Apocalypse of Abraham"', *JJS* 4 (1953), pp. 108–15; 5 (1954) pp. 132–5; and Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*.
- 62 Vol. 1, p. 77
- 63 *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 70, fol. 9a. See also Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 83–4.
- 64 'The Angels of the Shofar'.

- 65 See the version of this passage established by Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 176.
- 66 For more on this issue see Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron'; Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 195–203. It should be pointed out that elsewhere in his *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Abulafia distinguishes between those born *de facto* in the Hebrew Bible, and whose meaning is therefore literal, and other biblical expressions, like 'Israel, My firstborn son' which should be understood metaphorically, pointing to something conceived of as eminent. A third type of sonship is related to derivation of one entity from another, and may refer to the descending influx, for example. See *Sitrei Torah*, ed. Gross, pp. 22–6. See also below, note 213.
- 67 P. 81; see also Idel, *Golem*, pp. 102–3.
- 68 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 73–4, 102–3, 145. It should be mentioned that at least in one additional discussion, there is another direct connection between *tzelem* and the divine name, in the context of Metatron and Agent Intellect. In his *Sitrei Torah*, 1.1, ed. Gross, pp. 20–1 he connects the concept of image with the phrase, 'his name is like the name of his master', and in this context also the distinction between *Tzelem* and *Demut* as intellect and imagination is mentioned. See especially the sort of discussion in *ibid.*, pp. 21–2, where the connection between *tzelem* and *Ben* is explicit: whoever does not have an image, namely is not possessing an intellect, cannot be a son. For another explicit connection between *Tzelem* and spiritual sons, *banim nafshiyim*, see the view of R. Moses ha-Kohen Ashkenazi, a philosophically oriented inhabitant of Candia, Crete, who flourished in the late fifteenth century; cf. Idel, *ibid.*, p. 218 note 110.
- Following Maimonides, Abulafia asserted several times that the children of Adam who were born before Seth were not sons, since they did not possess the image of God. Interestingly enough, *tzelem* and *demut* are compared to intellect and imagination, and to son and daughter, respectively. See Abulafia's '*Otzar Eden Ganuz*, 1.3, p. 110. See also *ibid.*, 1.2, p. 83.
- 69 See '*Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, vol. 4, pp. 74–83; Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, pp. 104–12.
- 70 Ed., Z.H. Filipowski, printed in the collection of Hebrew texts entitled *he-'Asif* (London, 1847), p. 2. On this passage and parallels in R. Yehudah ha-Levi's Kuzari, R. Abraham ibn Dawd and ibn Caspi, see David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der Juedischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters* (F.A. Perthes, Gotha, 1877), pp. 204–5 note 181, and Harry A. Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, eds Isadore Twersky & George H. Williams (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1977), vol. 1, p. 64 note 19. Another passage from the book of Al-Farabi has been quoted verbatim in a commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed* by Abulafia, *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, MS. Munchen 408, fol. 12b, ed. Gross, p. 18. See the important remarks of Moritz Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi* (St Petersburg, 1869), p. 243 to this effect. The impact of this passage is evident also in two discussions in his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*. See his *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, ed. Gross, p. 26, and *Mafteah ha-Sefirot*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), p. 33. Al-Farabi's book was known to Abulafia's teacher, R.

Hillel of Verona in his book *Tagmulei ha-Nefesh*. See ed. Giuseppe Sermonetta (Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1981), index, under Al-Farabi, p. 268 (Hebrew). For the theory of prophecy of this Muslim thinker see Walzer, 'Al-Farabi's Theory of Prophecy and Divination', *Greek into Arabic*, pp. 206–19 and for its impact on Maimonides, see Jeffrey Macy, 'Prophecy in al-Farabi and Maimonides: The Imaginative and the Rational Faculties', in eds, Shlomo Pines & Yermiah Yovel, *Maimonides and Philosophy* (Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 1986), pp. 185–92. For another example of the understanding of the Agent Intellect as identical to the Neo-Platonic universal intellect, or to the first of the series of separate intellects found in several Jewish texts, philosophical and mystical, see Amos Goldreich, 'An Unknown Treatise on Suffering by Abu Al-Kasim Al-Kirmanî', in eds, Moshe Idel, Zeev W. Harvey & Eliezer Schweid, *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Eighteenth Birthday* (National and University Library, Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 202–4 (Hebrew) who adduced the pertinent secondary literature. Compare also to the son as the first emanated intellect in Neo-Platonic sources mentioned above, Introduction note 149. For a kabbalistic vision of the Agent Intellect as the supernal crown of the separate intellects, in the context of its being as a father that gives birth see the position of R. Isaiah ben Joseph of Greece, as discussed in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 197. On the Gnostic and Neo-Platonic theories of the procession of the Son as Intellect, from the Father, see Jean Pèpin, 'Theories of Procession in Plotinus and Gnostics', in eds, Richard T. Wallis & Jay Bregman, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), pp. 297–35, especially, pp. 298, 317. No doubt the Gnostic authors were much more inclined toward more sexualized worldviews than the Neo-Platonic ones.

71 Cf. the magical book, *Shimmushei Torah*:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, has immediately called Yefeifyyah, the prince of the Torah, and he [the latter] gave him [to Moses] the Torah ... and all the servant angels become his lovers and each and every one of them gave him a remedy and the secret of the names, which emerge from each and every pericope [section of the Torah], and all their [magical] uses ... and this is the [magical] use given to him by the angels, by means of Yefeifyyah, the prince of the Torah, and by Metatron, the Prince of the Face. And Moses has transmitted it to Eleazar, and Eleazar to his son Phinehas, who is [identical to] Elijah, the High and Respectable Priest.

Cf. *Ma'ayan Hokhmah*, ed. Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, vol. 1, pp. 58–9; Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', pp. 27–8. See the fuller text adduced above, Chapter 2 beside note 109.

- 72 The distinction between the two has to do with the superiority of the male, represented in the following lines by the son. See also below, our discussion of R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah's description of the ascent of Moses on high for 40 days.
- 73 Cf. Exod. 24.18 and 1 Kgs 19.8. The association between Moses and Elijah is ancient and it appears in the Greek Bible, in a context related to a revelation to a messianic figure, Jesus, understood to be the Son of God. See Mt. 17.13–18, and its parallels. There is a long series of studies dedicated to this issue. See e.g. Tabor,

- 'The Return to the Divinity' and Margaret Eleanor Thrall, 'Elijah and Moses in Mark's Account of the Transfiguration', *New Testament Studies* 16 (1970), pp. 305–17; John C. Poirier, 'The Endtime Return of Elijah and Moses at Qumran', *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10 (2) (2003), pp. 221–42; Poirier, 'Jewish and Christian Tradition in the Transfiguration', *Revue Biblique* 111 (4) (2004), pp. 516–30; Angela Standhartinger, 'Jesus, Elija und Mose auf dem Berg; traditionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zur Verklärungsgeschichte (Mk 9,2–8)', *Biblische Zeitschrift* 47 (1) (2003), pp. 66–85.
- 74 In Abulafia's writings, as in those of the early Gikatilla, the term secret is often related to a numerical equivalence. As to the specific nature of the secret here see immediately below.
- 75 The permutation of the consonants of the word *Mosheh Me-'Ayn*, 'Moses is from Nothing', produces '*Aniy Me-ha-Shem*: 'I am from God', or 'I am from the name'.
- 76 This is without doubt reminiscent of R. Nehemiah's passage from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, analyzed in the previous chapter.
- 77 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fols 22b–23a; MS. Paris BN 777, fol. 113a; See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 91. For another type of combination of the consonants of the same two names see a commentary on the name of 42 letters attributed, mistakenly, to R. Eleazar of Worms, but belonging to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo and found in the manuscript of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1568, fol. 1b.
- 78 For the pun on *Mosheh-ha-Shem* in the kabbalistic literature close to Abulafia see Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 87–8. It has much earlier sources, perhaps as early as nascent Samaritanism.
- 79 On this verse, its variants and context and its Christological interpretation see Burkett, *The Son of the Man*, pp. 93–111. See also Margaret Barker, 'Beyond the Veil of the Temple', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 (1998), p. 18.
- 80 '*Adam* amounts to 45 like *Mah*, which means 'What'. Thus the first part of the verse is understood as follows: 'What is his name? – '*Adam*.' Thus '*Adam* is the name of the Father, while *ve-'Adam* is the name of the son.
- 81 *U-Mah* – and what amounts to 51, like *ve-'Adam*, which means 'and Adam': For Abulafia, as for many other Kabbalists '*Adam* amounts to 45, like the plene spelling of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton. See *Sefer ha-Haftarah*, MS. Munchen 285, fol. 30a and Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 103; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 167 note 197 and above, Chapter 2 note 148.
- 82 This phrase amounts to 391, as do all the other words in the subsequent string.
- 83 Vol. 3, ch. 9, p. 364. It should be mentioned that earlier in this book Abulafia points to the affinity between *havanah* – 'understanding' and *Ben*. See vol. 2, ch. 1, p. 202, in an interesting discussion where the phrase '*ruah shel havanah*' – 'spirit of understanding' is equated to '*ha-ruah shel ha-ben*' namely the spirit of the son. It should be pointed out that in this book Abulafia returns several times to the concept of son as a spiritual affinity between the teacher and the disciple. See e.g. p. 55, 195–6. See also in his second commentary on the secrets of the *Guide*, entitled *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, vol. 1, ch. 2, ed. Gross, p. 17, where *Ben*, *Havanah*

and *Binah* are related to each other. See also *ibid.*, p. 16, where the disciple is described as the real son. More instances of an intellectualistic understanding of the son may be found in my *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 195–9. See also Abner of Burgos, alias Alfonso da Valladolid, in Gershenzon, *A Study*, p. 232 and below note 213. For earlier Jewish sources that describe the teacher as father see Benjamin G. Wright III, 'From Generation to Generation: The Age as Father in Early Jewish Literature', in eds, Charlotte Hempel & Judith M. Lieu, *Biblical Traditions in Transmission, Essay in Honor of Michael A. Knibb* (Brill, Leiden, 2006), pp. 309–32.

- Abulafia follows the lead of Maimonides, who mentions in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 1, ch. 7 that the term *Ben* is equivocal. See the translation of Pines, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 1, p. 32. All the main commentators on the *Guide ad locum*, interpret the son as a metaphor for spiritual sonship. Though Maimonides promised in this chapter to explain the meaning of this equivocality, it seems that he never did so. For the earliest discussion of the esoteric meaning of son as an intellectual entity see his *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*, ed. Cohen, p. 9, where Abulafia states that the 'material [namely the hylic] intellect is the son of the divine intellect' a sentence that may be indebted to Averroes' vision of the human intellect. See also *ibid.*, pp. 8, 36. For Averroes's rejection of the Christian identification of the Agent Intellect with the Son see Averroes, *The Epistle on the Possibility*, ed. K. Bland, pp. 59–60, Hebrew pp. 65–6. For a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of this rejection of the Christian view see Abner of Burgos, cf. Gershenzon, *A Study*, pp. 162–3 and below, note 203. It should be pointed out that the expression 'divine intellect' – *ha-Sekhel ha-'Elohi* – stands in Abulafia for the Agent Intellect. See the explicit identification found in Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, ed. M. Saffrin (Torat Hakham, Jerusalem, 1999), p. 19. In other instances when Abulafia uses the phrase divine intellect, he probably refers to the Agent Intellect, though in those cases it is less clear. See also Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 64 note 68. It should be mentioned that at least two different Jewish philosophers described this intellect as divine: see R. Yehudah ha-Levi, *Kuzari*, 5.4, and the *Commentary on Ma'aseh Bereshit* by R. David Kimhi, a Maimonidean thinker, printed in Louis Finkelstein, *The Commentary of David Kimhi on Isaiah* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1926), pp. lviii, lx.
- 84 For the Hellenistic background of this Gospel see Burkett's summary, *The Son of Man*, pp. 27–33.
- 85 It may be that this name is perceived here as pointing to a sort of angel of the face. In the literature related to the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* this is the case. See Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 176.
- 86 See Exod. 33.11.
- 87 *Dodi* amounts to 24 times, namely 24 recitations of the combinations of letters.
- 88 Song of Songs 5.2.
- 89 Prov. 22.6. This is another good example of what I call 'Enochic exegesis'. See above, Chapter 2 note 136.
- 90 *Na'ar*, the youth refers to Metatron but it is transferred here to *Hanokh*, Enoch, whose consonants are the same as the word *Hanokh*, which means 'Take heed'.

*Hanokh* [84] + *Darko* [230] *Kohenu darkho* = *Darkenu Koho* = 314, like Shadday and Metatron.

91 Exod. 23.21.

92 Cf. Exod. 23.20.

93 *Reshut ha-Shem* = *Sar ha-shemot* = 1251.

94 1 Sam. 3.9.

95 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 53a.

96 *'avedekha*, your servant. The word is discomposed into two parts, *'av*, namely cloud, which amounts to 72, and alludes to the name of 72 letters, which is the main divine name dealt with in this book of Abulafia's, and *dakh*, which amounts to 24, namely the first 24 units to be recited by the mystic. Both amount to 96, like *ha-mal'akh*, and the syntagm *'Sod YHWH'*, the secret of the Tetragrammaton. Both the units of 24 and 96 in connection to the letters of the divine name and connected to some form of supernal configurations appear in the writings of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo. The affinities between these discussions deserve a separate study.

97 The first line of his table in which there are 24 units of three letters each.

98 Num. 6.12.

99 *Mar'eh* = *Gavriel* = 246. My assumption is that both Gabriel and Metatron point to the cosmic Agent Intellect, and no progress in matters of revelation from one angel to another is described in this passage. For an anthropomorphic revelation of Gabriel in Qur'an see Surah 19.17,19, and in *Shahrastani, Livre des religions et des sects*, trs Daniel Gimaret & Guy Monnot (Peeters, UNESCO, 1986), vol. 1, p. 608.

100 *Hanokh* = *'Ediy* = *Halom* = 84.

101 *Sahadiy*, in the manner in which it is spelled in the biblical verse with a sin, amounts to 319, close to *ve-Metatron* (and Metatron), 320.

102 Job 16.19.

103 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 53a. It is hard to know whether such passage or another one had an impact on discussions found in a passage in the anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, vol. 2, fol. 66d, where theosophical discussions about Enoch as Metatron and *Ben*, and many gematria'ot have been combined. This book is well acquainted with at least two of Abulafia's writings. On another discussion of the *Sheykh* and Metatron probably influenced by Abulafia see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 116–18.

104 See also R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, referred to above, Chapter 2 note 197. I hope to be able to show in a separate study that this Kabbalist was at least for a while in Barcelona and could be one Abulafia's teachers in matters of Kabbalah.

105 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 117; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 94; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, 'Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologeme: 'L'Apocryphon de Jean' et ses sources', *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1981), pp. 422–4, and reprinted now in his *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 56–9; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, pp. 152–3.

106 See note 70 above.

107 Apparently seven points to the last and best of those prophets. For the arrival of prophecy with the arrival of the Messiah see also below in the passage from *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*. Here, unlike that passage, it is much more conspicuous that the subject is Abulafia as both the name Razel and Rome are mentioned.

108 *'Al BaM* is a method of letter-permutation, which changes the first letter of the alphabet for the last, and vice-versa, the second for the one before last, and vice-versa, and so on. Accordingly, *ShaDaY* is converted into *BQM*.

109 From this point on, until the word *'Muhammad'*, the whole passage is omitted from the Rome-Angelica manuscript, presumably due to fear of the censor.

110 This term occurs earlier in the same book, in the passage analyzed in the first section of this chapter.

111 MS. Munich 285, fol. 22a; MS. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 22a. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 73–4. This section is based on a long line of numerological equivalences, only some of which will be deciphered below. For the formula *'I am'* used in the quoted passage see Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension* (Uppsala, Wiesbaden, 1955), pp. 48–54; T.W. Manson, 'The *Ego Eimi* of the Messianic Presence in the New Testament', *JTS* 48 (1947), pp. 137ff. The hint at the Messiah's building upon the dissemination related to Jesus and Muhammad is perhaps related to the medieval assumption, found in some few Jewish thinkers like R. Yehudah ha-Levi and Maimonides, as to the role of these religions in paving the way for the final messianic recognition of Judaism. On Jesus as Messiah in Sabbatean sources see Liebes, *On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah*, pp. 398 notes 18, 19; 440 note 90. On the connection between the figure 40 and sonship, based on the assumption that the age of 40 is the time when understanding emerges, see some texts belonging to ecstatic Kabbalah adduced in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 198–201.

112 Idel, 'Abraham Abulafia and the Pope'.

113 Ps. 2.7.

114 Isa. 43.11.

115 Compare the double *'I* here to the double *'Adam'* in the passage from *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, discussed above.

116 See MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1649, fol. 206a, discussed in more details in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 11–12 and *Kabbalah & Eros*, p. 75. For the intellectual nature of redemption according to this text see also earlier in this manuscript, fols 201b–202a.

117 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 84. This is an interesting expression of mystical union, which has some parallels in Muslim mysticism. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 11–12. It should be mentioned that one of the earliest sources for the Christian theory of deification was Philo of Alexandria. See Helleman, 'Philo on Deification', pp. 58–9, who capitalized on Platonic and Stoic terminology, just as Abulafia capitalized on other forms of Greek terminology. For more on mystical union and philosophical terminology, in the context of Sufi formulas, see below in the discussion on Abner of Burgos's passage.

118 On the various scholarly interpretations of Ps. 2 in the context of the royal sonship see more recently Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, p. 89; Jon D. Levenson,

- 'The Jerusalem Temple in the Devotional and Visionary Experience', in ed., A. Y. Green, *Jewish Spirituality* (Crossroad, New York, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 47–9; Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, pp. 203–5; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion, An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Winston Press, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York, 1985), pp. 97–101; Raphael Patai, 'Hebrew Installation Rites', *HUCA* 20 (1947), pp. 169, 186; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, pp. 98–9, 145; Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 111. For scholarly discussions of adoption and sonship of the Israelite kings in general see e.g. Aubrey R. Johnson, in ed., S.H. Hooke, *The Labyrinth, Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Macmillan, London, New York, 1932), pp. 79–81; Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 28–30, 129; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 96–8; Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Scholars Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981), pp. 128–30, 146; J. de Fraine, *L'aspect religieux de la royauté israelite, L'institution monarchique dans l'ancien testament et dans les textes mesopotamiens* (Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma, 1954), pp. 236–49, 271–6; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah, The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (CWK Gleerup, Lund, 1976), pp. 261–2. See also Israel Knohl, 'Religion and Politics in Psalm 2', in eds, Sh.M. Paul, R.A. Kraft, L.H. Schiffman & W.W. Fields, *Emanuel, Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (Brill, Leiden, 2003), pp. 725–7. To be sure in other instances the king is also described as another form of son: *bekhor* – firstborn. See Ps. 89.27–28, and Mettinger, *ibid.*, pp. 262–4; and Ps. 110.3; Mettinger, *ibid.*, pp. 264–5; and a bibliography on the topic collected in Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, p. 71 note 30, and also *ibid.*, p. 225. On the affinity between the Messiah and the concept of being a firstborn see the medieval apocalyptic composition entitled *Pirquei Mashiah*, printed in *Midrashei Ge'ulah*, ed. Yehudah Even Shmuel, second edn (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1954), p. 338, as well as the late eighteenth-century Hasidic discussion referred to below in Chapter 6 note 203.
- 119 See Moshe Idel, 'On the History of the Interdiction against the Study of Kabbalah before the Age of Forty', *AJS Review* 5 (1980), pp. 1–20 (Hebrew); Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 138–43, 195–203. For the anointment of the son of the king, as alluded by Abulafia in the above quotation, see 2 Kgs 11.12. The occurrence of the name *Shadday* in this context may point to Metatron, which is numerically related to the name *Shadday*.
- 120 Cf. 2 Sam. 5.17.
- 121 Cf. Rashi's interpretation on BT *Sanhedrin* fol. 38a.
- 122 *Commentary on Sefer ha-'Edut*, MS. Rome-Angelica 38, fols 14b–15a; MS. Munich 285, fols 39b–40a. On this text see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 127–8; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 82–3; *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 339–40; and Elqayam, 'Sabbatai Sevi', p. 380. On the phrase 'son of David' see also below the passage from 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, where this phrase occurs again.
- 123 For the term *qehillot* see our discussion above in the context of the quotation from another prophetic book, *Sefer ha-Hayyim*. For Israel in this context see note 50 above. On the gematria 541 see also Idel, 'The Battle of the Urges', p. 129 note 137. For the term 'commandments' in this passage see Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 226, who claims that Abulafia refers here to 'practical fulfillment' of the commandments. However, here, as in many other instances in the texts adduced by Wolfson, in order to make his point, that Abulafia is a hypernomian Kabbalist, this author speaks about allegorical and linguistic understandings of the formulations of commandments in the Hebrew Bible, not about their 'practical fulfillment'. This is the reason why I define him as a hyponomian Kabbalist. For more on this issue see my 'The Battle of the Urges', and in note 161 below. This issue requires a much more detailed analysis, which I hope to offer elsewhere.
- 124 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fols 20a and 21a.
- 125 These names amount to 177 like the consonants of *Gan 'Eden*, namely Paradise. On Paradise as an allegory for the Agent Intellect see Averroes, *The Epistle on Possibility*, p. 110, an issue that recurs also in Jewish philosophy. Compare also to the attachment of the Tetragrammaton to the name of Jacob in R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar's *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 449, which will be discussed below in this chapter, near note 219.
- 126 Exod. 6.3.
- 127 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 836, fols 159a–159b.
- 128 *Ibid.*, fol. 155b.
- 129 In Hebrew *Ben 'El Shanah*. Abulafia was born in 1240, and in 1270/1 he was 31.
- 130 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, p. 369. To be sure: Satan here means the evil instinct or imagination, not an external angel, an issue that will be discussed in some detail below.
- 131 See notes 80–1 above.
- 132 *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 81. For the affinity between ecstasy and the claim of sonship see the ancient testimony of Celsus about a Jew that responded to Jesus's claims of uniqueness. Cf. Celsus as adduced in Origen's *Contra Philosophus*, in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1980), vol. 2, p. 267. Thanks are due to Professor Adiel Shremer who kindly drew my attention to this passage.
- 133 See *ibid.*, pp. 76, 77. This exoteric propensity is evident already in a poem accompanying his earlier *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, ed. Amnon Gross, second edn (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 45. These and other explicit statements about disclosure of the secrets, sometimes accompanied by a clear critique of other Kabbalists, is an additional discrepancy between his practice and the earlier assumptions of Kabbalists that the topics of Kabbalah should be kept secret. Though perhaps other Kabbalists also disclosed *de facto* their secrets, it is only in Abulafia that we find an ideology of disclosure.
- 134 *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, ed. Gross, p. 86. For a philosophical discussion where the Agent Intellect is described as father, the cosmic soul as mother and the matter as wife of the intellect, see the anonymous text preserved in MS. Paris BN 260, fol. 16a.
- 135 See also below, the quotation from *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*.
- 136 *Commentary on Sefer ha-Melitz*, MS. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 9a; MS. Munchen

- 285, fol. 13a; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 66 and Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 127, 140.
- 137 Ps. 68.5.
- 138 'Ayir ben 'Atonot = 1175 = Na'ar ben 'Otiyyot. The first phrase stands for Sandalfon, the latter for Metatron. It may be that the first phrase has something to do with the advent of the Messiah on the donkey-foal, signaled by the term *asino*, according to popular Jewish eschatology. See also below, note 225.
- 139 *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 77a. Compare to the untitled text of Abulafia's, MS. Firenze-Laurentiana, Plut. II.28, fols 96b–97a, where he insists on the one hand, that these two angels are not deities, but on the other hand he uses the gematria of Na'ar = 320 = *Diyosh*, namely deity.
- 140 See Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 91–124.
- 141 Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 140 and Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 50–1.
- 142 See *Sefer ha-'Edut*, MS. Munchen 285, fols 37b, 40b. See also the text adduced in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 140–1. Abulafia was apparently well aware of the messianic significance of such a phrase, as he describes Jesus as someone who founded 'a new religion', and assumed the title of the Anointed one. See his *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, MS. Munchen 341, fol. 160b. See also Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 53–4.
- 143 MS. Roma-Angelica 38, fol. 37a. For the different ancient treatments of the concepts of new Torah see W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964), pp. 154–96. For a medieval kabbalistic discussion on the new Torah see Amos Goldreich, 'Clarifications of the Self-Perception of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*', in eds, M. Oron & A. Goldreich, *Massu'ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1994), p. 476 (Hebrew).
- 144 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 295–307.
- 145 MS. Vatican-Chigi, I, 190.6, fol. 292a, in Hebrew there. For the short history of this view see above, Introduction, the passages adduced from Origen's *De principiis*. See also here below, notes 197, 205.
- 146 See *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, 3.10, p. 364, quoted above, note 83.
- 147 See Borsch, *The Son of Man*, pp. 96–8, and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 112, 223, 254, 264, 314.
- 148 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 12a. On this text see more Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 15–16.
- 149 See 2 En. 22.8–10; F.I. Andersen in Charlesworth, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 138–9, *Le Livre des secrets d'Henoch*, ed. A. Vaillant (Paris, 1952), p. 26, 18–27. For some scholarly discussions pertinent to the theme of anointment especially see Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 229–32; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 20, 23; Segal, 'Paul and the Beginning of the Jewish Mysticism', p. 105; Matthew Black, 'The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the 'Son of Man'', in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquities: Essays in Honor of W. D. Davies* (Brill, Leiden, 1976), pp. 57–73; Himmelfarb,

- Ascent to Heaven*, p. 40; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 53–4; Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 84, 98, 102; Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam', p. 100, who – following Michael Stone – points to an earlier tradition that might have influenced this passage, stemming from an Adam tradition. See also above, Introduction, the passage from Origen's *Contra Celsum* 6.31. On the affinity between oil and light in the context of Enoch see the Zoharic discussion to be analyzed in the next chapter.
- 150 See above, Introduction, beside note 40.
- 151 See e.g. in the untitled treatise of Abulafia's I identified in MS. Firenze-Laurentiana Plut. II.28.
- 152 See e.g. *Sitrei Torah*, MS. Paris BN 774, fols 139b–140a.
- 153 'Sefer Ha-Ot', p. 79.
- 154 See *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 473.
- 155 Deut. 28.10.
- 156 MS. Munchen 408, fol. 65a.
- 157 *Sitrei Torah*, MS. Paris BN 774, fol. 132b.
- 158 I.1, p. 31. For the Neo-Pythagorean Eudorus's view that distinguishes between the One, and then the Monad and the Dyad that both emerge from it, see Charles Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, A Brief History* (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2001), pp. 97–8. Much more obvious is his discussion in *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, p. 20, and in parallel discussions, where the four pericopes written in the *tefillin* are described as amounting to ten. For an analysis of *Sefer Yetzirah* using also Abulafia's text, as pointing to the Pythagorean secret *tetraksys*, see Phineas Mordell, *The Origin of Letters and Numeral, According to Sefer Yetzirah* (Philadelphia, 1914; in fact Breslau 1914, by H. Fleischmann). The text had already been printed, to a great extent, in *JQR* (NS) 2 (1912), pp. 557–83; 3 (1913), pp. 517–44. Such a view of the phylacteries recurs also earlier in Abulafia's *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, MS. Munchen 408, fols 87b–88a. See also Idel, 'On the Meanings of the Term "Kabbalah"', pp. 50–1. See also Wolfson, in his *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 224, who sees in this text a sign of performance, related to his more general attempt to infuse some sort of theurgy in Abulafia's Kabbalah. To this issue I hope to return in a more detailed analysis where I shall show that the philosophical/theurgical dichotomy is too simple when trying to understand the role of commandments, ignoring Abulafia's emphasis on their numerical or literal expressions, and does not do justice to his anomian views. See, for the time being, Idel, 'The Battle of the Urges'. I hope to elaborate elsewhere on the possible impact of the passage from *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah* on the *tetraksys* on Reuchlin's understanding of Kabbalah as the source of Pythagoreanism.
- 159 See Idel, "'The Time of the End': Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology", in ed., Albert Baumgarten, *Apocalyptic Time* (Brill, Leiden, 2000), pp. 161–2 and 'Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism', in eds, Peter Schaefer & Mark Cohen, *Toward the Millennium, Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Brill, Leiden, 1998), pp. 182–3.

- 160 *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*, MS. Munich 10, fol. 151b. On this kabbalistic treatise and its relationship to Abulafia see Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 72–5. See also the resort to the two Tetragrammata in the context of the term *Ben* and the Agent Intellect in R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar's *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 449, to be discussed in detail below. See also Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 581 note 91.
- 161 R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, *Sefer Mayyim 'Adirim* (Ha-Masorah, Jerusalem, 1987), p. 106. See also his elaborations on the 'secret of the son' in his *Commentary on the Zohar*, printed recently in *Kitvei ha-Gramm*, ed. S.A. Stern (Jerusalem, 2001), vol. 2, p. 164, after lengthy discussions about the nature of the redeemer. In one case he adduces the gematria *Yaho'el* = *Ben*. For the impact of Abulafia on his writings see Moshe Idel, 'R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov and R. Abraham Abulafia', in eds, Moshe Hallamish, Yosef Rivlin & Raphaël Shuhat, *The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples* (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 2003), pp. 173–83 (Hebrew). See also above, note 38. It should be mentioned that interesting discussions about the secret of the son, in the vein of a noetic interpretation of theosophical terms, are found in Menahem Mendel's *Mayyim 'Adirim*, pp. 102–3. In this context, the transformation of Enoch is discussed, as well as the term *Na'ar* as part of what I called in Chapter 2 an Enochic exegesis. Elsewhere in the same book, p. 232, Enoch, Metatron and *Na'ar* are discussed in the context of the *Barukh/Bekhor* pun. See above Chapter 2, Section 3. See also Liebes's analysis, 'The Attitude of the Vilna Gaon', pp. 225–7.
- 162 See also *Kitvei ha-Gramm*, vol. 2, pp. 50 and 378. For the gematria *Yaho'el* = *Ben* see R. Menahem Mendel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 314, in a context in which Metatron is discussed, as well as *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 343. *Yaho'el* occurs quite frequently in his writings together with Metatron. See e.g. vol. 1, pp. 14–15, 21, where Abulafian contexts are evident, though in other cases it seems that the two names were taken from other sources that are not relevant for our discussion here. I have seen a manuscript copy of Abulafia's *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* found together with the manuscripts of this R. Menahem Mendel, in the possession of Mr. S.A. Stern in Jerusalem, the owner and the publisher of the recently discovered material of the Lithuanian Kabbalist. On an interesting speculation about son in the commentary of R. Elijah of Vilnius on Proverbs (R. Menahem Mendel's master) see below in the Concluding Remarks.
- 163 On the questions related to the authorship of this treatise and its two versions see Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 69–72.
- 164 *Ben* and *Binyan* – building – are understood as stemming from the same root and reflecting a semantic field that projects from one aspect of it to another. Following a Talmudic discussion in BT *Berakhot*, fol. 64a, this etymology is found in several grammarians and in both ecstatic and Zoharic Kabbalah. However, in addition to this view, it stands to reason that the term *binyan* stands here also for combinations of two letters, as we learn from the linguistic Kabbalah close to the anonymous Kabbalist, like R. Joseph Gikatilla's early writings. See the text of the answer given by the otherwise unknown R. Joshua ben Moses ha-Levi to Gikatilla, translated by Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 219 note 111. See also below, Chapter 4 note 112. This is just one example of the semantic reservoir, specific to someone who thinks about son and sonship in Hebrew.
- 165 *Ben Bait*. I translate this phrase, which means someone who is familiar, in a literal manner. For this phrase see Moses' view in R. Abraham ibn Ezra's text, addressed below in Section. 4.
- 166 Exod. 4.22. On the intellectual concept of Israel in similar contexts see above, notes 50 and 123.
- 167 MS. Jerusalem JNUL Heb, 8° 143, fols 34b–35b, the Hebrew original first printed in Chaim Wirszubski, *Three Studies in Christian Kabbala* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 53–5 (Hebrew). This passage is not found in the shorter versions of this treatise extant in several manuscripts like MS. Paris BN 774, fol. 193ab. For more on the passage see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 237–8 note 57 and Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, p. 363 note 151. This passage has been translated in Latin by Flavius Mithridates. See Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, pp. 233–4, where the translation has been printed. On the ancient Christian understanding of the first verse of the Hebrew Bible as dealing with the son, namely Jesus, see Pierre Nautin, 'Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène', *In Principio: Interprétations des premières versets de la Genèse* (Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1973), pp. 61–94, especially pp. 84–5. For Israel as 'beginning' see Philo's *The Confusion of Tongues*, par. 146, already discussed above in the Introduction, and also Hengel, *The Son of God*, p. 70 note 125. For one of the earliest readings of the first two letters of the Hebrew Bible as *Bar*, namely 'Son', see the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch known as Targum Neophiti, ad locum. See Manns, 'Col. 1, 15–20', p. 102. For the Zoharic reading of the first consonants of the Hebrew Bible as son see Liebes's analysis, *ibid.*, pp. 147–8.
- 168 For more on the issue of theological mistakes attributed to Christians by Kabbalists see Duran's passage discussed in the Concluding Remarks.
- 169 MS. Jerusalem 8° 1303, fol. 28b; See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 187. The motherhood of the Agent Intellect is a vision that differs from Abulafia, who described the Agent Intellect as a son, but despite the feminine form this designation still demonstrates an element of the double intellectual sonship of God theory that is characteristic of ecstatic Kabbalah. Abulafia himself relates to the *Knesset Yisra'el* as the supernal soul, in a form of Neo-Platonic approach. See his *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, MS. Munchen 408, fols 49b–50a, and Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 214–15. For the Agent Intellect as the king and the potential intellect as a child, see the early fourteenth-century Italian thinker R. Yehudah Romano, mentioned in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 197.
- 170 On this topic see more, Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 99. Elsewhere I shall try to show that it is possible that here there is also some impact from R. Nehemiah's view.
- 171 See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 150–1. On the first word of Genesis, *Bereshit*, as 'Wisdom' and 'Son' see earlier material adduced by Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 317 and footnote 159.
- 172 *Pico della Mirandola*, pp. 233–4. See also below, Chapter 5 note 13.

- 173 See MS. Roma-Casanatense 190, fols 203b–205a.
- 174 *Heikhalot Rabbati*, ch. 31.
- 175 *Sefer Ner'Elohim*, MS. Munchen 10, fol. 147b; and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 421–2 note 59.
- 176 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 303–4.
- 177 See Gershom Scholem, 'The Sources of the "Story of Rabbi Gadiel the Infant" in the Kabbalistic Literature', reprinted in the collection of his studies *Explications and Implications* ('Am 'Oved, Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 270–83 (Hebrew). See also Yuval, 'Two Nations in Your Womb', p. 271 note 14. I am not totally confident that the author is indeed de Leon, as assumed by many scholars, despite the many affinities between this pseudo-Midrash and his writings. See Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 105–7 and the pertinent footnotes.
- 178 See above, Chapter 2 and below in the Appendix.
- 179 *Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, ed. Gross, p. 16, and see Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 109–10.
- 180 By saying so I assume that Abulafia is what I call an anomian or hyponomian – though not antinomian – thinker. Compare Wolfson's view, *Abraham Abulafia*, passim, who considers Abulafia a hypernomian thinker. On this issue see also Idel, 'The Interpretations of the Secret of Incest', pp. 159–89. See also above, note 124. For an important text in which Abulafia expresses his elitist view, distinguishing sharply between the extraordinarily few people who are interested in the knowledge of the divine name and those who keep Torah and commandments, described as guardians, see his 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 3.9, pp. 354–5.
- 181 See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 50–1 and Huss, 'A Sage', pp. 127–8.
- 182 On the use of the Ezekiel images of the sitting man, without the concept of sitting at the right side of the throne, see the discussion in my Introduction to R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah's *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 266–76.
- 183 See his Commentary on Num. 12.7, discussed briefly in Huss, 'A Sage', p. 127 note 89. On the 'son of the house' see also above in Chapter 1 note 296, in the context of Honi the circle-drawer, in the study of Menahem Hirshman.
- 184 See e.g. *Kuzari* 1.95. It may be, as pointed out by R. Yehudah Moscato in his commentary *Qol Yehudah* ad locum, that ha-Levi had an impact on Nahmanides' *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, on Gen. 6.4, where he describes Adam and Eve as the 'sons of 'Elohim'. However, while ha-Levi describes this sonship as based upon the inheritances of the 'divine power' Nahmanides bases himself on the similarity between God and Adam in the *Tzelem*, the image, and the fact that Adam does not have any other father than God. For a possible Jewish-Christian source for such a view see the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.45, analyzed in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 202–5. For a later kabbalistic view of the sonship of Adam see below, Chapter 4, in our discussion of Abraham Michael Cardozo, and again in the Concluding Remarks, in the discussion of R. Isaiah Horowitz's *ha-Shelah's* passage. Interestingly enough, as we shall see in the next chapter, Nahmanides does not subscribe to any form of intra-divine sonship. It should be mentioned that in *Genesis Rabbati*, p. 39,

- Adam is described as the blood of the Holy One, Blessed be He: *damo shel ha-Qabahu*. See also below, Chapter 5 note 60.
- 185 *Ibid.*, 1.95; 2.14. This stand had an impact on R. Abraham ibn Ezra's *Short Recension of the Commentary on Genesis* 6.2. See Yochanan Silman, *Philosopher and Prophet, Judah Halevi, the Kuzari, and the Evolution of His Thought*, tr. Lenn J. Schramm (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), p. 289 note 26.
- 186 On this issue see Ignaz Goldziher, 'Melanges Judeo-Arabes: Le 'Amr 'ilahi (*ha-'inyan ha-'elohi*) chez Judah ha-Levi', *REJ* 50 (1905), pp. 32–41; Harry A. Wolfson, *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion*, eds. I. Twersky & G.H. Williams (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979), vol. 2, pp. 60–119; and Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy, Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (SUNY Press, Albany, 2000), pp. 30–2. It should be mentioned that some of ha-Levi's views on the possible dwelling of the Godhead (see *Kuzari*, 3.31) come close to a Christian position of incarnation, more so than any other Jewish thinker active in Christian provinces. It seems that his impact is found in R. Meir ibn Gabbai's *Sefer 'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 3.39, fol. 100a. The verb *Hul* in these two Jewish authors reflects the Arabic *Halla*, used in the context of the descent of the impact of the Agent Intellect on man, and the way in which incarnation is described when referring to Christianity, in Al-Farabi. See Pines, *The Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 20 note 1. See also below in this section the discussion of incarnation and the Agent Intellect in Abner of Burgos. On the issue of the concept of incarnation in the context of Jewish texts see above, Introduction.
- 187 Prov. 30.4. See the use of this verse in Sabbateanism according to a view of Nathan of Gaza, cf. Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, p. 211.
- 188 *Ibid.*
- 189 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b.
- 190 MS. Vatican 192, fol. 76a, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 153a, printed now by Howard Kreisler, *Levi ben Abraham, Liyyat Hen* (World Union of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2004), p. 348. See also immediately afterwards the discussion of the son as the firstborn, again pointing to the Agent Intellect. See also the version printed *ibid.*, p. 415. Especially important for our topic here is the discussion found *ibid.*, p. 76, where the concepts of the divine image, Metatron and Agent Intellect, are described as similar to the view of the Logos before incarnation according to the Christians. This is one of the few instances in the Middle Ages when such an explicit comparison is found. On this treatise see the more recent studies of Colette Sirat, 'Les differentes versions du *Liyyat Hen* de Levi ben Abraham', *REJ* 122 (1963), pp. 167–77; Warren Zev Harvey, 'Levi Ben Abraham of Villefranche's Controversial Encyclopedia', in ed. S. Harvey, *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedia of Science and Philosophy* (Kluwer Academic Publishers Dordrecht, 2000), pp. 171–88. For a similar stand see the passage above from *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*. For another interesting discussion of Metatron, the angel of the face as the Agent Intellect, see *Liyyat Hen*, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 11a. See also Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason, The Conflict over the Rationalism of Maimonides* (Hermon Press, New York, 1935), p. 193 and Lasker, *Jewish*

- Philosophical Polemics*, p. 80. See also the material adduced by Vajda, 'Pour le Dossier de Metatron'. For the view that the emanation of the human intellect from a higher intellect is reminiscent of the relationship between son and father see the early fourteenth-century halakhic thinker, oriented toward philosophy, R. Menahem ha-Me'iri, *Beit ha-Behirah, Commentary on 'Avot*, ed. Sh. Z. Havlin (Makhon Ofek, Jerusalem, Cleveland, 1995), pp. 147–8.
- 191 BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 63b, the book of *Bahir*, as well as Abulafia himself, in several places, as seen above from the passage from 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz.
- 192 Exod. 23.21.
- 193 R. Moses ibn Tibbon, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Mekize Nirdamim, Lyck, 1874), Preface, p. 12. Compare also to R. Moshe ibn Tibbon's view, *ibid.*, p. 13 and in the commentary itself, fols 14a, 15a, 21a, and the allegorical interpretations of *Go'el* and *Moshy'iyim*, in another book of the same author, the commentary on the Talmudic Aggadot entitled *Sefer Pe'ah*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 939, fol. 27ab. See also Moshe Idel, 'Jerusalem in Thirteenth-Century Jewish Thought', in eds. Joshua Prawer & Haggai Ben-Shammai, *The History of Jerusalem, Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099–1250)* (Yad Izhac Ben-Zvi Publications, Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 284–6 (Hebrew). On the mystical sources of the quotation adduced above see the review of the edition on the *Commentary on Song of Songs*, printed in Bruell's *Jahrbuch fuer Judischen Geschichte und Literatur*, vol. 3 (1877), p. 175. On this commentary on the Song of Songs see Menachem Kellner, 'Communication or the Lack Thereof Among Thirteenth–Fourteenth Century Provençal Jewish Philosophers: Moses ibn Tibbon and Gersonides on the Song of Songs', in ed., Sophia Menache, *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora, The Pre-Modern World* (Brill, Leiden, New York, Koln, 1996), pp. 227–54. For more on the identification between Metatron and the Agent Intellect in other Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages see Vajda, 'Pour le Dossier de Metatron', pp. 345–54. On the 'Kingdom of God' and the Agent Intellect see the views of Al-Farabi, mentioned above in note 70.
- 194 *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot*, ed. Y.A. Vajda (Israeli Academy of Science and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1973), p. 58. For a French translation and discussion of this text see Georges Vajda, *Isaac Albalag, Averroste Juif* (J. Vrin, Paris, 1960), pp. 201–2. It should be mentioned that philosophers, like the medieval Jewish mystics, were not totally reluctant to resort to late antiquity views on theophorism. See also the stand of the anonymous Kabbalist who authored *Sefer ha-Tzenuf*, discussed above, whose view it was that despite the attribution of the Tetragrammaton, which belongs to the First Cause, to Metatron, we should not mistake this angel and his activities as being independent. Cf. MS. Munchen 22, fol. 185ab.
- 195 See Seymour Feldman, 'Platonic Themes in Gersonides's Doctrine of the Active Intellect', in ed., Lenn E. Goodman, *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), p. 272.
- 196 MS. Los Angeles, UCLA X 779, fol. 102b. The passage interprets a rabbinic statement about the advent of the Messiah when all the souls from a supernal body will be exhausted. See BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 63b, BT *Niddah*, fol. 14b. This passage has been interpreted in philosophical terms, similar to ibn Moṭoṭ, by many authors in the Middle Ages, including Abulafia, as we have seen, for example, in the passage above from 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz.
- 197 See MS. Los Angeles, UCLA X 779, fol. 62b. The Hebrew passage has been printed in Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, p. 452. For another philosophical instance of the understanding of the intellectual development reaching an angelic status called Israel see R. Moses ha-Kohen Qrispin, MS. Paris BN 719, fol. 48a. See also above, note 50.
- 198 Ps. 103.5. This verse has been associated in several medieval commentaries with the concept of the rebirth of the Phoenix. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 224–5 note 158.
- 199 Ps. 2.7.
- 200 *Derekh 'Emanah* (Constantinople, 1522), fol. 37a. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 202. On this thinker see Allan Lazaroff, *The Theology of Abraham Bibago: A Defense of the Divine Will, Knowledge, and Providence in Fifteenth-century Spanish-Jewish philosophy* (University of Alabama, Alabama, 1981) and Avraham Nuriel, *Concealed and Revealed in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 181–298 (Hebrew). For the continuous rebirth of Jesus within the soul of the mystic see the view of Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius, cf. McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 176–7; McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart* (Herder & Herder, New York, 2001), pp. 141–2; and Idel, *ibid.*, p. 222 note 134. These references belong to a constellation of ideas related to a form of eternal entity, sometimes described as boy or son, which constitutes the eternal element of a person, and is understood, in both Abulafia and Meister Eckhart to be related to the intellect. See, *exempla gratia*, the theories about the archetype of *puer aeternus*, as described in the writings of Carl G. Jung and his followers: Marie-Luise von Franz, *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus* (Inner City Books, Toronto, 2000); Erich Neumann, *The Origin and History of Consciousness* (Mythos Books, New York, 1962), p. 253; and Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, pp. 172, 346–8 notes 70–1; Corbin, 'Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth', p. 109 note 94. See also Leibniz's theory in his *Monadology*, Sections 83–4, that the mind of man is an image of the divinity, and is also a child of God. See Donald Ruthford, 'Leibniz and Mysticism', in eds. A.P. Coudert, R.H. Popkin & G.M. Weiner, *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1998), pp. 31–2.
- It should be mentioned that Abulafia juxtaposed the Hebrew *Na'ar* and *Zaqen*, youth and elderly, known as the Jungian archetype of *puer* and *senex*, as two manifestations of Metatron. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 116–17; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 94–5; and Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 56–8. For theories of mystical rebirth in a variety of religions see Eliade, *Rites and Symbolism of Initiation*, pp. 53–60.
- 201 See R. Joseph of Rossheim, *Sefer ha-Meqanneh*, ed., H. Frankel (Mekize Nirdamim, Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 105–6 and an anonymous treatise found in MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1816, fol. 136ab. An impact of this treatment of the theme of rebirth is also visible in the mid-sixteenth-century R. Moses

Almosnino's *Vi-Ydei Moshe*. See also the similar view of R. Menahem Azariah of Fano, dealing with rebirth and sonship, found in a passage translated in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 202.

202 At least the anonymous treatise in which Bibago's passage is found, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1816, fol. 139a, expresses some anti-Maimonidean tendencies. For the controversy on Hesychasm, see e.g. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, pp. 69–70, 76–7.

203 See Gershenson, *A Study*, p. 165, and the manuscript she printed in the appendix MS. Parma de Rossi 2440 (533), fol. 22a. Gershenson pointed to the possible source in Al-Ghazzali's *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 106! In fact these statements of Abner's are strong, even distorted, readings of some ecstatic statements, found in this book, see *Al-Ghazzali's Mishkat Al-Anwar* ('*The Niche for Lights*'), tr. and intr. W.H.T. Gairdner (Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1924), pp. 32–3, 65. This important text was translated into Hebrew at the end of the thirteenth century. However the Hebrew wording of Alfonso da Valladolid does not match the Hebrew translations or the original, but twists the meaning in order to prove his vision of incarnation. See also above, note 83. For echoes of these statements, again without mention of the Agent Intellect, in Ibn Ṭufail's book *Ḥayy bin Yaqtan*, and in the younger contemporary and acquaintance of Abner, the Provençal-Catalan author R. Moses Narboni, who wrote a commentary on this book, see Georges Vajda, 'Comment le philosophe juif Moïse de Narbonne, Commentateur d' Ibn Ṭufayl, comprenait-il les paroles extatiques (Shataḥat) des soufis?' in *Actas del primer congreso de estudios arabes islámicos* (Maestre, Madrid, 1964), pp. 129–35; and Gitit Holtzman, 'Seclusion, Knowledge and Conjunction in the Thought of Moses Narboni', *Kabbalah* 7 (2002), pp. 111–74, especially pp. 145–6 (Hebrew). See also above, note 185. It is interesting that Vajda was not aware of the existence of the *Shataḥat* in al-Ghazzali, as he wrote a small article entitled, 'An Observation on the Words of Al-Ghazzali adduced by Abner of Burgos', *Tarbiz* 28 (1959), pp. 99–100 (Hebrew), where he dealt with another citation from the Arabic author. On the same page, Abner offers a reading of Avicenna, interpreted as dealing with Jesus's preaching his understanding of incarnation to the Jews. See also the pantheistic interpretation Abner offers elsewhere for the views of Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias and St Augustine. See Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, p. 377 and especially Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 117 note 36, where the issue of incarnation is dealt with.

It should be mentioned that on fol. 21b of the above-mentioned Parma manuscript, Abner adduces a statement of Themistius, a commentator of Aristotle, to the effect that 'I am the Agent Intellect'. See also *ibid.*, fol. 19a. On the divinity of the intellect and of the presence of the divinity within man by dint of the intellect see Barbotin, *La théorie aristotélicienne*, pp. 216–40 especially p. 219 note 3. For the declaration that 'We are the Agent Intellect' see Themistius paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*, quoted in the name of Themistius, and preserved in Averroes' long commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, cf. Averroës, *L'intelligence et la pensée, sur le De Anima*, ed. and tr. Alain de

Libera (Flammarion, Paris, 1998), pp. 75, 220 note 201. Thus, the third statement is an original combination of a view attributed to the pagan 'Themistius', with the declaration of the Muslim al-Ḥallaj or al-Bistami, made by a Jew who converted to Christianity. To complicate the picture further let me remind the reader that according to the view of Robert C. Zaehner, the *shataḥat* adduced by al-Ghazzali (and later on by the twelfth-century Andalusian mystical-philosophical thinker Ibn Ṭufail), reflect the impact of the Vedanta on Islamic mysticism. This is the gist of his book, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (Schocken Books, New York, 1972), especially pp. 86–188. This transition of mystical themes is an interesting aspect of the diverse ways of transmitting religious knowledge from the East to medieval Europe described in the chapters above. It should be noted that Abner never mentioned Abraham Abulafia's books or his views on sonship though they had been written a generation beforehand, even though he was acquainted with Moses Narboni, one of the few authors in Spain who even quoted Abulafia verbatim. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 63–6. The explanation is that the only book of Abulafia's known by Narboni, *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekhel*, does not include discussions on sonship.

For the immanence of the Agent Intellect, upon which Abner draws, see the views of ancient commentators on Aristotle, discussed by Barbotin, *La théorie aristotélicienne*, pp. 205–13. Among those who maintained a more immanentist approach were Themistius and St Thomas d'Aquino. Some of the strong immanentist language used by Abner is also influenced by Al-Ghazzali.

204 See e.g. in Abraham Abulafia, *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*, his first commentary out of three, on the secrets allegedly found in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, written in 1273, and extant in a Latin translation of most of the text in MS. Chigi A.VI, 190, fols 291b–292a, and in a fragmentary form in the Hebrew original in MS. Leipzig 39, fol. 10b, printed now in ed. Cohen, *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*, pp. 46–7; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 131–3 note 101, and see above, note 145. For this Neo-Aristotelian noetic understanding of Trinity see the rich material collected from polemical literature and analyzed by Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 77–83. See also the Hebrew text of Alfonso da Valladolid, adduced in Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, p. 372.

205 See especially the discussion found in Lasker, *ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

206 The other example is much later and belongs to a fierce opponent to both Kabbalah and Christianity, the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Rabbi active in Venice, R. Yehudah Arieḥ [Leone] da Modena. See Lasker, *ibid.*, pp. 81–2. It should be mentioned that the unique manuscript where the Hebrew material of Abner mentioned above has been preserved was in the possession of da Modena, who wrote a response found in the same manuscript. See Gershenson, *A Study*, p. 30. Nevertheless, it seems that da Modena was open to a philosophical – and perhaps also to a kabbalistic – vision of Trinity as meaning intellect, intellection and intelligibilia – see his critique of Christianity entitled *Magen va-Herev*, pp. 25–6. On p. 25 note 19, Shlomo Simonsohn, the editor of the book, refers to a variant, which attributes the above similarity to both philosophers and Kabbalists. It stands to reason that da Modena was

impacted by Abulafia's view, since a great admirer of Abulafia's Kabbalah, who collected materials from Abulafia's known books and even preserved some otherwise unaccounted material from his circle, was none other than Leone da Modena's most beloved student, R. Joseph Ḥamitz. The latter was an accomplished Kabbalist and subsequently a Sabbatean believer, who was acquainted with and admired many writings of the ecstatic Kabbalist, for which his teacher explicitly criticized him. It should be mentioned that Heinrich Graetz's attempt to attribute to Abulafia some confession of belief in the Trinity while he was in the presence of the Pope is based upon a double error: Abulafia did not author the text used by Graetz in order to make this point, but its author is the earlier Kabbalist R. Asher ben David, and neither he nor Abulafia met the Pope. In any case R. Asher's poem has nothing to do with the Christian Trinity. For the entire affair see Idel, 'Abraham Abulafia and the Pope'.

- 207 See Abulafia, 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 1.3, ed. Gross, p. 118. Compare, however, to Magid's claim, 'Ethics Disentangled', p. 55 note 80. It should be pointed out that the resort to the theory of omnipresence of the Agent Intellect in the material world shared in principle also by Abulafia, and used for promoting a theory of incarnation, is found in Alfonso da Valladolid. See Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, p. 376–7, and Gershenzon, *A Study*, pp. 137–69.
- 208 See e.g. Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 82–124; Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, p. 74, and see also below, note 264.
- 209 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 83.
- 210 See Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 91–5. On the history of allegory in general see Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Harvard University Press, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1987), and the important collection of articles he edited more recently, *Interpretation and Allegory, Antiquity to Modern Period* (Brill, Leiden, 2000). See also Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths, Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, tr. Catherine Tihanyi (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 2004).
- 211 See Peter Brown's quotation of the words of Henry Chadwick on the emergence of Christianity, in *Poverty and Leadership*, p. 106, as well as his resort to the concept of solidarity in *ibid.*, p. 108, 111. See also above, Introduction note 199.
- 212 See the various kabbalistic sources for the image of seal in the context of the Agent Intellect, in writings from the second part of the thirteenth century collected in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 94, 216–17 notes 95, 96, and see also Abulafia's 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 3.10, ed. Gross, p. 373. This image is found already in pre-kabbalistic sources. See Moritz Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi* (St. Petersburg, 1869), p. 253 note 2. See also above, Introduction, in several texts and especially in note 97.
- 213 For Abulafia's allegorical understandings of the words *Yisra'el* and *Knesset Yisra'el* as intellectual hypostases see above, especially note 50. In this spirit of a more universalistic approach we should understand Abulafia's special version of the story of the three rings found in his *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekhel*, where he assumes that the son of the possessor of the pearl has only one son, and in the future when he

will repent the people which he is an allegory for will be called the Sons of God. See translation and discussion in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 48–50. I wonder whether this story, which assumes that God has just one son, should be understood in a literal manner, an interpretation that would contradict Abulafia's own metaphorical treatment of Israel as the firstborn Son of God in a book written beforehand – see above, note 66 – or as pointing to the true son of God, a person that is dedicated to intellectual activity, as we have seen above (especially in the text referred to in note 83 above). Compare, however, this approach to another, more particularistic understanding of this story in Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, pp. 60–1, 64–7 and, in a different context, in his *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 148–9. The difference between Wolfson and my approach in understanding Abulafia is grounded in basic methodological matters on how to read Abulafia's writings. For example, Wolfson's more particularistic approach to the views of this Kabbalist, or his more concrete readings of Abulafia's statements versus my more metaphorical or allegorical, and thus more universalist, mode of reading deserves a special study. In any case, insofar as our topic is concerned Wolfson's brief mentioning of sonship leaves out some of the most pertinent material on the topic, as it has been discussed in this chapter. What is even more surprising, the quintessential role played by the philosophical aspects of Abulafia's discussions of this topic have been ignored in this context. We had already dealt with Abulafia's distinction between the three forms of sonship, and see also his Introduction to 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 1.1, ed. Gross, p. 5 and further more *ibid.*, 2.7, p. 267, where the firstborn son is interpreted explicitly as the human intellect to be rescued from the material forces. See also above, Chapter 2 beside notes 260–1. See, meanwhile, Idel, 'The Battle of the Urges'. In any case, Abulafia explicitly rejects the view that the people of Israel as a corporate personality are a Son of God in a genetic sense, as he points out above in the triple categorization of sonship in his *Sitrei Torah*. For Wolfson's tendency to read the discussions of other Kabbalists as reflecting something like a theory of incarnation see above, Introduction note 180. For another vicissitude related to Wolfson's reading of a text belonging to ecstatic Kabbalah, see also immediately below.

- 214 See his *Sefer ha-'Or*, p. 76.
- 215 See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 114–15 note 15, and *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, pp. 41–2. This is a rather standard discussion in his writings, and its meaning is that Israel is restricted to those who hold some form of special type of knowledge. However, in his 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, 3.9, p. 355, he explicitly argues that the Jewish people are called Israel because they know the name of God. Since earlier in this discussion he distinguishes between those who worship the Torah and the commandments, whom he describes as the worshippers of the guardians, and the very few who know the divine name, it is clear that he restricted the name Israel to the very few. This is a fairly elitist and exclusive view, unparalleled by any other Kabbalist in the thirteenth century.
- 216 See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 59, 98–9, 114 note 13.

- 217 See Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, pp. 39–41, 108–9, and the pertinent footnotes.
- 218 See Idel, 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), pp. 170–4.
- 219 See *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 449. For the association of the divine name to Jacob see also Abulafia's text discussed above near note 125. Let me point out that the identification of Jacob with the intellect is also found in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 33d, at the end of a lengthy discussion about the intellect and imagination, which is reminiscent of Abulafia's polarizing approach. Interestingly enough, elsewhere in the same book, fol. 201a, this Hasidic author identifies the intellect with the firstborn son.
- 220 *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 581 note 91.
- 221 Abulafia interprets here and in the following discussions statements found in BT *Berakhot*, fol. 3a.
- 222 This is based on the pun of *Hamor* – ass – and *homer* – matter.
- 223 *Sitrei Torah*, MS. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 61a.
- 224 MS. New York, JTS 1777, fol. 33a. On the issue of the authorship of these traditions see my *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 73–90.
- 225 For this distinction see Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship*, pp. 105–12.
- 226 *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 449. For more on this issue see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 195–203, especially the passage from Abulafia's *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, found in MS. Moscow-Ginsburg 133, fols 64a–66b, and MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fols 41b–42a.
- 227 Compare to Abulafia's '*Otzar Eden Ganuz*, 3.8, p. 337.
- 228 See below, note 235.
- 229 See the lengthy discussion found in *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 372–4.
- 230 See especially the passage from Abulafia's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, translated and analyzed in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 34–8, where again the letters of the Tetragrammaton occur in a similar context. See also Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 172–3 note 213. In R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah's *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 441, we find the gematria *Metatron Sar ha-Panim* = 999 = *Shikhvat Zera'*, namely Metatron, the Prince of the Face = the ejaculation of semen. I shall return in a separate study to the various meanings of this recurring gematria. See below, note 247.
- 231 *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 374.
- 232 For another instance of connecting the son with a supernal spirit, see the Lurianic text dealing with the birth of Isaac, found in R. Isaac Luria's *Liqqutei Torah*, fol. 33ab.
- 233 See the texts I adduced in my Introduction to *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 246–7 and Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 145 note 137.
- 234 See above note 72 and Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, p. 259 note 50. See also my 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 72–80.
- 235 Let me be clear: I do not assume that feminine nouns are not applied to the Agent Intellect in Jewish texts, as it is obvious they are, for example, in the

- above passage from *Sefer 'Or ha-Menorah* or from that from *Sitrei Torah*. See also the identification of the Agent Intellect with feminine concepts in Corbin, *Avicenne*, pp. 287–8. However, I suggest that we would better understand such expressions not as a matter of gender changes – who ever decided about the gender of the Agent Intellect as male? – but by referring to other contexts, which cannot be discussed here in detail, especially as the result of the impact of feminine terms like *Malkhut* – kingdom – found in Al-Farabi and R. Yehudah ha-Levi, as part of descriptions of the Agent Intellect. My point is, however, that R. Nathan did not do so here, and we should understand the kabbalistic texts in their specific contexts, which sometimes defy modern problematics of gender. I would say that the question of gender is not always salient for understanding certain discussions, in Kabbalah or elsewhere. Either the masculine or the feminine descriptions of this concept are metaphorical terms, which may sometimes appear together, without actually referring to a concrete attribute. It should be mentioned that in the first passage of Abulafia that was quoted above from *Sitrei Torah*, one of the names of the Agent Intellect is *Shekhinah*. That does not mean that there was a change in the gender of the Agent Intellect, but that Abulafia was not concerned with this issue when offering the philosophico-linguistic synthesis we described above. See also above, the reference to another philosophical text in note 193, where the term *Malkhut* appears. Thus, there is no reason to distinguish the ecstatic kabbalistic use of this term from the philosophical ones, though there are also other instances when the term *Malkhut* may betray these Kabbalists' views on the last *sefirah* found in the theosophical Kabbalah.
- 236 *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 377–8 and the discussion in my Introduction, *ibid.*, pp. 60–1. Compare to the interesting discussion of Abulafia in '*Otzar Eden Ganuz*, p. 84, where Moshe is described as *Ben Sekhel*, the son of the intellect, which amounts in gematria to *Ben Shemiy*, the son of my name, 402. This is an interesting example of juxtaposition of the two axes of Abulafia's thought: the intellectual and the linguistic. For the *nousanodia* see Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 37–41.
- 237 On this linguistic change found in texts close to Abulafia and written during the second part of the thirteenth century see passages adduced in Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 82–92. See also the important discussion found in '*Otzar Eden Ganuz*, 2.9, p. 285, where Moses is described as the forefather that enables the attainment of the world-to-come, unlike Abraham, whose covenant of circumcision is beneficent only for this world. See also *ibid.*, p. 193. For the pun *Mosheh – Shemah*, in some Samaritan sources see Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of God*, p. 88. See also note 78 above.
- 238 See *Ve-Zot Li-Yhudah*, p. 20. It may well be that we have here some sort of understanding of the Agent Intellect reminiscent of its scholastic meaning, as a power within the consciousness of man. See also the important discussion of Abulafia in his *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, 3.1, MS. Munchen 408, fols 69b–70a, where there were not two people in Rebecca's womb, as the narrative in Gen. 25.22 assesses, but Metatron and Sandalfon, the two famous angels in Abulafia's

- writings, the former standing for Jacob, the latter for Esau. They represent, according to the ecstatic Kabbalist, the two urges or instincts in rabbinic terminology, namely an inner battle between instincts within the human soul. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 76–8 and my ‘The Battle of the Urges’, pp. 106–7, 122–3, where I adduced several texts about Metatron as an inner urge. See also above, note 138.
- 239 Jer. 23.5. On this verse and its interpretation in the Talmud see above, the discussion in Chapter 1.
- 240 Exod. 32.34.
- 241 Exod. 23.21. For the importance of this verse in the theophoric thought in Judaism see above, Introduction.
- 242 *le-hithappekh*. On the importance of this verb in this book see the occurrences in *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, and in Abulafia's Kabbalah see the material collected by Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 172–3 note 213, and Idel, ‘The Battle of the Urges’, pp. 107–8 note 35.
- 243 Exod. 33.15.
- 244 *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, ed. Joseph A. Porush (Makhon Sha'arei Ziv, Jerusalem, 1989), p. 20.
- 245 On these two divine names in a similar context see our discussion of the passage from *Sefer ha-'Ot* above.
- 246 See my Introduction to *Natan ben Sa'adyah, Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 194 note 4.
- 247 See e.g. Wolfson's suggestion to read, *Through a Speculum*, p. 338 note 40, Abulafia's text on Metatron as phallic – a suggestion that turns in the same line into a fact. He then draws from this suggestion/fact a more general conclusion about the possible existence of an earlier tradition of Metatron as phallic. I cannot enter here in a detailed discussion of the reasons why such a suggestion, precarious in my opinion, should not become the basis of any more general conclusion as to the nature of Jewish esotericism. See also above, note 230.
- 248 See above, note 213, where I refer to Wolfson's unwarranted and unqualified reading of Abulafia as particularistic, and as trying to diminish, as he does also in other instances, the stark divergences between his Kabbalah and other trends of Kabbalah.
- 249 See e.g. Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 3–6, where I distinguish between the three early books of Abulafia, written between 1271–73, and those written later.
- 250 Let me repeat what I have already hinted at above: not being a cultural critic, my use of terms like ‘universal’ or ‘particular’, here or elsewhere, do not attribute any positive or negative valence. They are just different strategies of creating identities adopted by different communities, or schools.
- 251 See 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1580, fols 16b–17a, ed. Gross, 1.1, pp. 33–4.
- 252 See the observation to this effect by George W.E. Nickelsburg, in eds, Jacob Neusner & Alan J. Avery-Peck, *George W.E. Nickelsburg in Perspective, An Ongoing Dialogue of Learning* (Brill, Leiden, 2003), vol. 2, p. 652.
- 253 Compare to the distinctions between the prophetic and the ecstatic as proposed by Heschel, *The Prophets*, *passim*.
- 254 See Heschel, *ibid.*, pp. 331–4.
- 255 See Idel, ‘On Mobility, Individuals and Groups: Prolegomenon for a Sociological Approach to Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah’, *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 145–76.
- 256 Evidently, Abulafia was acquainted with both the Ashkenazi traditions of the Kalonymide school and with writings of R. Nehemiah the Prophet, discussed in the previous chapter, and it is plausible that he encountered them in different stages of his career, some of them in Spain, especially Barcelona in the early 1270s, and others in Italy some years later. Since he thought that R. Nehemiah's writings were written by R. Eleazar of Worms, the two different trends were conflated.
- 257 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 14, 24–5, 117.
- 258 Abulafia visited Greece at least twice, was married to a Greek woman, and uses Greek words several times in his writings. It is difficult, however, to evaluate how much Greek he actually knew and whether he was capable of reading classical philosophical or patristic texts in this language.
- 259 We may also mention here the possible impact of Islamic esotericism, stemming from Ismailiyah, dealing with the science of the letters or the combinations of letters, and mysticism of numbers stemming from Pythagorean sources, or even from philosophical writings (for example, commentaries on the Arabic alphabet), might have on occultist Jewish thinkers in Castile, and its subsequent contribution to Castilian Kabbalah, as in the *Midrash Hokhmah* of R. Yehudah ben Shlomo ha-Kohen ibn Matka of Toledo, a mid-thirteenth-century author of a comprehensive compendium of sciences and religious topics. On this book see e.g. Colette Sirat, ‘Juda b. Salomon Ha-Cohen – philosophe, astronome et peut-etre Kabbaliste de la premiere moitié du XIIIe siecle’, *Italia* 1 (2) (1978), pp. 39–61, especially pp. 48–9; and Sirat, ‘La Kabbale d'apres Juda ben Salomon ha-Cohen’, in eds, Gerard Nahon & Charles Touati, *Hommage a Georges Vajda* (Peeters, Louvain, 1980), pp. 191–202. Abraham Abulafia knew this book while he stayed in Sicily from the mid-1280s, as did R. Bahya ben Asher ibn Halewwah in the 1290s, who copied lengthy passages in his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*. See David Goldstein, ‘The Citations of Judah ben Solomon ha-Cohen in the Commentary on Genesis of Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher’, *JJS* 26 (1975), pp. 105–12. This comprehensive book should be studied in the context of the existence of other channels of transmission of linguistic secrets from the Muslim world to Kabbalah.
- 260 See Moshe Idel, ‘The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism’, in eds, Peter Schaefer & Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1993), pp. 142–3.
- 261 *Ibid.*
- 262 See Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, p. 107.
- 263 See especially his claim that Jewish-Christian material has been preserved in Arabic manuscripts, in his articles found in *Collected Works*, vol. 4, especially an article written with Shaul Shaked, pp. 473–85, where a Hebrew document

found in the Cairo Genizah is shown to be a Jewish-Christian text committed to writing in the twelfth century in the Byzantine Empire. For the existence of Jewish-Christian communities in the Byzantine Empire in the early Middle Ages see also Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 114–19. This sort of communal continuity is an interesting development in recent research, and it opens new vistas for another, much more complex, understanding of the possibility of transmission of forms of late antiquity information to the Middle Ages. Compare also below, Appendix note 144.

- 264 See his *The Survival of the Pagan Gods, The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1972), and Brisson's book mentioned above note 210.
- 265 Whether or not Abulafia derived all his acquaintance with Pythagorean elements from R. Abraham ibn Ezra is a difficult question that cannot be dealt with here. For the relatively limited availability of Pythagorean themes in Arabic in the High Middle Ages see Franz Rosenthal, 'Some Pythagorean Documents Transmitted in Arabic', *Orientalia* (NS) 10 (1941), pp. 104–15, 383–95; Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (Routledge, London, 1975), p. 40; and D.J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989), pp. 230–2. On Nemesius of Emessa, John of Damascus and Shahrastani, who mentioned Pythagoras, see Harry A. Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, eds. Isadore Twersky & George H. Williams (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1973), vol. 1, p. 357 and also Sa'id al-Andalusi, *Tabaqat al-umam*, tr. G. Blachere (Paris, 1935), pp. 57–62. On the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* translated from Arabic in Hebrew see Martin Plessner, 'The Translation in Arabic and Hebrew of the Golden Verses of Pythagoras', *Eshkoloth* 4 (1962), p. 58 (Hebrew).

## CHAPTER 4 The Sexualized Son of God in the Theosophical-Theurgical Kabbalah

### 1. *Theosophical-Theurgical Kabbalah: A divine son within a divine family*

As seen in the previous chapter, from a conceptual point of view ecstatic Kabbalah represents an amalgam between the two main diverging lines of Jewish medieval traditions articulated in the late twelfth century and the early thirteenth century: the various Ashkenazi esoteric traditions dealing with exegesis on Scriptures and with mystical and magical techniques on the one hand, and Neo-Aristotelianism, as essentially represented by Maimonides, on the other hand. This specific blend, with the addition of a Pythagorean – more marginal – form of speculation, is also well represented in the respective views of sonship found in this kabbalistic school: in addition to being dealt with by means of gematria, the son is also conceived of as an intellectual son. This late thirteenth-century development brought together, therefore, two main lines of development that are quite independent and, phenomenologically speaking, quite divergent. However, interesting as the above synthesis is, it was far from becoming the most widespread type of Kabbalah. Much earlier than Abraham Abulafia's floruit after the 1270s another type of Kabbalah emerged, radically different from his ecstatic lore and which exercised a much greater impact on the history of Jewish mysticism.

This Kabbalah represents a broad and variegated spiritual phenomenon that I propose to call by the generic name 'the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah'. The schools designated by this term evolved into the main form of kabbalistic literature for centuries, and dominated the spiritual interest of many of the elite rabbinic figures from the late twelfth century onwards. The divergences between the various forms of this Kabbalah and the ecstatic one are numerous and substantial, and there is no need to elaborate on each of them again here, as some will emerge as part of our comparison between this type of sonship and the theosophical-theurgical type. But what is important to mention now are their different intellectual backgrounds. While the mainstream forms of Kabbalah were much more reflective of Neo-Platonic, theosophical, magical, and astrological speculations than that of Abulafia and his students, at the same time they were less grounded in Neo-Aristotelianism and in the Ashkenazi traditions than Abulafia's

Kabbalah was. Like Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah also developed in several different cultural centers, both diachronically and synchronically. In the case of the latter school, various brands of this lore are documented before the end of the thirteenth century in Provence, Catalonia, Castile, Northern Africa, Ashkenaz, Italy, and the more remote land of Israel. The bold and explicit claims of such Kabbalists that they inherited traditions stemming from Adam or from the Sinaitic revelation and, more modestly, from early rabbinic literature and from medieval Northern African and Ashkenazi figures, alternatively and together, all testify to their multiform thought. In fact, they indeed drew from many intellectual and religious traditions.

This is why an attempt to describe the emergence of this lore is even more difficult than in describing that of Abulafia's. In the case of the latter we have some reliable dates, a relatively clear inventory of sources, and the main developments of the lore are easily discernible. Much less reliable, however, are the historical testimonies relating to the history of the inception of such lore. The many claims about its ancient sources are indubitably problematic insofar as the entire theosophical structure of this type of Kabbalah is concerned. Its first documents, what I call the literary platform that is related to authors active in the second part of the twelfth century, consist of a few short, difficult passages and texts, some of which still await detailed analysis. Especially important in our context is the fact that this type of Kabbalah was analyzed by scholars as reflecting Gnostic and Neo-Platonic views, and less as part of what I called a 'stream of traditions' stemming from a variety of earlier Jewish sources, and also adapting and adopting other non-Jewish sources over time, especially since the Middle Ages. The parallel ascent of this literature, since the late twelfth century, is contemporary to that of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, and may be better understood by resorting to Moses Gaster's theory, described above as the arrival in central and Western Europe of a variety of traditions and books, some related to apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature, from Eastern Europe. Though there is no reason to restrict this stream of traditions to the materials discussed by Gaster in his books, which deal basically with oral literature and folklore, his theory should attract much more attention, as we shall attempt to address in the issue of Enochic literature below in this chapter.

While the contribution of basic reservoirs of associations in earlier Jewish sources have been sharply underestimated, as we shall see below, at the same time in my opinion scholars have overemphasized and even exaggerated some rather tenuous possibilities concerning its sources. I suggest that it is the issue of proportion that has been distorted. In its language, literary genres, most of its representatives on the social scene, and

more importantly, in its modes of life, the theosophical-theurgical forms of Kabbalah display a strong conservative type of lore within the frameworks of rabbinic forms of Judaism. This does not imply close-mindedness with regard to other spiritual possibilities, but rather suggests a more balanced approach between what is more or less important and what is more or less plausible. In order to understand these texts, a scholar not only needs an acquaintance with the basic reservoir of associations, Jewish and otherwise, that informed the Kabbalists, but also a general picture of the different structures of systems that constitute the frameworks of such trends. Moreover, the scholar needs to be able to distinguish what is central from what is less important.

First and foremost, the branch of Kabbalah under scrutiny in this chapter is constituted by systems that are much more complex – though not always less clear – than anything found earlier in Judaism. The complexity of the systems impinges on the meaning of their individual elements which, when interpreted alone, may generate meanings that are not compatible with the relevant system. Moreover, these systems are also very dynamic, which means that the powers within this complex are, at least in principle, interacting all the time, producing an ongoing changing variety of constellations. The various conceptualizations of the ten divine powers known as *sefirot* assume a great spectrum of interactions between them, some depicted by showing the interaction of each of these powers with the other nine.

The developments undergone by earlier Jewish and non-Jewish themes absorbed within a certain theosophical system (and in this context we will address the concepts of sonship), can be properly understood only by a scholar with an understanding of the broader map of earlier literatures, who is able to discern and integrate such changes into this map of powers adequately. The precise systemic map is not a given, but should be extracted from each of the dozens of commentaries on ten *sefirot* available, especially in manuscripts. Since no detailed study on these various accounts of theosophies is available, we are still speaking about approximations, insofar as the logic of the system of the ten *sefirot* is concerned. The basic logic of this system – in fact a plethora of many theosophical systems – is only tentatively known to scholars, and until a more comprehensive picture, or series of pictures on the topic is accomplished, this logic may differ from one scholar to another. There may be fruitful debates among scholars concerning both details and matters of principle, but without a more detailed exposition of the way in which a scholar understands the cultic, mystical and theological frameworks of one system or another with which he or she is concerned, it is difficult to attain a balanced understanding of its details. To be sure: this does not hold for scholars who are concerned with printing

texts, a laudible enterprise which can prepare the ground for more conceptual analysis later on.

A survey of the various forms of sonship discussed above reveals that the sons have been defined as such primarily in relation to a certain feature of their father. Representing him in both form and name, what I propose to call morphonominalism, these sons reflect the divine personality as father and his action in the world. Though both males in principle, the importance of their sexual identity is, however, rather secondary, if at all important. Thus, the polarity of this simple hierarchy does not address the question of the son's or the father's marriage. Not that God in the Hebrew Bible was single. At least in some instances He entered into some form of Catholic relationship with the people of Israel, imagined as the wife of God. This marital alliance has been challenged in Christianity, but did not disappear in some of the later forms of Judaism. In Christianity however, God took as a spouse a specific lady, Mary, in order to beget a son. Jesus, as we know however, was not married nor was marriage a particularly important value in his teachings, regardless of the strong Encratic impulses that abounded since the beginning of Christianity. When relations to his mother Mary were given greater importance, especially in the high Middle Ages, some nuances which may be interpreted in a more erotic and sometimes even sexual manner emerged. At least in principle, on this crucial topic Jesus did not imitate His Father. His non-imitation has, however, been widely imitated in early Christianity by the monarchic way of life. The birth of a son was not conceived of as having any religious dimension in early Christianity or later in the history of this religion. The most important event that generated the founder of Christianity, the decisive act of God the Father to interact via the Holy Spirit with a human woman, has been excluded from the later religious repertoire of Christianity. The name of the game was the exclusivity of the divine son. The religion 'about Jesus' reflects in this instance the religion 'of Jesus'. In the Paulinian version of Christianity, however, sonship is possible for all Christians, but theirs is achieved not by an Immaculate Conception; they are not pre-existent sons, and they were not incarnate divinities. It has nothing to do with a family, deeds or righteousness, but with faith. Therefore, the structure of the holy family in Christianity is not a paradigm for imitation.

In most forms of Judaism however, in a religious structure in which the divine marriage was Catholic, *imitatio Dei* could include, at least in principle, the importance of marriage, as well as of the procreation, especially of a son. In rabbinic Judaism we may speak of a divine family, which, though different from the Christian one, is still evident in some instances, to be discussed below in this chapter. However the result of this marriage is not a single son, but many, in fact the entire people of Israel. The most interesting

crystallization of the brief and relatively rare rabbinic discussions of the divine family, the divine couple, constituted by God and *Knesset Yisrael*, or alternatively the divine Wisdom, *Hokhmah*, and the children of Israel, is found in the main schools of Kabbalah, a variety of theosophical systems that differ dramatically from the one we discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter we shall address other forms of kabbalistic approaches, belonging to the main school of Kabbalah: theosophical-theurgical. By the two main components of this description I mean to take into account the specific complex theological structures, which may be designated as theosophy – in our case the understanding of divinity as constituted by ten divine manifestations named *sefirot*, while in other schools a variety of divine hypostatic faces or countenances – and the affinity between the human religious deeds and the supernal structures, what I designate as theurgy.<sup>1</sup> In my opinion, no accurate understanding of the conceptual core of this type of Kabbalah is possible without taking these two basic elements and the dynamics of the relationship between them into consideration. Let me first address the theosophical aspect in the framework of our foregoing discussions, as this is an aspect that has been much more explored in scholarship.

In many cases, since the earliest literary manifestations of this type of Kabbalah, the ten divine powers or *sefirot* have been described as possessing a comprehensive shape, for which a human *morphē* was imagined. This comprehensive symbol was described by terms like Man, Supernal Man, Primordial Man, or even Son of Man, as we shall see below. At the same time, the same Kabbalists employed another comprehensive symbol for those manifestations, namely the letters of the divine name, the Tetragrammaton. In one of the first usages of this comprehensive symbol, the first letter, *Yod*, was conceived of as symbolizing the *sefirah* of *Keter* and *Hokhmah*; the second letter, *Heh*, as the third *sefirah*, *Binah*; the third letter, *Waw*, whose numerical value is six, was a symbol of six *sefirot*: *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, *Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*; while the last letter, the second *Heh* of the Tetragrammaton, was a symbol of the last *sefirah*, the Bride, namely *Kallah*, or *Malkhut*.<sup>2</sup> In other words, both a morphic aspect and a nominal aspect can be discerned as major comprehensive symbols of the supernal system that was understood, *mutatis mutandis*, as emanating from an even higher entity, called sometimes 'Ein Sof, and at other times by more philosophically oriented terms like 'Illat ha-'Illot or Sibbat ha-Sibbot. The anthropomorphic aspects of the ten *sefirot* are manifold and display a variety of functions that exceed the scope of this discussion. In this context, it is sufficient to mention that a divine manifestation is, or represents, at the same time, both a limb and a letter of a divine name.

Insofar as the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah is concerned, sex-

ualization of the son is not an independent issue limited to the son but, rather, a more comprehensive phenomenon characteristic of the structure of a complex system. It was not only the son that became more sexually imagined, but also the Father. In early developments of kabbalistic theosophy, the Father is understood as having a female counterpart and, at times, the family image is portrayed in its entirety. Important as this family *imaginaire* was, it is just one of the many comprehensive symbols (like the divine name, the sefirotic tree, or supernal Adam) that organize a great part of the realm of the ten *sefirot* within a theosophy that can be designated as inclusive theology; this is in contrast to the predominantly exclusive theology represented in the kabbalistic literature, inter alia, by Abraham Abulafia's thought.

Let me adduce just one example of the many dealing with the 'divine family', which stems from a collection of kabbalistic traditions reflecting late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century mostly anonymous material, presumably written in Castile:

The [*sefirah* of] *Tiferet* is son and the [*sefirah* of] *Malkhut* is daughter . . . the father and the mother operate in the supernal realm, and the son and the daughter operate in the lower realm. And all is one entity without [any] separation.<sup>3, 4</sup>

If the son's father is the second *sefirah*, *Hokhmah*, his wife, or the mother, is *Binah*, the third *sefirah*. They operate within the higher realm of three *sefirot*, envisioned as a realm in itself while the 'younger' couple are part of the lower world, which consists in fact of the seven lower *sefirot*, sometimes called in late thirteenth-century Kabbalah the lower world, though referring nevertheless to a divine realm. Alternatively, it is possible also that the couple of son and daughter indeed rule over the created universe. Thus, we may speak about a comprehensive sexual interpretation of the theosophical-theurgical system, in which two main couples, father/mother and son/daughter, are described as syzygies, fully sexualized and 'married' couples, the higher one reproducing itself in the lower couple. The sexual relationships between the members of the two couples are understood as quintessential for the function of the entire system and for the world as a whole. While the major characteristics of the father/son complex dealt with in the above chapters are imitation, repetition, representation by mediation, hierarchy, and in some cases tension, and even dislocation, with the son/feminine complex other attitudes are displayed: first and foremost a sexual attitude representing a more tender form of relationship. This is quite a common approach in most of the systems known in scholarship as theosophical-theurgical, the more extreme forms of which are traceable since the end of the thirteenth century. In fact, the sexual relations between

the members of each of the two couples create a certain sympathetic relation between the members of the two couples themselves.

Let me emphasize that those overt uses of the terms father, mother, son and daughter, enumerated in the above note, are but a small part of the much more numerous instances in which those four terms do not occur together on the same page, but are evident from reading the larger contexts. Therefore, we may speak about one of the major theosophical schemes that informed the main school of Kabbalah, but without taking its prominent role into consideration, it is sometimes hard to understand the manner in which the individual members of this family function. In any case, it seems quite evident that the quaternity of the divine family reflects the minimum requirement in Rabbinism, where it is an imperative to give birth to a son and a daughter. Thus, the divine family corresponds to the quaternary structure on the human level. Awareness of the connection between the rabbinic imperative and the structure of the divine family is sometimes evident for the Kabbalists, as is the case of some discussions in the later layer of the book of the *Zohar*.

Let me draw attention to the fact that though the theosophical son is just one of the four members of the divine family within the divine realm, he nevertheless occupies a place of honor. Envisioned as identical with the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, a central one in the economy of the lower seven *sefirot*, and especially in his relation to the last *sefirah*, the feminine one, he was sometimes identified as 'the Holy One, Blessed be He' and an entire interpretation of the Jewish ritual as intended to unify the male and female potency permeated this kabbalistic school. In other words, we may understand some developments of the concept of sonship as intrinsically related to the theurgical and erotic interpretation of the commandments. From this point of view, there is a resemblance between the ancient status of the king as son and the rituals related to it, the Christian worship of Jesus the Son, and those kabbalistic interpretations of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His *Shekhinah*, a core formula in this school of Kabbalah, as I have attempted to show in my *Kabbalah & Eros*.

It should be emphasized that the logic of the quaternity that constitutes the gist of the theosophical divine family and informs by its structure of two pairs many of the intra-divine processes differs dramatically from the Christian Holy family, by the fact that in the former there are two feminine figures, which allow different forms of affinities between the son on the one hand and each of the three powers on the other. So, for example, Dante's medieval paradoxical descriptions of Mary as both the mother and the daughter of Jesus are hardly paralleled by anything I am acquainted with in explicit relation to the theosophical son. In the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, the son has both a mother and a wife, which differ from each

other, though they may well be in contact. From this point of view, the theosophical Kabbalists differ from the earlier rabbinic authors, who may conceive the same feminine entity as functioning in more than one way, namely as sometimes a daughter, a wife or a mother. Also the dynamic nature of the feminine divine entity, which is widely described as ascending to higher levels of the sefirotic world, transcending the status of the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, that sometimes represents the son, and reaching the first *sefirah*, or even the Infinite, is hardly paralleled by anything I am acquainted with in Christian theology. Therefore, the logic of the sefirotic structure, in which the *sefirah* that is commonly related to the son situates the son in a special place: he is the intersection of a variety of axes: the sexual one, in terms of his relation to the last *sefirah*, the daughter; the filial one, in terms of his relation to the supernal parents though in different ways in relation to *Binah*, the mother, or *Hokhmah*, the father; or in some cases in direct relation to the highest *sefirah* *Keter*, as *Tiferet* serves as the main part of the median line, which allows direct access to *Keter*, according to some Kabbalists.

Therefore, the basic contour of the theosophical divine family as found in some of the main schools of Kabbalah contains two married couples, but to my best knowledge, no one single virgin, either male or female. In other words, the status of the son is derived from the structure within which it occurs, just as that of any other member of this family. However, what should also be mentioned is that the tetrad of the divine family is part of an even broader structure, that of the ten *sefirot*, and should be understood as such. In other words, in order to understand the theosophical way of thinking, we must keep in mind the general vision of these Kabbalists, who subordinated each of the parts to the comprehensive picture of the whole, as a basic assumption. This is in my opinion, not only a theoretical principle, but also understood as the final purpose of the performance of the Jewish rituals: the unification of the entire structure of ten *sefirot*. In any case, each of the two couples is conceived of in sexual terms, and the sexual relation of the lower couple has been designated, at least since the book of the *Zohar*, as the lower union, while that of the higher couple is described as the higher union. Therefore, the structure I call divine family is the framework for understanding better not only the way in which the divine son is functioning, but also the details of the theosophical-theurgical understandings of divine hierogamos.

The importance of the divine family and the existence of the different axes of relationship that are connected with the theosophical son are quintessential for understanding the difference between the brands of Kabbalah to be discussed below in this chapter on the one hand, and ecstatic Kabbalah on the other, which has been discussed in the previous chapter.

There the human person becomes a son only when he leaves the family structure, 'divorcing' or detaching himself from his normal life in order to plug in the cosmic, impersonal flow represented by the supernal son, the Agent Intellect. Only by detaching himself from the common forms of behavior can he attach himself to the cosmic intellectual life conceived of as separated from matter. Sonship is therefore related to a process that the ecstatic Kabbalists would call 'humanization' since only the intellectual dimension of a person is his/her real essence, while from a more comprehensive point of view, less essentialistic, this may be regarded as a process of de-humanization, because of the suppression of many other dimensions of human personality. On the other hand, in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, the intensification of the family life, represented by concepts that reflect persons in their mutual relationship within the supernal world, is quintessential for the leading vision of the Kabbalists belonging to this approach. If the name of the game in ecstatic Kabbalah is simplification, namely the reduction of the human complexity to one's intellect alone, which is the gist of sonship, in the other forms of Kabbalah what is more conspicuous is the importance of complexity, namely of multiple relationships, which includes both an ordinary family life in this world and at the same time participation in the complex divine life in the supernal world. In any case, the human personality is envisioned in the theosophical-theurgical forms of Kabbalah in its richness, which includes the corporeal, emotional, spiritual and sometimes also the intellectual aspects, and this is the reason why the theories of sonship are much more diversified than the views found in ecstatic Kabbalah.

Moreover, while in the latter form of Kabbalah, the most significant religious experiences took place in solitude and required isolation from the world, in a special room, in the former it is the relations with others that is part of the attainment of the aim of this lore: the participation in a communal prayer, in the process of study or even in sexual intercourse. Last but not least: if in ecstatic Kabbalah the language of sonship is basically metaphorical, when judged by the common usage of the term son, in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah the metaphorical dimension has been dramatically diminished, and a more concrete imagery has been forged, which deals more with the *morphē* than with the *eidōs*.

## 2. Sexualizing the divine couple: The son in the book of Bahir

Unlike the scant references to divine sonship in the earlier layers of Jewish literature surveyed in the previous chapters, there is no shortage of discussions about the son within the theosophical schemes found in the vast kabbalistic literature. In fact there are dozens of instances in which the sixth

*sefirah*, *Tiferet*, is mentioned explicitly as related to the concept of son, as well as a whole series of other symbols: Moses, Jacob, the Tetragrammaton, the body, while the tenth *sefirah* is imagined as the daughter, designated also by terms like *Malkhut* [kingship], *Kallah* [Bride], *Bat* [Daughter], *Shekhinah* [divine presence] or *Atarah* [diadem], as well as biblical male figures like Dávid and Solomon. In the various theosophical systems, the main correlative entity in the system that defines the divine attribute understood as the son is no longer just the father, but rather the father in combination with feminine figures such as the mother and the wife, and sometimes even the daughter of the supernal couple. The theosophical Kabbalists as a whole were less concerned with the paternal filial affinity, or the issue of representation of the transcendental father, as it is the case in Philo and to a certain extent Abulafia, and more concerned with the issue of union between male and female divine powers, especially in a sexual manner, and reproduction. Theosophical systems are, structurally speaking, much closer to a family structure, as seen above, than to a couple of father and son, as was the case in earlier Jewish instances discussed previously, or in some of the discussions below related to the two Faces in the book of the *Zohar*. Thus, it is only by engaging the specific structure of an entire theosophical system as it appears since the early theosophical documents that we may properly understand the nature of the changes in sonship. This also holds true with regard to the correlative of the Son in the theosophical structure: the feminine power, which is described in many cases as the divine presence or the *Shekhinah*. Given the paramount importance of the sexualized theosophical son for our discussions in this chapter, let me introduce first some deliberations regarding approaches found in scholarship concerning the shifts related to the role of sexualized entities in the economy of the divine world.

There is a remarkable weakness in how the development of this latter concept, *Shekhinah*, in Judaism has been described recently in scholarship: the change in matters related to her sexualization have been discussed without addressing her correlative, the son and the ways in which this figure has been understood within the theosophical-theurgical system. Following Scholem, scholars emphasized the paramount role played by the book of *Bahir* in this process. Though explanations for this alleged drastic change differ, scholars share a basic presumption. Scholem believed that the feminine nature of the concept of the *Shekhinah*, and in fact of the last *sefirah* in general, stems from the impact of ancient Gnosticism.<sup>5</sup> In some studies printed in the 1980s, I questioned the appropriateness of the Gnostic explanation proposed by Scholem for the emergence of Kabbalah.<sup>6</sup> By now, it seems that most scholars are accepting, explicitly and sometimes implicitly,

this assumption and that it can be found underlying a number of the studies to be addressed below.

This is also the case, though only implicitly, with regard to studies printed recently by Arthur I. Green and Peter Schaefer. They too no longer adopt Scholem's Gnostic theory, at least insofar as it relates to explaining the 'shift' found in the book of *Bahir* concerning the *Shekhinah*. However, they attribute the shift toward a feminine character of the last *sefirah*, to the alleged impact of the flowering cult of Mary in medieval Western Christianity in the twelfth century.<sup>7</sup> No doubt this is a dramatically different explanation than Scholem's, and it is a welcome situation that scholars are offering alternative theories to the once dominant explanation based on Gnosticism, though they do not dwell on the weakness of Scholem's stand or on possible alternatives already proposed to it. Yet different as these historical explanations for the shift toward a more sexualized view of the *Shekhinah* are from Scholem's, Green and Schaefer nevertheless depend heavily upon essentially three of Scholem's major assumptions, and at the same time they differ from my assumptions as to the earlier existence of Jewish mythologoumena that may explain the emergence of Kabbalah. These assumptions are:

- a) Scholem's diagnosis of what he perceived to be an unprecedented and substantial shift related to a sexualized understanding of the *Shekhinah* that took place first in the book of *Bahir*.
- b) The assumption that the traditions of the book of *Bahir* represent the religious atmosphere of Provence, and thus were affected by an external source, not ancient or medieval forms of Gnosticism, but the Mary cult spreading in that region in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.
- c) Last but not least, Scholem's assumption that this book laid the foundation or blueprint for further developments in matters of kabbalistic theosophy, what I call a unilinear history of kabbalistic theosophy that was embraced by him and his followers.

Only if this third assumption is true is the alleged change dramatically important for the history of Jewish thought and for the history of Kabbalah in particular. Insofar as the second assumption is concerned, the role played by *Sefer ha-Bahir* in the subsequent history of Kabbalistic theosophy has been dramatically minimized in recent studies, which were not taken into consideration by those two scholars.<sup>8</sup> As to the first assumption, it should be pointed out that the term *Shekhinah* is conceived of as a feminine Goddess already in the ancient word *Shekhintu* that appears in founding Assyrian mythology.<sup>9</sup> Some of the more feminine aspects of the divinity that are found in a number of pre-kabbalistic sources have also been ignored in these

recent analyses.<sup>10</sup> By ignoring these relevant materials, a different picture emerges of the development of the feminine aspect of the divinity in Judaism, one that attributes to the book of *Bahir* a critical role in the history of the kabbalistic theosophy.

In my opinion, the second assumption is even more questionable since the book represents, according to many scholars (including an article printed recently<sup>11</sup>) a series of traditions that issue from the East, although I cannot elaborate on the details of this issue here.

From the point of view of this study, the first assumption is the most important. Can the primacy of the sexualization of the feminine aspect of a system have influenced that of its masculine counterpart? Can we speak about a sequel of two shifts, in which one of the members of the couple, the last *sefirah*, first underwent a shift, consequently causing the other to do so as well? And, one may ask, is the primacy of the change of the feminine obvious?

In my opinion, there is a major methodological fault in ascribing the shift toward a feminine understanding of the *Shekhinah* as a process in itself, assumption (a), as well as in attributing it to the impact of the Mary cult. Without understanding the importance of the other feminine beings in the books of *Bahir*, *Hokhmah* and *Knesset Israel* to the status of the *Shekhinah*, the discussion of the latter in itself is problematic. May not the earlier, non-kabbalistic feminine valences of *Hokhmah* and *Knesset Israel*, which are less addressed by scholars in this context, serve as a blueprint for the way in which the *Shekhinah* is also understood in this book? And, in general, the question is why concentrate the scholarly discussions on shifts of the understanding of this entity, which appears in only very few instances in the *Bahir*? We shall return to some of these questions below. However beforehand, let me remark that the Mary-cult explanation neglects numerous salient sources and scholarship, while also avoiding a substantial analysis of the core of the theosophical-theurgical system, which incorporates the feminine power under scrutiny. In a more precise manner, the fact that another sexualization took place concomitant to the alleged sexualization of the *Shekhinah* – that of the previously more sexually neutral Son of God – is overlooked. From the logical point of view it is implausible to cut between the members of a couple, which occur together as a meaningful unit in a system, and analyze the ‘shift’ of just one member of the couple while ignoring the possible developments undergone by the other. Let me start with a rabbinic discussion of the parental couple, or what I described above as the rabbinic forms of the divine family:

R. Hanina ben Papa said: To enjoy this world without a benediction is like robbing the Holy One, blessed be He, and

*Knesset Yisrael*, as it says. ‘Whoso robbeth his father or his mother and saith, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer;<sup>12</sup> and ‘father’ is none other but the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it says. Is not He thy father that hath gotten thee;<sup>13</sup> and ‘mother’ is none other than *Knesset Israel*, as it says, ‘Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother.’<sup>14, 15</sup>

There can be little doubt that the biblical verse dealing with father and mother has been projected on high and identified as referring to a supernal couple, which functions as the parents of the Jews in general, depicted here explicitly as sons. Even more erotic and sexualized is the petulant approach to God in *Knesset Yisrael*, as reflected in another Talmudic statement:

*Knesset Israel* says to God: ‘Lord of the World, far more ordinances than Thou hast imposed on me have I imposed on myself, and I have kept them’: ‘The mandrakes give a fragrance, and at our gates are all manner of choice fruit, old and new, which I have laid up for thee, O my Beloved.’<sup>16, 17</sup>

Here, more than just a married couple being described there is an implied erotic relationship between them. These two rabbinic passages suffice as the springboard for an inner development of discussions on hypostatic couples. Let me emphasize that I do not intend to see in these cases, among others, proof-texts for totally fresh developments, but rather I intend to use them as solid background that should be highlighted before dealing with any analysis of the sexualization of both male and female metaphysical elements in mystical forms of Judaism during the high Middle Ages.

In a passage found in a commentary on the Pentateuch attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms we have an explicit example of the sexualization of the two members of the couple mentioned in the *Berakhot* passage. In this *Commentary on the Pentateuch* the Ashkenazi author, whose identity is far from being clear, writes: ‘Bridegroom – it is the Holy One blessed be He; and the bride – she is *Knesset Israel*.’<sup>18</sup> This sexualized understanding of *Knesset Yisrael* as part of a couple has been part and parcel of various Jewish traditions since the Talmudic discussion and, moreover, has been instrumental in creating the sexual polarity evident in the book of *Bahir*.

Thus, we may surmise that two different processes found in rabbinic literature converged in the book of *Bahir*: the adoption of the earlier rabbinic understanding of the hypostatic *Knesset Yisrael* as a feminine entity in relation to a male God, and the sexualization of the male. It seems to me that the latter process is much more conspicuous in this early kabbalistic book.<sup>19</sup> Let me start with an interesting theme: the righteous as a pillar. In

the texts analyzed in the previous chapters the righteous play an important, and in some cases even cosmic, role. However, even when playing this cosmic role the righteous has not been understood as having sexual features. Not so in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the book in which the shift from a non-sexualized *Shekhinah* to a sexualized one allegedly took place. In one of the paragraphs in this book we read:

There is a pillar from earth to heaven, and its name is *Tzaddiq*, according to the name of the righteous men. And when there are righteous men in the world then the pillar is strengthening, but if not – it becomes weak. And it supports the entire world as it is written: ‘the righteous is the foundation of the world.’<sup>20</sup> But if it is weakened, it cannot support the world. This is the reason why even if there is only one righteous [in the world] he maintains the world.<sup>21, 22</sup>

While in the writings of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, and in his sources in southern Italian poetry of the mid-eighth century, the pillar and the angel Metatron are identified with each other, as we shall see in the Appendix below, this is not the case in *Sefer ha-Bahir*. The sexualization is quite obvious, and no scholar writing on the topic has ever avoided mentioning it, though this recognition has not been associated with the sexual nature of the *Shekhinah* in the same book. The cosmic/phallic entity is the source from where the souls descend:

The Holy One, blessed be He, has a righteous in His world, and he is fond of him because he maintains the entire world. He [the righteous] is its foundation and he provides for it, and lets it grow and cultivates it and guards it. He is loved and treasured above, loved and treasured below; feared and sublime above, feared and sublime below. He is comely and accepted above, comely and accepted below.<sup>23</sup> And he is the foundation of all souls.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the language of excessive love found in the last quotation, the son is not identical with the ninth *sefirah*, *Yesod*, the paramount sexual divine manifestation in the sefirotic realm, but with another *sefirah*, the sixth, *Tiferet*. Though these two *sefirot* are conceived of as separate entities, in *Sefer ha-Bahir* they are counted explicitly as one.<sup>25</sup> Thus, a certain distancing between the son and the righteous occurs that contrasts with earlier traditions where they were understood as identical. The son is now a power within divinity, which is neither an angel nor totally identical to the righteous. This quandary is connected to the relatively eclectic nature of the book, and it is scholarly advisable not to force the discussions in this book regarding the theosophical structure.<sup>26</sup>

I am not sure that this development is so peculiar to the book of *Bahir*. In a kabbalistic text written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, presumably in Barcelona, R. Yehudah ben Yaqar wrote as follows:

the commandment of union which concerns us is connected also to what God said to the Sabbath:<sup>27</sup> *Kneset Israel* will be your spouse and it [the Sabbath] is the Righteous, the foundation of the word and therefrom all the spirits and souls come . . . this is the reason why people are accustomed to celebrate the [event of] marriage on the day of Sabbath.<sup>28</sup>

The couple here is constituted by the hypostasis called Sabbath, identified as righteous and as foundation, namely the male hypostasis, while *Kneset Yisrael* serves as the female hypostasis. The main element that compels a comparison between this passage and the *Bahir*, aside from their being two similar interpretations of the same Midrashic statement, is the common mentioning of the souls. Given this similarity between the two understandings of the righteous as the cosmic source of souls, we may ask the question of who is first, or who is the original source for the sexualization of the righteous within a theosophic structure. However, the attempt to answer this question will take us too far from the main point I would like to make here, which is that the sexualization of the righteous is not quoted by ben Yaqar as a view of the *Bahir* and, historically speaking, it may stem from other sources common to this book and to R. Yehudah ben Yaqar. In any case, this sexualization is discussed in the context of a feminine power, *Kneset Israel*, which has already been conceived of in a rabbinic source as the spouse of God and as a mother, as seen above.

Let me draw attention to a common denominator of ben Yaqar’s passage and that of the *Bahir*, which is salient for our discussion in this study: the emanation of souls from the sexualized divine power. Though it is only in the book of *Bahir* that the righteous is implicitly also the Son within the quaternity of divine family, in both cases we may speak about some form of sonship, related to the humans, both male and female, who receive the souls from above. Thus, at least in the case of the book of *Bahir*, we may speak about a double form of sonship: of the *sefirah* as a divine son, and of the souls, which are derived, perhaps emanated, from the supernal world. This view had an impact on many kabbalistic sources in theosophical Kabbalah, more conspicuously in the second half of the thirteenth century in Castilian Kabbalah.

How is the feminine power envisioned in relation to this sexualized son according to the book of *Bahir*? Let me inspect another paragraph from this book:

R. Rehumai said: 'Light that preceded the creation of the world, "cloud and fog are around Him"<sup>29</sup>, as it is said: 'And He said: "Let there be light, and light there was."<sup>30</sup> They said to Him: 'Before you create your son [Israel],<sup>31</sup> make a diadem for him'. He said: 'Yes'. This can be compared to a king who longed for a son. He found a nice and praiseworthy and precious diadem. He rejoiced greatly and said: 'This will be for My son, for his head, because it is nice for him' They said to Him: 'Does he know that his son is worthy?'<sup>32</sup>

I shall not address here the entire associative world of this small text. It seems that the gist of it is that the light created in the first stages of creation has been kept for the son, presumably a transformation of the righteous ones, about whom the Talmud assumes that they will have diadems around their head while inheriting the stored light of the primordial days.<sup>33</sup> However, what seems to me to be important here is the emphasis put on the Son of God: he is the key concept while the feminine power, the light or the diadem, is less central. Also in the other paragraphs where a daughter of the king is mentioned, she is described as marrying or betrothing either the son of the king or a king.<sup>34</sup> In various other cases, the feminine power is described as related to light.<sup>35</sup> We may assume that the initial status of the light was related to the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah*. It preceded the creation of the son, namely *Tiferet* (if the version that includes the word 'Israel' is accepted), and only after the emergence of the son, the light has been given as a last or perhaps the tenth *sefirah*, to the son, or as a comprehensive presence of the divine, that encompasses the seven lower *sefirot*.<sup>36</sup>

This text is paradigmatic for other discussions in the book. In a manner similar to this passage and as appears in another few instances in the book, the feminine is mentioned as marrying the son of the king, or Israel. In various other cases, the feminine power appears like some form of precious stone that will embellish the male.<sup>37</sup> To be clear, the point I wish to make is that, with one exception, the descriptions of the feminine powers in this book assume that she is or will become part of a couple, and understanding the sexual role is facilitated by paying attention to the change in the manner in which the book interprets the masculine powers. The sexualization of the son is a change that parallels the book's rather modest interest, I would like to emphasize, in depicting feminine entities. The more sexualized the son becomes, the more sexual the divine feminine power becomes too.<sup>38</sup>

Another evolution that occurred in the theosophical systems that distinguishes them from earlier views of sonship is the frequently found dissolution of the nexus between the concepts of son and Metatron. This distinction is significant in view of the fact that this nexus is so visible in

some of the material analyzed in the two earlier chapters. It means that the older forms of exaltation, which strove to reach the ontological level closest to the divine realm, became less 'exalted'. Angels, who were once the beings most intimate with God, become relegated in the theosophical structures to a much lower status, appearing as entities found beneath the sefirotic realm. Thus while the category of sonship is newly attributed to a higher entity – the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* – Metatron, high an angel as he was, in many cases remains a servant of the last *sefirah*, is sometimes identified with the last *sefirah*, and is thus identical with a feminine power, or becomes identical to the ninth *sefirah* in an exceptional discussion in the book of *Bahir*,<sup>39</sup> or even becomes a negative entity as we shall see below in the discussion on R. Joseph of Hamadan.

However, this kabbalistic book knows also of more than one son within the supernal world. The book of *Bahir* brings a famous parable dealing with sons:

A king had a nice wife and he had several sons from her and he loved them and rose them but they went on wrongs ways.<sup>40</sup> He hated their mother and she turned to them and said: 'My sons, why do you do so that you father hates me and you!' Then they recanted and turned to perform the will of their father. Their father saw this and loved them as he did first, and remembered their mother, as it is written there 'He saw', 'and He knew'<sup>41</sup> as it is written: 'Revive your work in the midst of the years.'<sup>42</sup> And why it is written: 'in wrath remember mercy'.<sup>43</sup> He said: 'When Your sons will transgress against You and You will be angry, [then] 'Remember Mercy.' What is the meaning of Mercy [*Rahem*]? That about whom it is written: 'I will love you, O Lord, my strength.'<sup>44</sup> You gave to him this attribute that is the *Shekhinah* of Israel.<sup>45</sup> 'And [what is] Remember [*Zakhor*]'?<sup>46</sup> – His son who inherited her and You gave her to him, as it is written: 'And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom.'<sup>47, 48</sup>

It seems that *Rahem* stands for the feminine power, while *Zakhor* stands for the masculine. This is quite unusual symbolism in comparison to that which dominates theosophical works, in which the feminine is related to justice or judgment, both of which have negative connotations. It seems quite plausible that the sons are the people of Israel on the mundane plane, while the mother corresponds to the higher, theosophical feminine power. According to this passage she is not the mother of a single son, namely the one hypostatic power within the sefirotic system known later as *Tiferet*, but of many human children. Whatever may be the specific nature of the Father, a certain *sefirah*, namely the mother, is to be understood as a higher

figure whose specific nature is quite clear in the text: she is described both as *Shekhinah* and as wisdom. A theological reading, which would assume that a more articulated system is found in this book and it is of utmost import to disclose it, would insist that the feminine figure can be solely the *Shekhinah*, and thus understand the passage as representing a sea-shift or a daring departure in Jewish thought insofar as this concept is concerned.<sup>49</sup> However, we know, as Schaefer also well knew, that the *Hokhmah* was a feminine power in a series of texts in earlier forms of Judaism and it is quite plausible to discern here a Midrashic mode of semiosis, by which a contamination of the concept of the *Shekhinah* by the feminine aspect of the *Hokhmah* enriched the semantic field of the *Shekhinah*. This reading is strengthened by the fact that a connection between the *Shekhinah* and *Hokhmah* is quite explicit in two other instances in the same book.<sup>50</sup> Thus, my solution to the emergence of the feminine nuance of the *Shekhinah* in the above passage is quite simple, and it takes into consideration the most concrete aspects of the relevant texts in the book while resorting to quite a straightforward type of explanation.

In any case, analyzing only a truncated quotation from one passage in which another feminine power is explicitly mentioned, ignoring its potential contribution and then attempting to identify sources outside the passage's reservoir of association before exhausting the immediate textual context is far from a serious philological approach.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the *Shekhinah* is not described as a mother of the Jews in earlier rabbinic literature, though such a description is found in the Talmudic passage dealing with *Knesset Israel* adduced above. Indeed, the figure of *Knesset Israel* appears in the book of *Bahir* in a context similar to the earlier quotation from this book.<sup>52</sup>

What is quintessential for the understanding of this passage is the impact the sons' deeds have first on the king and then on the queen. The latter is not an intercessor between the sons and their father, but rather a much more powerful being capable as a mother of being affected by the deeds of the sons. Such a theurgical understanding of the deeds, understood as performing the will of God, has rabbinic sources, and played a central role in the book of *Bahir*.<sup>53</sup> Ignoring it, and describing the *Shekhinah* as an intercessor alone is, in my opinion, quite misleading, as it is the neglect of the dramatic process of sexualization of the Son.<sup>54</sup>

In any case it should be emphasized that the process of sexualization of the relationship between a feminine entity and God or one of His powers, reflects a much earlier tradition found, for example, in rabbinic descriptions of the relationship between the two cherubs in the Holy of the Holiest. According to one such rabbinic statement, when the Jews performed the commandments, described there as the will of God, as is the case in the book

of *Bahir*, the two cherubs which represent God and the people of Israel are sexually united.

How did they [the cherubs] stand? – R. Johanan and R. Eleazar [are in dispute on the matter]. One Says: 'They faced each other'; and the other says: 'Their faces were inward.' But according to him who says that they faced each other, [it may be asked]: Is it not written, 'And their faces were inward?'<sup>55</sup> – [This is] no difficulty: The former [was] at a time when Israel performed the will of the Place [namely God]; the latter [was] at a time when Israel did not perform the will of the Place.<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere, in another Talmudic discussion it is said that:

When Israel used to make the pilgrimage, they [i.e., the priests] would roll up for them the *Parokhet* [curtain] and show them the Cherubs which were intertwined with one another, and say to them: 'Behold! Your love before God is like the love of male and female.'<sup>57</sup>

Those sources were known and studied in many circles of Judaism, and they informed the views of the book of *Bahir*. I assume that the notion of 'influence', namely of the impact of the Talmudic texts written in the Near East that subsequently arrived in the West, is permissible in this case, despite the recent fears induced by some cultural theorists who overemphasize the quite rare and the rather evasive cultural *conviventia* between Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages.

What I find interesting in the manner in which the book of *Bahir* appropriated the Talmudic statement is the substitution of the more general term Israel with 'sons'. A perusal of the different paragraphs of the book of *Bahir* evinces that a family *imaginaire* is becoming more and more important, in which the males play the main role, while the feminine figures are relegated to a most modest role. In any case, the insertion of the *Shekhinah* as the mother of Israel who suffers because of the sins of the Israelites represents an exegesis on the verse from Isa. 50.1: 'Behold for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions was your mother put away.' Here we have the triangle that was explicated by the *Bahir*: the Israelites who sin and suffer, and the father that punishes the mother. I assume that this verse, interpreted as dealing with the mother of Israel or with *Knesset Israel*, like in *Yalqut Shime'oni* ad locum, indeed influenced the above passage from the *Bahir*. Though not quoted explicitly, it is part of what I called the reservoir of associations, which represents the linguistic womb from which much of religious creativity developed in Jewish mysticism. Thus, without being aware of these simple associations and

without taking into consideration the available Hebrew sources as well as the larger conceptual context in the book of *Bahir* as dealing with a couple not with a single female, as we shall see below, any speculations that the Marian influences, however mild such may be, based as they are on extensive analyses, are no more than pure conjecture.<sup>58</sup> In principle, one should not negate the possibility that someone adducing persuasive material may yet prove the impact of the Marian cult. Like many types of influence, this one may also be detected sometime in the future. But serious work must first be done after taking into consideration all the pertinent available material, including issues related to developments concerning sonship. I hope that the above texts qualify as examples of influences of canonical texts upon the *Bahir*, and that there is no more need to resort to nebulous methodological speculations about the nature of the shift of a term, that does not occur in the text, Maia, or Miriam, under the alleged impact of a common *Zeitgeist* found in Provence or perhaps earlier in the Byzantine empire.<sup>59</sup> By inserting a term in a passage in which it does not exist and then speculating about the shift of its meaning, anything can be proven, especially when the relevant sources are not quoted and the scholar does not believe in proofs or evidence; simple things are complicated in order to create a case of dramatic semantic shift.

Let us return to a more concrete understanding of specific passages in the book of *Bahir*. Unlike the formulations found in the earlier sources discussed above, the term 'sons' is found and testifies to what may be called 'theurgical sonship', namely the assumption that there is a powerful impact of the son on the father. Indeed, when comparing the earlier rabbinic material to *Sefer ha-Bahir* it is clear that the latter has already absorbed the rabbinic theurgy, expressing it in a less audacious manner than its sources.

A King had sons and grandsons; as long as the sons acted according to His Will, He entered among them and maintained everything, sustaining all [of them] and giving them an abundance of good, that the fathers and sons may be satisfied. But when the sons do not act according to His Will, He [only] sustains the needs of the 'fathers'.<sup>60</sup>

Here the situation is much more complex: the fathers represent the sefirotic powers, while the sons represent the Jews, who are expected to perform the commandments, namely the will of God. Again this is a case of theurgy, though in this case the power that benefits from the effect of the performance is not the *Shekhinah* but all the seven lower *sefirot*, which enjoy the influx of the king because of the acts of the 'grandsons'. Elsewhere in the same book we read that the king speaks in the first person, saying that:

if the sons are not worthy, and will not do things which are just in My eyes, then the channels . . . will receive water so as not to partake with their sons, since they do not act according to My Will.<sup>61</sup>

Here the 'sons', namely the *sefirot*, are not mentioned but rather the channels between the *sefirot*. This is a third type of theurgy found in this book. Here, the theurgical element related to the sons is obvious, and in both of these last cases the term *Shekhinah* does not occur. We may therefore conclude that the role of the feminine entity, like the *sefirot* and the channels, is better understood as reflecting the situation between the father and the sons even though she does not play an important role in those examples of theurgical sonship. The centrality of the will of God, its performance and repercussions, is an issue that is essential to understanding the important issues in the book of *Bahir*.<sup>62</sup> It defines the concept of sonship as a special type of relationship between people to whom the divine will has been revealed, who were elected for this purpose and whose deeds have important repercussions, and God. This type of *imaginaire* distinguishes the *Bahir* and many other forms of theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah on the one hand, from the ecstatic Kabbalah discussed in the previous chapter, on the other hand.

The theurgical understanding of sonship had strong repercussions in various forms of Jewish mysticism, both kabbalistic and Ḥasidic, and differs significantly from the earlier types of Jewish sonship. In theurgical forms of mysticism there is no intercession related to a hypostatic son, but rather a corporate personality religiously performing the commandments with theurgical consequences on the son on high. In any case, the emergence of the theurgical sonship in the main line of Kabbalah should be seen as part of a wider development, namely the ascent of the importance of rabbinic theurgy in medieval Jewish thought, especially in the main school of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. In several distinct instances, Ashkenazi masters emphasized the changes induced by the prayer in the divine glory or *dynamis* that is described as both being enhanced and as ascending on high.<sup>63</sup> This ascent in importance may account for the development in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, which has been connected to Ashkenazi material from its beginning, at least according to a major tradition describing its arrival in Spain.<sup>64</sup> In short, the attempt to understand the processes related to a wife without her husband, the daughter without the son, or the sefirah of *Malkhut* without *Tiferet*, constitutes a problem that impedes a better understanding of both, as it represents neglect of the theurgical impact of the human sons on both entities. In any case, without taking into account the sexualization of the *Tzaddiq* in the book of *Bahir* and even later in the book of the *Zohar*, it is difficult to understand the

sexualization of the feminine hypostases in these same books. I would prefer not to surmise any priority in terms of the temporal sequence of these two processes, since I believe that they occurred concomitantly.

To repeat my point on this important issue: it is best to study the changes related to the perceptions of the two divine powers together, as part of a larger process of ascent of theurgical elements in most of the earliest forms of Kabbalah. The emphasis upon the union between the two powers, described as the union between the Holy One, blessed be He and the *Shekhinah*, became one of the most fascinating contributions of the theosophical-theurgical trends to the novel understanding of Jewish rituals, and it points to the conceptual connection between these concepts.<sup>65</sup> Ignoring this central issue reduces the vision of the kabbalistic cult to what is basically a contemplative reproduction of the non-theurgical mode of the medieval Christian cult of Mary, marginalizing the core elements of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah: the strong performative elements found both in the book of *Bahir* as well as in the *Zohar*. Images and themes, especially biblical ones, are common to both Christian and Jewish medieval authors and mystics in the Middle Ages, and affinities between them may be matters of historical and phenomenological affinities, and both tracks should be investigated in detail. However failure to take into consideration not only the general differences between specific forms of Judaism and Christianity<sup>66</sup> but also the specific details of the kabbalistic systems under scrutiny and their Christian counterparts to which these systems are compared, limits scholars, at their best, to dealing with secondary shifts. After all, an understanding of details depends heavily on understanding the structures that organize such details, and without articulating the deeper structure of the relevant systems it is difficult to understand the meaning of the details. So, for example, the book of *Bahir*, which has been highlighted by so many scholars as the changing moment in the history of the feminine aspects of the divinity, is evidently little interested in this issue, as revealed by the book's limited references to the *Shekhinah*, in contrast to its much more expansive discussion of the status of the sons as hypostatic powers, similar to the system of ten *sefirot*. The phenomena represented in a certain text may be easily misunderstood by a failure to integrate the relative weight of each of the elements into the structure and attempt to determine what the scholar assumed is interesting, exotic, or important also for the alleged later developments in a certain domain. Understanding implies not only identifying that which is considered novel, but integrating such within the larger structure of thought that informs a certain book.

I would say that the major contribution of the *Bahir* to the history of the main schools of Kabbalah is the development of rabbinic theurgy, which is elaborated with the help of a more complex theosophy in which the 'sons'

are not only plural, but also united with a concept of sonship in which God responds to the acts of his grandsons by providing the sons with more or less influx. Here we find an interesting example of what I called double sonship, in which the second sonship had a theurgical impact on the first one. The status of the feminine elements should be understood within this larger picture, as a particular case of the complex supernal new dynamics. The book of *Bahir* certainly had an impact on later forms of theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, and it seems that the emergence of the male and female couple in its system is one of the most significant impacts of the book, though, as mentioned above, other type of couples also contributed to the more elaborate visions of later Kabbalists.

In a way, scholars' dissociation of the feminine hypostasis from her masculine counterpart is reminiscent of what some Kabbalists called *qitzutz bi-nefi'ot*. There is nothing objectionable in performing such dissociation and ignoring the warnings of the tradition under investigation, so long as the scholar's approach does not create an artificial – and in some ways also superficial – understanding of the subject-matter. Since hypostatic couples are well known in Philo, rabbinic literature, Heikhalot and Ashkenazi literature, as well as in early Kabbalah in instances where the term *Shekhinah* does not appear,<sup>67</sup> this dual theosophical structure is the best conceptual and historical framework for understanding the book of *Bahir* and the *Zohar*. To be sure, this approach does not preclude the need to investigate other types of influences, including the Christian, as we shall see in several other instances in this chapter.

### 3. The Absence of the son in early theosophical Kabbalah

Unlike the relative importance of the concept of theophoric sonship in Hasidei Ashkenaz and even more in ecstatic Kabbalah, as seen in the previous two chapters, early theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah was not concerned with the theophoric mediator as a divine son. By the term 'early' I mean the various kabbalistic schools that flowered in Provence and Catalonia between the end of the twelfth century and the middle of the thirteenth century, with the quite notable exception of the book of *Bahir*, whose views have been discussed above.<sup>68</sup> Indifference towards this matter is even more obvious when considering that some of the themes analyzed in Chapter 1 or their sources had in fact reached the early Kabbalists.<sup>69</sup>

The ecstatic school of Kabbalah, as analyzed in the previous chapter, envisaged human perfection as an intellectual achievement and the second son as the human intellect actualized; a real rebirth (though a spiritual rebirth will be discussed below in the case of a selection of philosophers) or corporeal adoption is not implied, since in both cases the importance of an

external form or of the body of the son would be assumed. The theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah however was much more positive in its attitude toward the human body and to the divine shape described anthropomorphically, as well as to the conception of these as organic entities that can change, with moments of perfection and imperfection.<sup>70</sup>

We may find in the early theosophical documents an affinity, similar to that analyzed above in the case of R. Eleazar of Worms, between the divine name and a certain anthropomorphic structure. So, for example, we read in a quotation found in the book of R. Ezra of Gerona, who may have been influenced by R. Isaac the Blind, the son of R. Abraham ben David of Posquieres (one of the first theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists), and the master of the Kabbalist who wrote the following passage:

The [divine] name was not complete until man was created in the image of God, and [then] the seal [*hotam*] was complete . . . you were on the degree of Adam,<sup>71</sup> who completed the ten *sefirot* . . . and 'He called a complete name over a complete world'<sup>72</sup> and the Lord was delighted by his creatures, and the divine Spirit dwelled upon him, since he was comprised, crowned and adorned<sup>73</sup> by the ten *sefirot*.<sup>74</sup>

Here we have the connection between the human image, the divine name and the concept of seal, three elements that were connected to each other in the passages from the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, adduced and discussed in the Introduction above. However, what is conspicuous is the absence here, in comparison to the early Judeo-Christian text, of a concept of sonship. In his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, R. Isaac the Blind defines man explicitly as a great seal, *Hotam gadol*.<sup>75</sup> The description of man as comprising in his constitution the ten *sefirot* is central to the anthropology of R. Ezra, and is repeated several times in his works; here, however, it seems that this conception is related explicitly to the dwelling of the divine spirit in man. However, in the same context we learn that this constitution reflects the divine structure. I assume that just as in the perfect man, the affinity between the deced of *sefirot* and the spirit is obvious, as it should be with the divine pleroma, which is completed by the creation of man. It seems that the reference to the seal is to be understood on two levels: first it reflects the biblical notion of man as the perfection of the creation.<sup>76</sup> Second, I assume that an additional issue is hinted at by use of this metaphor: the seal stands for a structure that is formed out of ten components; apparently, R. Ezra points also to the fact that the perfected human form functions as a sort of talisman which can attract the divine influx, in accordance with the isomorphic parallelism between the supernal deced and the lower one. It may be presumed that the ten *sefirot* are a seal because they capture the influx

descending from the Infinite, whereas man is a seal which is designed to collect the influx descending from the superior anthropomorphic structure.<sup>77</sup> The duality of the structure and the dwelling spirit is reminiscent of the duality of image and breath discussed in the Introduction. There can be no doubt that here there is a reverberation of these two earlier elements within a system that is much more complex. Haviva Pedaya has duly pointed out the importance of this duality for the understanding of theosophy in early Kabbalah.<sup>78</sup>

It seems, therefore, that in some theosophical circles there was a reluctance to adopt the concepts of sonship, even when such were already part of reliable Jewish sources that could influence Kabbalists. This reluctance is also evident in the case of the cult of Mary, which has been attributed in general terms to early Kabbalists, but which is nevertheless absent from all the Provençal material regarding theosophical Kabbalah.<sup>79</sup> In any case, in books in which the righteous was not conceived of in sexual terms, like R. Jacob ben Sheshet's *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, or his *Sefer ha-'Emanah ve-ha-Bitahon*, the *Shekhinah* is also not conceived of in feminine terms. Moreover, these books are not interested in the idea of sonship, despite the 'central' role attributed by some scholars to the book of *Bahir* in the development of theosophical Kabbalah.

The absence of the role of the hypostatic son in Catalan Kabbalah should raise questions regarding the history of this specific type of kabbalistic symbol. What is missing in a particular system should not be supplanted by elements found in a second system. Rather, to avoid imposing an unwarranted meaning on a given system, scholars should refrain from importing symbols from one school to another as a means of elucidating the meaning of a symbol. In my opinion, this is quite a basic methodological remark, yet it remains pertinent due to insufficient awareness about the dangers of this practice by scholars in the field. Implicitly, many of them assume that there is a general type of kabbalistic symbolism that permeates the entire literature of Kabbalah. My assumption is that it would be better to first map the main types of categories of symbols, then determine in what schools they do and do not prevail, and finally refrain from mixing them for no justified reason. So, for example, some Kabbalists prefer the comprehensive system of the tree of *sefirot*, while others prefer Adam symbolism. Sometimes both are used. It would be unwarranted to assume that all Kabbalists used both, and to then import elements from one of these systems into the other. The symbolism of the son is not a component of all theosophical-theurgical types of Kabbalah, and should not be imported to where it does not explicitly appear, just as the feminine understanding of the *Shekhinah* is not universal among all the Kabbalists: Abraham Abulafia's writings and some of the young Gikatilla, or the writings of R. Isaac ibn

Latif, are just a few examples of literature in which the feminine characterizations of this concept are absent.

Therefore, my methodological assumption is that scholars should be cautious even when creating connections between symbols found within the same theosophical system, if such connections are not explicit in the texts themselves. Let me explain this methodological issue in some detail. In the very same kabbalistic system the term 'son' as *Tiferet* may occur, though it may not be connected to the father as a higher *sefirah*. While it is reasonable to assume that in systems based on a strong form of coherence such a nexus is logical and even strictly necessary, this may be much less the case in looser conceptual systems if the two concepts are not in fact found together. Oblique connections, namely assumptions based on the conviction of a strong sense of coherence in theosophical systems, may sometimes be quite misleading. Given the huge number of symbols related to the same *sefirah*, in our case *Tiferet*, it is easy to create affinities that are irrelevant from the point of view of the Kabbalist. So, for example, if this *sefirah* is represented by the terms Son, Moses, Jacob, Truth, Mercy, Torah, Heart, the feast of Shavu'ot, *Holam* – one of the vowels – or *Lulav*, to adduce just a few examples from one single treatise, a scholar may speculate about the affinities between the *Holam* and the Son, or alternatively, about those between the *Holam* and the heart. According to the oblique assumption, there is no methodological obstacle to such speculation. However, in engaging in such speculation, a scholar may impose new meanings on the texts which do not explicate such a nexus, and in which it is reasonable that the Kabbalist never intended to create such a nexus. Kabbalistic logic and ontology do not work with the logical assumption that if A is B and B is C, then A must be C. Loose ontologies and scant interest in systematic logic make forms of inductive speculation weak starting points for drawing further conclusions. Rather, at most, these are hypothetical possibilities and constructing comprehensive structures upon such oblique connections requires much caution. It is even less recommended to make these connections between books written by different Kabbalists. Or, to resort to an expression used by Martin Hengel in his book on the Son of God, the various symbols are 'multiple approximations' and should not be analyzed analytically in an effort to discover hidden structures that were hidden by intention. They are rather clusters of primarily biblical terms that rarely constitute coherent structures when related to each other. This is the case in the early Christian depiction of Jesus and even more so in theosophical Kabbalah. The absence of the term 'son' in the early schools, and the references to 'son' and 'sons' in the book of *Bahir*, demonstrate the marginality of the theosophy of the one unique son in those kabbalistic schools. It should be mentioned that as an exception in his commentary on

Gen. 6.4, Nahmanides describes Adam as the Son of God because he was created in the image of God.

Thus, to turn to the topic of the next section, although both the concept of son and of Lesser Face or Countenance [*Za'yir*] appear in the Zoharic literature, one should not automatically assume that the terms are strongly related and draw conclusions on this ground, but rather only do so when an awareness of the relationship on the part of the relevant Kabbalist(s) is detected. Though both terms are indeed related to *Tiferet*, an effort should be made to translate the indirect connection into one that is direct before drawing any further or broader conclusions.

#### 4. *The book of the Zohar*

In the second part of the thirteenth century, Kabbalah underwent a greater series of changes than in the first part of the century. Geographical change was a factor: while previously the various schools flourished in smaller centers of Jewish culture, be they in Provence or in Catalonia, in the second part of this century many kabbalistic books were written in bigger cities, or at least connected to such cities. So, for example, in Catalonia Kabbalah moved from Gerona to Barcelona, disappearing in Gerona after 1260, as was the case in Provence. In Castile, Kabbalists were connected to the family of R. Todros ha-Levi Abulafia, an inhabitant of Toledo, who also wrote kabbalistic books. This is also the case of Abraham Abulafia's writings, his *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* and his prophetic book *Sefer ha-Haftarah* in Rome. At this point, more of the non-canonical kabbalistic books were written, for example Abulafia's *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, the later books of R. Joseph Gikatilla's and, last but not least, the extensive kabbalistic literature known as the book of the *Zohar*. The length of these books is incomparably greater than most of what was written beforehand, and naturally, some themes are treated in a more elaborate manner. Moreover, as pointed out in the context of Abulafia, a more exoteric propensity can be discerned.

It is this latter literature that will concern us here, since it put great emphasis on a variety of axes important to the concept of the theosophical son: the son/daughter, the son/father and the son/mother. It should be pointed out that the sexualization of the relationship son/daughter or of the couple of *sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, which dominates innumerable kabbalistic discussions, does not constitute a complete change of the sonship paradigm, since the son/father affinities remain important in a number of cases, while it is the specific nature of these elements and their prominence in the general economy that shifts dramatically.

In the main trend of predominantly theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah

developing during the last decades of the thirteenth century in Castile, the role of the *morphē*, the shape – both human and divine – was more important than mental achievements. From this point of view there is a sharp difference between Abraham Abulafia's spiritual and noetic understanding of the concept of son on the one hand, and the much more morphic approach permeating the great majority of the Zoharic corpus on the other hand. Given the amplitude of this literature and the conceptual diversity of the treatises that belong to what is commonly referred to as the book of the *Zohar*, there is hardly any agreement on numerous important topics, just as there is hardly any agreement insofar as concepts related to the son are concerned. Drawing from a broader spectrum of sources, this literature reflects a diversity of 'sonship-principles'. Yehuda Liebes makes an important contribution to the study of the plausible impact of the Christian vision of son on discussions in the *Zohar*.<sup>80</sup> More recently, additional remarks in this direction have been articulated.<sup>81</sup> Yet here, I shall deal mainly with other aspects of sonship that appear in the Zoharic literature, since in other contemporary literatures this topic is less evident. What is especially interesting is that in the theosophical writings of R. Joseph Gikatilla, a major Kabbalist who was in his youth a student of Abraham Abulafia and in his mature period close to Zoharic literature, theories of theosophical sonship are absent.

The earliest layer in the Zoharic literature that addresses the issue of the son is *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on the book of Ruth. Interpreting the verse from Prov. 30.4 the anonymous Kabbalist states that the biblical syntagm 'His name' means 'YHWH Tzeva'ot' while the name of 'His son' is Israel, because elsewhere in the Bible it is said, 'Israel [is] My firstborn son'.<sup>82, 83</sup> This may well be a traditional reading dealing with the election of Israel, and thus a metaphorical or corporate form of sonship. However, immediately afterwards it is said that 'All this refers to the Holy One, blessed be He'.<sup>84</sup> According to this statement, the son is also related to an inner divine entity, and constitutes some form of hypostasis. Thus, we may speak about two divine names, *YHWH Tzeva'ot* and 'Israel', as theophoric names related to a sonship, each pointing to distinct divine powers. The hypostatic existence of Israel on high is well known since late antiquity, as seen in Philo and in the so-called *Prayer of Joseph* in the Introduction. The appearance of such a position is certainly not a significant conceptual innovation. However, what is novel in the quotation above is the explicit reference to sonship as part of what is imagined to be the divine realm. Indeed, in theosophical Kabbalah the name 'Israel' is often the name of the sixth *sefirah*, or the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*. Thus we may conclude this discussion by asserting that in the earlier stratum of the *Zohar*, there was an assumption that Israel is not just the Son of God on its national, corporate level, as in previous Jewish literatures, but this

name stands also for a supernal power found within the divine realm, described also as a son.

In the various theosophical frameworks of the *Zohar*, the 'son' becomes much more organically connected to a theory of divinity conceived of as possessing an anthropomorphic shape, or to a complex theosophical system whose attribute, the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, is designated as 'son'. In some discussions in the main bulk of this book, the father is conceived of as the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah*, while the son is identified with the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*.<sup>85</sup> This identification has to do with the common association of the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* with the names of Jacob and Israel. Elsewhere, this *sefirah* is associated with Moses, whose Hebrew form of the name, *Mosheh*, is constituted by consonants similar to the Hebrew phrase *MaH Shem*, 'what is the name' of his son, which appears in the verse from Proverbs.<sup>86</sup> This association of Moses with the name of God, more precisely the Tetragrammaton, is reminiscent of much earlier traditions found among the Samaritans, as well as in various traditions of the contemporary Kabbalists close to ecstatic Kabbalah.

Sometime in the last decades of the thirteenth century in Castile, anonymous Kabbalists wrote what is thought to be the bulk of the Zoharic literature, considered the classic text of Kabbalah.<sup>87</sup> As Liebes points out, the discussions found in this literature are rather vague, especially in their references to the son holding a relatively high position in the theosophical system, and attention should be paid to the Christian overtones of such discussions.<sup>88</sup> As claimed by Boaz Huss, it is possible that the central figure of the book of the *Zohar*, the venerated late antiquity figure R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai, is described as the Son of God in order to counteract the vision of Jesus as son, while in a later layer of the book, namely in *Tiqqunei Zohar*, an attempt is made in order to restore the unique status of Moses by describing him as the son, and higher than Rashbiy.<sup>89</sup> The main characteristic of the theosophical-theurgical treatments of the son, as having a clear sexual identity, is a pun on the Aramaic term for 'the Son': *Bera'*. By changing the order of the consonants, the word '*Ever*' emerges, which means a limb, but in the specific context of the *Zohar* it stands for the phallus, represented by the righteous man upon whom the world stands, like in *Sefer ha-Bahir*.<sup>90</sup> It is quite obvious that the *Zohar* follows a path well represented in the earlier theosophical-theurgical classic text: as pointed out above, the *Bahir* recognizes a strong connection, though not a total identification, between the son and the phallus, counted as one entity. In the Zoharic passage the phallus is also conceived of as emerging from the permutation of the letters of the word that points to son. Indeed, the strong affinity between the two *sefirot* is explicitly attributed to the Zoharic passage in Cordovero's commentary ad locum.<sup>91</sup>

According to another interesting passage found in this book, God not only had a son but also a daughter and these progeny correspond respectively to the *sefirot* of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>92</sup> Apparently unwilling to identify the son with a clear-cut positive divine power, the anonymous authors of this book preferred to deal not with the single Son of God as is found in Christianity, but with the ways in which Jews may become good Sons of God. This is evident in a series of Midrashic and Zoharic interpretations of Prov. 30.4, which understand the son in the verse as pointing to the people of Israel.

According to another Zoharic passage, the consonants of the name of the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, widely understood as the supernal mother, are to be divided into *Ben* and *Yah*,<sup>93</sup> which should be understood as the son of *YaH*, the two consonants that represents the supernal Father and Mother. Indeed, as shown by Liebes, there are other instances in which this *sefirah*, more often representing a feminine function, is related to the idea of son.<sup>94</sup> Let me turn now to another Zoharic discussion of the Jews as sons, and their relation to the supernal parents:

Rabbi Eleazar was sitting in the front of his father.<sup>95</sup> He said to him: 'If there is a defender in the world, it is found in the *Matronita*'. And if there is a prosecutor in the world, it is found in the *Matronita*.' Why? He said to him: '[There is a parable about] a King who had a son from the *Matronita*'. 'As long as the son is fulfilling the will of the King, the King made His dwelling with [in] the *Matronita*'. And as long as the son does not fulfill the will of the King, the King separates His dwelling from the *Matronita*'. So is the case of the Holy One, blessed be He, and *Knesset Israel*: as long as Israel fulfills the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, the Holy One blessed be He put His dwelling with[in] *Knesset Israel*. As long as Israel does not fulfill the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, the Holy One blessed be He, does not put His dwelling<sup>96</sup> with *Knesset Israel*. What is the reason: Because Israel is the firstborn of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written 'Israel, My firstborn son'<sup>97</sup> The Mother is *Knesset Israel*<sup>98</sup> ... As long as Israel are remote from the palace of the king it is as if the *Matronita*' is remote together with them. What is the reason [for it]? Because the *Matronita*' does not precede *Qisfa*' [admonishing] to that son to afflict him, so as to go on the upright path since the king never afflicts his son but leaves everything in the hands of the *Matronita*' to govern the palace, to afflict her son and to guide him on the path of truth.<sup>99</sup>

The affinity between the son and the celestial mother, the *Matronita*', is conspicuous and reverberates in kabbalistic literature. So, for example, we read in an early sixteenth-century Kabbalist R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi:

As long as Israel does the divine will, the King [i.e., the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*] has intercourse with the bride [i.e., *Malkhut*] and falls in love with her, since Israel is God's firstborn ... and so long as Israel does not do His will, he [the King] departs from her.<sup>100</sup>

It should be pointed out that the supernal King, no doubt the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, is described here as the Father, whose attitude to the supernal Mother depends on the worship of the human sons. This is indubitably a theurgical type of sonship, which builds on the rabbinic and the Bahiric theurgies related to the concept of son. The question is, however, whether there is in this passage a double sonship: if we apply an oblique approach to the symbolism of *Tiferet*, which is the son in the divine quaternary scheme, this is obviously the case. However, this implicit double sonship will become explicit only in Lurianic Kabbalah, as we shall see below.

Let us turn to another aspect of the *Zohar* passage: it exemplifies the extra-divine son's clear dependence on the last *sefirah*, a relationship that may itself reflect the intra-divine pattern in which the hypostatic son as *Tiferet* depends upon the *sefirah* of *Binah* as Mother. So, for example, we read:

'My son, fear the Lord and the king'<sup>101</sup> – 'Fear the Lord' – to link [the hypostasis of] Fear with the Holy One, blessed be He, [namely] the son and the king, in order to draw down the light of the supernal Mother, that is called King, to that firstborn son, to enter from below to the high. Another interpretation: 'My son and the King' to draw the light from the son to the daughter, that is called king.<sup>102</sup>

Two theosophical-theurgical models are offered here as possible alternatives. One, dealing with the relationship between the Mother and Son within the divine sphere, basically reflects the view of R. Isaac the Blind about the centrality of the *sefirot* *Binah* and *Tiferet*,<sup>103</sup> while the other deals with the relationship between the Son and the Daughter, namely the sixth *sefirah* and the last one, understood as the king of the universe, in a way paralleling the *Matronita*' in the above passage, and reflecting the view of Nahmanides.<sup>104</sup> In one way or another, the son plays a central role in the theosophical scheme and is to be understood as a key figure in the theurgical processes. No change of gender is involved in this passage, either according to the first interpretation or to the other. One of the reasons for this stand may be that

this Zoharic passage reflects the earlier positions found in Catalan Kabbalah, where gender was not mentioned. In any case, it should be mentioned that the affinity of the son to the mother in the supernal realm does not inhibit the sexual relationship of the second axis. Unlike Christianity, where the affinity of the supernal Son to the divine Mother is accompanied by a state of celibacy (and later an exemplary form of behavior in Christianity), here, and much more in some other instances in the book of the *Zohar*, the mother seems to encourage the son's sexual relationship with the supernal feminine power, the *sefirah Malkhut*.

However, there are more individualistic readings of sonship in the book of the *Zohar*. So, for example, we read that:

Whoever reaches the age of thirteen years and on, he is called a son of the 'Congregation of Israel',<sup>105</sup> and whoever reaches the age of twenty and onwards is called a 'Son of the Holy One, blessed be He'.<sup>106</sup> For certainly 'You are sons of the Lord your God.'<sup>107</sup> When David reached thirteen years and was meritorious, on the very day that he entered his fourteenth year, it is written,<sup>108</sup> 'God said to me, you are my son, this day I have begotten you.' What is the meaning? That before that day he was not His son and the supernal soul did not dwell upon him, for he was in his years of uncircumcision. For that reason – 'this day I have begotten you'. 'Today' – certainly 'I have begotten you' and not the Other Side<sup>109</sup> as it had been until now.<sup>110</sup>

From this passage it becomes clear that there is a process of progressive adoption. First the lower divine power takes over the *Bar-Mitzvah* child, who thus escapes the patronage of the demonic realm, and then seven years later the male, higher divine power takes over responsibility, enabling the child to become the Son of God. The *Zohar* also interprets the appearance of the soul, which is the supernal component within the personality, as a new birth that transforms man into a Son of God, higher than the status of the son of the last *sefirah*. In a way, the maturing Jew becomes the son of the *sefirah* that is itself the Son of God. The final statement – to the effect that man is dominated by the Other Side until the age he is required to perform the commandments – is reminiscent of Abraham Abulafia's statement that prior to the appearance of the intellect, the bodily powers of man predominate. The *Zohar* operates, however, with both a ritualistic and a complex Neo-Platonic theory, the latter seeing in the highest human faculty, *neshamah*, an entity descending from a higher theosophical power. Interestingly enough, the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, which is conceived of as the source of *Neshamah*, which is its son, is conceived itself as the Son of the Father, *Hekmah*, and Mother, *Binah*, supernal powers within the divine

structure. It should be emphasized that this achievement is shared by many Jews synchronically and diachronically, and is not limited to an exceptional individual. The higher souls were conceived of as Sons of God, namely as the offspring of the union between *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>111</sup> R. Moses de Leon wrote in *Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah*, that:

All the higher soul is an example of her Creator, like the image of the son from the father, for He is its building, literally; thus, the higher soul is the building of her Creator.<sup>112</sup>

The sort of sonship involved here draws from more than one source. No doubt the vision in rabbinic Judaism of the Jews as Sons of God exerted an influence. However, I assume that the view discussed above, about the souls as Sons of God, found already *in nuce* in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, also played a role. The Zoharic position, drawing presumably on Nahmanides' view of the soul as divine, explains what is hardly found in rabbinic literature, which is how and why a Jew becomes the Son of God: he possesses a divine soul. What should be emphasized here is that this is a more concrete example of the conception of double sonship, since the soul is derived from the conjunction of the two lower *sefirot*, one of which may be identified as the son within the divine family. Moreover, sonship is defined here as much more a matter of the spiritual prolongation or extension of the divine world, than of morphic resemblance. Not that such an isomorphism is lacking in the *Book of Bahir*, in the Zoharic thought or in some of the writings of R. Moses de Leon. On the contrary, it is quite present. Furthermore, the morphic elements within the theosophical structure are present in the context of a theosophical theory of sonship, to be discussed immediately below in this chapter, as the Longer and Lesser Faces, related to each other as respectively a Father and a Son. However, the similarity between the morphic dimension of the theosophical structure and the way in which the human body itself is described as a son does not generate a theory of sonship, while in the case of the highest soul, this seems indeed to be the case. The shift from bodily isomorphism to spiritual kinship between God and man is quite a significant one, in some cases assuming that the special theurgical power of the possessor of the high soul is related to its supernal source in the divine sphere.

Let me point out that the Zoharic passage is quite ambiguous regarding the age at which someone becomes a Son of God. It begins by stating that the relevant age is 20. However at the end of the quotation, the figure 13 appears. I would like to compare this view with that found in R. Eleazar of Worms's *Sefer ha-Shem*. God is described there as the father of a member of the nation of Israel only after he reaches the age of 13, when the child is called 'My son, the firstborn.'<sup>113</sup> At this age, the genetic father, who is

responsible for the deeds of his son during the first thirteen years, hands his status to a divine father.<sup>114</sup> In a way, this rite of passage from human to divine paternity is reminiscent of a similar transition related to baptism in Christianity, though in rabbinic literature the affinity between God and the sons is imagined as being more genetic than spiritual.<sup>115</sup>

An interesting issue to explore further is the possible connection between the phrase *Bar Mitzwah*, and an understanding of the boy experiencing this rite as more literally the 'son of the *Mitzwah*', where the term *Mitzwah* points to some divine power (as some texts in early Kabbalah).<sup>116</sup> Moreover, in the later layer of the book of the *Zohar*, in the treatise entitled *Ra'aya' Mehemna'*, the term *Mitzwah* is conceived of as identical to the Tetragrammaton.<sup>117</sup> The relationship between the performance of commandments and sonship may reflect some form of affinity to theurgy, as seen above in the book of *Bahir*. In other words, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah is regarding sonship in terms fundamental to its main religious ethos, namely the performance of the commandments. The dynamic son below is performing acts that affect the supernal son within the divine realm – so another instance of double sonship.

### 5. Enoch as the son of Adam in the *Zohar*

The triple distinction in psychology dealing with the faculties of *nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah*, characteristic of the main layer of the *Zohar*, is supplemented in several discussions in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah by some higher spiritual qualities, namely the degrees of *hayah* – living soul – and *yehidah* – the unique spiritual power – which are however much more restricted.<sup>118</sup> Even higher than the fivefold psychological structure is the rank called *zihara' 'ila'ah*, namely the supernal brilliance, which is the patrimony of the very few individuals who would be understood as Sons of God. I use 'would' because in the *Zoharic* literature I have not found a straightforward connection between the reception of the supernal brilliance and sonship. However by the way of a *fortiori* argumentation, I assume that if someone who receives the *neshamah* is considered to be a son, as seen above, the same would certainly be the case for someone who received an even higher power. In fact, only Adam and Enoch are portrayed as having possessed this highest spiritual power, and the affinities between them are described as relating to the reception of this power and some form of sonship. So, for example, we read in an early layer of the book of the *Zohar*, the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, on the Song of Songs:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden, in a garment of glory, [taken] out of

the light of the Garden of Eden . . . and those garments left him, and the luminous soul ascended . . . and he remained bereft of all . . . and that luminosity of the Supernal soul which left him ascended upwards, and it was stored in a certain treasury, that is the body, up to the time that he begat sons,<sup>119</sup> and Enoch came into the world. Since Enoch came, the Supernal light of the holy soul descended into him, and Enoch was enwrapped in the supernal soul which had left Adam.<sup>120</sup>

Interestingly enough, Enoch is mentioned here as if, at least implicitly, he is a son of Adam. It is he who inherits Adam's special garment of light, thereby receiving the highest soul that abandoned Adam after his sin. Thus, some form of transmission of the spiritual essence of the father passes into his 'son'. This is certainly not a matter of transmigration of a soul from one body to another, as can be found in another kabbalistic source where Enoch is portrayed as a transmigration of Adam.<sup>121</sup> The fact that the son, Enoch, is conceived of as receiving a higher soul creates what I propose to call an 'oblique' type of sonship, insofar as Enoch is concerned.

Yet it is difficult to fit the precise meaning of this transmission within the theosophical system of *sefirot*, as in the earlier *Zoharic* text, and it seems to me that what we have here is some form of earlier, non-theosophical tradition that may be similar to those found in the theory of the divine power in ha-Levi's *Kuzari*. The matter of the brilliance is undoubtedly connected to the concept of the *haluqa' de-Rabbanan*,<sup>122</sup> as emphasized in Lurianic Kabbalah, and this matter requires detailed study.<sup>123</sup>

What is surprising in this quotation is the absence of Metatron. The patriarch in his human phase is envisioned as a direct substitution for Adam, without mentioning the latter's sons and without himself being transformed into an angel (as is the case of the traditions discussed in the earlier chapters), but rather by a direct form of relationship whereby he takes on the latter's lost light. For this reason it seems plausible that in this case the author had at his disposal a tradition closer to a *Book of Words of Adam to Seth* in a written or oral form, diverging from the standard views about the angelification of the patriarch.<sup>124</sup>

Another similar tradition is found in a treatment located in the *Zohar*. There someone, no doubt Enoch, is described as walking in the path of truth while on earth<sup>125</sup> and finding:

. . . [t]he light that has been lost by the primeval man, because this light has been hidden in the Paradise. He ascended on high but did not sit on his [Adam's] place [namely seat] because he was not perfect from all the sides, as the perfection below was deficient, because it was lost because of Adam's sin, who descended below

and has been hidden within the trees of the garden, and he stripped himself of all the aspects of the garden, until the birth of Enoch ben Yared.<sup>126</sup> When he was born, he was close to the garden, [and] this light was dwelling in order to illumine him, and he was anointed with the holy oil, and the light that sparks was dwelling onto him. He entered paradise and found there the tree of life, the branches and the fruits of the tree. He smelled them and the spirit of the light of life dwelled upon him. The messengers, which are the supernal angels, came and taught him the supernal wisdom and gave him a book that was hidden within the tree of life,<sup>127</sup> and he studied from it and knew the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He,<sup>128</sup> and pursued them, as it is written 'And Enoch walked with God' until that light has been perfected within him. When this light was perfected below he wanted to ascend to his place and show that perfection, according to the secret of Enoch. One day he entered the paradise, and he was shown the secrets of the garden and he put this book and all he has seen, outside [the garden], and it is hidden with[in] the companions.<sup>129</sup> Afterwards he put upon himself that light within that garment, in order to show toward the high, so that those<sup>130</sup> who protested in the front of their Master, against the creation of the man in the world, will be ashamed because of it. As it is written: 'He is not, because God took him' 'And he is not' in this world. 'And he is not' – as he was in this world. 'Because God took him': to [be in] another image. In this [world] he is permanently a youth. This is the secret that we found<sup>131</sup>: 'Enoch is a youth, according to his path' [in order] to rule over all the worlds. 'Even if he will grow old, he will not deviate from it' behold he is found permanently in it, and turned into a youth. Within Enoch the hidden world is comprised.<sup>132</sup> He is the throne of his Master. He does the mission in the world. When the world is [under the attribute of] judgment, Metatron goes out and calls: 'Master over all the supernal armies.' The old man who is a youth enters from one world to another, and the anger is settled.<sup>133</sup>

This small and rather dense composition did not attract the due attention of Zoharic scholars and even less that of the scholars of the pseudepigrapha.<sup>134</sup> It begins with Adam's loss of exalted status and finishes with the exaltation of Enoch as the angel Metatron. Its assumption, similar to that in several late antiquity texts studied elsewhere, is that Enoch's fate and deeds repaired Adam's sin, an issue that is comparable to the way Jesus's religious role has been understood in Christianity.<sup>135</sup> In this specific case, the original sin

damages the luminous spiritual entity, and Enoch strives to re-perfect this luminous soul before he can enter Paradise.

However the sequence of events in this passage is not totally clear to me. Enoch is described as ascending on high and taking a seat, and only afterwards is the birth of the patriarch mentioned. This sequence of events constitutes a quandary. In any case, it seems that Enoch first ascended, then descended, before ascending again. This pattern does not appear in *1 Enoch* and *3 Enoch* but does appear in *2 Enoch*.<sup>136</sup> This is also the case with regard to the mention of the 'book of Enoch'. In the Zoharic passage, unlike *3 Enoch*, a book of Enoch that deals with religious issues is mentioned, and in *2 Enoch* many books of Enoch are referenced.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, in *2 Enoch* the book is transmitted as is the case in the *Zohar*.<sup>138</sup> Last but not least: the anointment of Enoch is a remarkable theme because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it is found in *2 Enoch* but not in the Heikhalot traditions describing Enoch. Yet it appears in Abraham Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, written concomitantly with the composition of the bulk of the *Zohar* (though it happened in Italy). In contrast, in the Zoharic text there is a theme absent from Abulafia's description of the mystic's unction: the affinity between unction and light that is found only in *2 Enoch*. Was this ancient book or one of its versions, perhaps in a Semitic language, the source of some of the Zoharic discussions related to Enoch?<sup>139</sup>

Let me adduce a testimony found in the ancient Gnostic book *Pistis Sophia* IV, ch. 134, where a book related to Enoch is again connected to Paradise:

for the sake of sinners I have troubled myself, I have come to the world, that I may save them. Because even for the righteous themselves, who have never done any evil, and have not committed sins at all, it is necessary that they should find the mysteries which are in the book of Jeu, which I caused Enoch to write in Paradise, when I spoke with him from the tree of the Knowledge and from the tree of the Life. And I have caused him to place them in the rock etc.<sup>140</sup>

Speech from the tree is certainly a rare theme in the history of religion. Nevertheless, it appears in the *Testament of Abraham*, as noted above. In both cases, the speaker was a tree. As can be seen from the Zoharic passage, it may reflect an acquaintance with a book of Enoch related explicitly to the tree of life. However for our purpose it is important to also highlight the fact that the theme of Enoch composing books in Paradise had earlier sources.

In any case, the affinity between a book possessed by Enoch and the

book of Adam is clear from another discussion in the book of the *Zohar* that reverberated in influential kabbalistic books:

Rabbi Abba said: 'An actual book was brought down to Adam, from which he discovered supernal wisdom. This book reached the sons of 'Elohim, who contemplate and know it. This book was brought down by the master of mysteries, preceded by three envoys. When Adam departed the Garden of Eden he grasped that book, but as he was leaving it flew away from him to the gate. He prayed and cried before his Lord, and it was restored to him as before, so that wisdom not be forgotten by humanity and they strive to know their Lord. 'Similarly we have learned: Enoch had a book, a book from the site of 'the book of the generations of Adam', mystery of wisdom, for he was taken from Earth, as is written: 'He was no more, for God took him.'<sup>141</sup> He is the Youth, as is written: '(*Hanokh*) Train the Youth.'<sup>142</sup> All hidden treasures above were entrusted to him, and he transmits, [them] carrying out the mission. A thousand keys were handed to him; he conveys one hundred blessings every day, wreathing wreaths for his Lord. The blessed Holy One took him from the world to serve Him, as is written: 'for God took him'. By him a book was transmitted, a book was conveyed called *The Book of Enoch*. When the blessed Holy One grasped him, He showed him all the treasures above, the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, including its leaves and branches. All this we see in his book. Happy are the devout of the world, to whom supernal wisdom is revealed, never to be forgotten, as is said: 'The secret of YHVH is for those in awe of Him; to them He reveals His covenant.'<sup>143, 144</sup>

In my opinion this text suffices in assessing the importance of the deep affinity between Enoch and Adam in the book of the *Zohar*, and I presume the possibility of much earlier sources reflecting such a view.

To return to sonship: in the last passage this issue is less evident than in the earlier passage, but nevertheless the direct continuity between Adam and Enoch is quite conspicuous.<sup>145</sup> The ascent of Enoch to Paradise and his becoming Metatron according to the above Zoharic text is not identical to the description of the elevation of Enoch in *3 Enoch*. There, Paradise plays a secondary role, since Metatron is taken to serve the divine chariot.<sup>146</sup> This strong connection between Enoch and Paradise is obvious in *2 Enoch*,<sup>147</sup> and it recurs elsewhere in the book of the *Zohar* as a quotation from a 'book of Enoch':

It is found in the book of Enoch, that after he was elevated and

was shown all the supernal and inferior treasures, he was shown the tree of life, and the tree upon which Adam has been appointed. And there is the place of Adam in the garden that, would Adam keep this commandment permanently, he would be able to live permanently. He did not keep the commandment of his Master, and exited because of depravation [*zimmum*] and was punished.<sup>148</sup>

Again, the link between Enoch and Adam is quite clear, and demonstrates some form of coherence with the two earlier quotations related to Enoch. This connection is seen even more strongly in discussions by a contemporary of the *Zohar*, R. Joseph of Hamadan, as we shall see further on in this chapter.

Let me mention that Enoch as the author of books is certainly not a new theme, nor does it originate with the *Zohar*. The exalted patriarch was widely known as a scribe, and the awareness of the existence of books written by Enoch is quite evident in the Middle Ages.<sup>149</sup>

The connection between Enoch and Paradise is even more emphatic in a passage from the latest layer of the *Zohar*, *Tiqunei Zohar*, which will preoccupy us more below. Here Metatron is portrayed more negatively than in the bulk of the *Zohar*. Thus, we read that in addition to the supernal Paradise of God, there is a lower one:

In the lower tree certainly there are alien shells, and it is planted in the Paradise of *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, that is Enoch Metatron . . . where Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma' and Elisha entered.<sup>150</sup>

This distinction between two Paradises reflects a new religious attitude toward Enoch/Metatron. They are now extra-divine powers that live in a zone of incertitude, of Good and Evil. The three ancient Rabbis, Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma' and Elisha, entered and failed there, while R. Aqivah succeeded because he entered another Paradise, that of God Himself. The connection between Enoch/Metatron and *Zeyir 'Anppin* – the Lesser Countenance – should be understood as the culmination of a more extensive development to which we shall devote the next section.

To summarize this section: according to the *Zohar*, Enoch inherits both the book of secrets and the supernal luminous soul directly from Adam. In one case, he is described explicitly as if he is a son of Adam. It is obvious that Enoch is replacing Adam by repairing the sin he committed. Let me offer a hypothesis that is worthy of additional consideration: the idea that Enoch is the son of Adam might have emerged as the result of a similar view found in *1 Enoch*, according to which Enoch became the Son of Man. In Hebrew it would be 'the son of Adam'.<sup>151</sup> Both in *1 Enoch* and in the *Zohar*, and as we

shall see below in R. Joseph of Hamadan, Enoch is not just mistaken as one of the sons of Adam, but he actually becomes one when he acquires some of Adam's unique features, especially the soul.

At the end of this part of the survey of Enoch in the *Zohar*, let me draw attention to a strongly apothotic understanding of Elijah in the *Zohar*, where the anonymous Kabbalist interprets some aspects of Prov. 30.1-4:

'Who has gathered the wind in his fists?' It is Elijah that returns the spirit of man within his insides . . . 'Who has established all the ends of the earth?' It is Elijah, since he gathered the water and swears in the name of heaven, after he returned in his prayer, and he caused all the world and caused the rain to descend, giving nourishment to all. 'What is his name?' this is Elijah. 'And what is his son's name?' It is Elijah. 'What is his name?' when he ascends on high, Elijah. 'And what is his son's name' when he descended on low and became the messenger to perform miracles? Its name is Elijah.<sup>152</sup>

Elijah is understood as the subject of the various verbs found in these verses. It seems that the Kabbalist assumes quite a dynamic nature for Elijah, as one who plays a variety of roles mentioned in the biblical verses. Inter alia, he is also related to the name of the son, which is reminiscent of the views in Chapter 2 above about the connection between Elijah and the *Ben* as a gematria. Moreover, the ascent and descent are reminiscent of the triple hierarchy found in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*. We have here also some apotheosis of the status of Elijah, who becomes an angel capable of descending and ascending.<sup>153</sup> Thus Elijah, a figure reminiscent of Enoch and mentioned alongside him in many medieval sources, is also depicted in the book of the *Zohar* as a son. In short, in the last three decades of the thirteenth century, in the *Zohar* (written in Spain), as in the kabbalistic writings of Abraham Abulafia (written in Italy and Sicily), there is an abrupt surge of interest in the figure of Enoch, unlike anything in the history of Kabbalah 100 years previously. In several instances, this interest reflects a continuation of traditions found in the Ashkenazi writings discussed in Chapter 2 above, although some cannot be accounted for in such a manner. This Enochic renaissance is coupled with a renewed interest in the topic of sonship, a topic that again plays a visible role in the Ashkenazi writings.

The findings above relating to the role played by Enochic elements should be seen in a much later cultural context, as part of the stream of pseudographic traditions that arrived in the West from Eastern Europe, as in the thesis of Moses Gaster. According to Gaster, the emergence of the book of the *Zohar* should be understood, as a 'compilation of apocryphal

and pseudographic oriental books, woven together as a commentary on the Torah, Ruth, etc., and the Song of Songs' and he mentions in this context what he calls 'direct quotations' from the books of Enoch and, earlier on the same page, the impact of the Manicheans.<sup>154</sup> Though such a reading would scarcely fit the findings of recent scholarship on the book of the *Zohar*, it nevertheless has some truth as to the possible impact of these earlier literatures on some aspects of this classic kabbalistic text, and the analyses above may corroborate the reception of a much milder version of Gaster's thesis. Let me turn now to another analysis that may strengthen the possibility of such a thesis on the impact of Enochic literature on the *Zohar*.

### 6. Two faces/heads on high in Zoharic theosophy and earlier sources

As seen in the previous section, a theory of sonship related to Enoch is hinted at in various Zoharic statements. While revealing it requires bringing together disparate passages spread through this literature, the picture I try to describe by creating this mosaic is corroborated by the views of a Kabbalist contemporary of the period in which the book of *Zohar* was written, R. Joseph of Hamadan, whose views will attract our attention in the next section. In the context of reinforcing the importance attributed to Enoch in Zoharic literature in contexts that are related to sonship, attention should be paid to a phrase found in *Midrash Ruth ha-Ne'elam*, a composition belonging to the earlier layers of the *Zohar*. There the anonymous Kabbalist explains the meaning of Gen. 5.24, stating that Enoch:

was drawn from this world of the children of man slowly [*za'yir za'yir*] and he became what he became, and dwelled in his place<sup>155</sup> as it is appropriate, Metatron the Great One, appointed upon the face,<sup>156</sup> from whom the supernal rulers and servants are trembling.<sup>157</sup>

Here we have a hesitant start to, or hint at, a nexus between Enoch and the 'smallness' which is referred to by the Aramaic form *Za'yir*. As in the Heikhalot literature, Enoch oscillates between the Lesser and the Great, and when transformed into Metatron he becomes related to the concept of face. Interestingly enough, this passage discusses a gradual development from human to angelic status, a process that does not reflect the traditional descriptions of Enoch's translation. It may be that use of the Aramaic term *Za'yir*, which means small, is a translation of the term *qatan*, which was so closely related to Enoch.

One of the most original contributions of Zoharic thought to kabbalistic theosophy is the assumption that within the divine realm there

are two faces, or two heads, a 'Small' one, and a 'Great' or 'Long' one. This terminology appears mainly in the specific Zoharic literature of the two 'Iddras, as well as in a number of other passages related to them. The terminology used is Aramaic and speaks about 'faces' rather than 'heads', though the lengthy descriptions of their beards leave no place for doubt that the intended meaning is that of 'heads'. The assumption that there are two faces on high will concern us here in the context of the second face being the countenance that is identified with a theosophical power conceived of both as a son and as the Tetragrammaton.

In several instances in the *Zohar*, especially in the most esoteric parts called 'Iddrot, namely the Assemblies, a special type of affinity is attributed to two divine configurations: the Holy Ancient, 'Attiqa' Qaddisha', sometimes called also the Great Face, 'Arikh' Anppin, and the Lesser Face, Ze'vir' Anppin.<sup>158</sup> So, for example, we learn from one such passage that 'Each and every day the dew'<sup>159</sup> from the Holy Ancient is dropped upon the Ze'vir' Anppin, and all the holy field of apples is [then] blessed.'<sup>160</sup> Here, the divine Lesser Face is found between two other divine hypostases: the higher one that functions as a king or father, and the feminine one, the last *sefirah*. The corresponding sefirotic levels to this hypostatic structure are the *sefirot Keter, Tiferet* and the five *sefirot* around her with the exception of the last, and the *sefirah* of *Malkhut*. In other words, the Lesser Face corresponds to the extended domain of the sixth *sefirah*, conceived of in many theosophical Kabbalists as the son,<sup>161</sup> in comparison to the higher *sefirot*, corresponding to Father, Mother and husband, and in comparison to the feminine *sefirah* or configuration – known as the 'holy field of the apples'. Thus, while integrated within a family structure as a son, the Lesser Face is a husband in relation to the lower *sefirah*. Indeed, the last *sefirah* is conceived of as 'his female' – *nuqebbeih*. This double relationship is found in the same text, and does not entail bringing together different texts (the afore-mentioned indirect or 'oblique' interpretation).

The Holy Ancient is called in some instances 'Ayin, Nothingness, while the Lesser Face is explicitly called the Tetragrammaton and sometimes 'heaven'.<sup>162</sup> While the Great Face is identical to the first *sefirah Keter*, the Lesser Face is sometimes identical to *Tiferet*, the *sefirah* that is also related to the Tetragrammaton and the son. According to the 'Iddra' Rabba' the two countenances are called by two Tetragrammata.<sup>163</sup> The lesser is described as dependent upon the higher.<sup>164</sup> In one of those cases, the two countenances are described as two faces looking at each other,<sup>165</sup> and the Holy Ancient is understood as identical with the Great Face, 'Arikh' Anppin.<sup>166</sup> In some cases, the higher face illuminates the lower one<sup>167</sup> or blesses it.<sup>168</sup> This illumination plays an important role in the most cryptic of all the Zoharic treatises entitled *Sifra' di-Tzeni'uta*.<sup>169</sup> Given both the explicit mention of

the Tetragrammaton in the case of each of the two faces, and their being heads, we have here an instance of morphonominalism.

According to another Zoharic passage, the righteous men long to cleave to the Lesser Face,<sup>170</sup> thus creating an implicit affinity with the concept of righteousness that appears in the case of the son in many of the above discussions, and implicitly some form of double sonship. It should also be pointed out that while the Great Face or the Holy Ancient stand for the attribute of absolute mercy, the Lesser Face is described as representing the attribute of stern judgment.<sup>171</sup> If there is a Christian influence on the concept of the Lesser Face as son, then it is far from being a simple instance of acculturation, since we find at the same time some form of implicit critique addressed to the Christian vision of the hypostatic son that is understood to be full of mercy. Though I opt here for an early source of this distinction between the two faces, such a historical proposal should not preclude the possibility that the Lesser Face has been articulated in a manner that represents an oblique reaction to a main tenet of Christianity, which envisioned the divine Son as representative of love and mercy.

We see the affinity between the two heads formulated through their masculinity (as suggested by the numerous references to the beards of the two countenances). This type of male polarity remained influential in further developments in kabbalistic theosophy. In one example found in an important exposition of Zoharic theosophy, the 'Idra' Rabba', the 'Attiqa' Qaddisha' is presented as creating the Ze'vir' Anppin in the image of man.<sup>172</sup> According to one such passage:

Because the configuration [*dioqna*] of man is the configuration of supernal and inferior things that are comprised in him, and because this configuration comprises supernal and inferior [things] the Ancient Holy prepared his preparations and the preparation of the Lesser Face according to this configuration and preparation.<sup>173</sup>

Thus, the Lesser Face is in the image of the higher countenance which the Tetragrammaton also refers to. This means that we have some form of morphonominal representation, which is connected, in some instances, to the implicit view of Ze'vir' Anppin as son. In any case, one of the most important interpreters of the *Zohar*, R. Moses Cordovero, assumed such an affinity in his commentary on the book.<sup>174</sup> As we shall see further on in this chapter, Lurianic Kabbalists similarly accepted such an affinity as self-evident. Let me draw attention to the emphasis on the countenance or the face. It is not the entire anthropic body that is relevant for this form of theosophy, but the face, and in fact the head alone. From this point of view,

I see here more an instance of what I called in the Introduction 'informment', rather than of a full-fledged embodiment.

However, in a few instances in the book of the *Zohar* and in instances in the writings of a contemporary of the book of the *Zohar*, R. Joseph of Hamadan,<sup>175</sup> whose views will be surveyed below, the two heads represented by 'Arikh 'Anppin and Ze'yir 'Anppin are identified as a male-female polarity, the latter being identified as the last (feminine) *sefirah*.<sup>176</sup> Following these minority understandings of *Za'yir*, we find the feminine interpretations of this term in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* and, following it, in R. Moses of Kiev's *Sefer Shushan Sodot*.<sup>177</sup> I propose to regard this male/female polarity of the 'Arikh and *Za'yir* not as reflecting a later development, which took place under the impact of the Zoharic theosophy, but as representing the Zoharic theosophy as a deviation from an earlier position in which the feminine power is understood as the Lesser Face.<sup>178</sup> If this account of the emergence of the symbolism of the two countenances is correct, we may see the Zoharic development as charging the *Za'yir* with the valence of the sonship, not previously connected to it. Such an explanation assumes the greater importance of sonship in some layers of Zoharic thought than in the earlier theosophical-theurgical systems. To characterize the Zoharic theosophy, we may say that it operates with three main couples: father/mother, father/son, son/daughter, combined in different manners. To be sure, other couples also appear in the book, like mother/son, but they do not play the same central role as these first three couples.

I would like to return to the couple hinted at already in Dan. 7, which reappears in 1 and 2 *Enoch*. The importance of their faces or heads is part of what I proposed to call the 'sonship principle'.<sup>179</sup> Though more comprehensive schemes related to faces, supernal and human, are already discernible in writings belonging to the Kalonymite Ashkenazi school in the early thirteenth century,<sup>180</sup> a specific couple of supernal, theosophical heads or faces as a distinct theological concept is unknown before Zoharic theology. Though inferences about the importance of the faces of the two cherubs found in the Holy of the Holiest may have contributed to the understanding of the two heads on high in the *Zohar*, it seems to me that the imagery from the book of Daniel, in one of its many avatars, is nevertheless the most important source for the Zoharic understanding of the concept of *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, the Lesser Face.

Let me start with a quotation from 2 *Enoch*. Warning his sons about the danger of disrespectful behavior toward the face of another man, Enoch says:

The Lord with his own two hands created mankind; in a facsimile of his own face, both small and great, the Lord created [them]. And whoever insults a person's face, insults the face of a king, and

treats the face of the Lord with repugnance. He who treats with contempt the face of any person treats the face of the Lord with contempt. He who expresses anger to any person without provocation will reap anger in the great judgment. He who spits on any person's face, insultingly, will reap the same at the Lord's great judgment. Happy is the person who does not direct his heart with malice toward any person, but who helps [the offended and] the condemned, and lifts up those who have been crushed, and shows compassion on the needy.<sup>181</sup>

The major issue for us is the resort to the term 'face' as the main characteristic of the affinity between God and man. Such a move is not unique in itself in ancient texts. What I am concerned with here, however, are the attributes of small and great as related to the created face. As pointed out by Andersen, creation related to small and great parallels *Wis.* 6.7 and in his translation of the book, David Winston adduces several parallels from earlier sources.<sup>182</sup> However, these parallels do not explain what is important from my point of view here: the possibility that two faces are found on each of the two levels – the divine and the human. The *Wisdom of Solomon* says: 'For the master of all will not shrink from a countenance, or have regard for greatness, Small and great he himself made, and all alike are under his providence.'<sup>183</sup> If the countenance is understood as being either great or small and created by God, which is not quite evident from the text, we have a closer parallel to 2 *Enoch*. In any case, let us return to the above passage: as I understand it, God's two hands created a small and a great face, which correspond to a small and a great face of God, whose face is the facsimile of the two lower faces. I interpret this as relating to some form of androgynous creation, as we may learn from a parallel found in rabbinic literature:

Nahman ben R. Hisda' expounded: 'What is meant by the verse: 'Then the Lord God formed [*wa-yyitzer*] man?'<sup>184</sup> [The word *wa-yyitzer*] is written with two *yods*, to show that God created two inclinations . . . Or as explained by R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar; for R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: 'God created two countenances in the first man, as it says: 'Behind and before hast Thou formed me.'<sup>185</sup> And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman.<sup>186</sup> Rav and Samuel explained this differently: One said that [this 'rib'] was a face, the other that it was a tail. No objection can be raised against the one who says it was a face, since so it is written, 'Behind and before hast Thou formed me.' But how does he who says it was a tail explain 'Behind and before hast Thou formed me'? As stated by R. Ammi; for R. Ammi said: 'Behind'

[i.e., last] in the work of creation, and 'before' [i.e., first] for punishment. We grant you he was last in the work of creation, for he was not created till the eve of Sabbath. But when you say 'first for punishment', to what punishment do you refer? Do you mean the punishment in connection with the serpent? Surely it has been taught: Rabbi says, in conferring honor we commence with the greatest [*min ha-gadol*], in cursing with the least important [*min ha-qatan*]. 'In conferring honor we commence with the greatest', as it is written, 'And Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar his sons that were left, Take the meal-offering that remaineth etc.'<sup>187</sup> In cursing we commence with the least; first the serpent was cursed then Eve and then Adam!<sup>188</sup> ... Eve was created from the face, for so it is written, *wa-yyitzer*, with two yods. But he who says it was a tail, what does he make of *wa-yyitzer*? As explained by R. Simeon b. Pazzi? For R. Simeon b. Pazzi said: 'Woe is me because of my Creator [*yotzri*,] woe is me because of my evil inclination [*yitzi*]!' No difficulty arises for one who says it was a face, for so it is written, 'Male and female created He them.'<sup>189</sup> But he who says it was a tail, what does he make of 'male and female created He them'? As explained by R. Abbahu. For R. Abbahu contrasted two texts. It is written, 'Male and female created He them', and it is also written, 'For in the image of God made He man.'<sup>190</sup> How are these statements to be reconciled? At first the intention was to create two, but in the end only one was created. No difficulty arises for him who says it was a face, since so it is written: 'He closed up the place with flesh instead thereof.'<sup>191</sup> But he who says it was a tail, how does he explain, 'he closed up the place with flesh instead thereof.'<sup>192</sup>

The Talmudic discussion reflects a view that is similar to *2 Enoch* from several points of view.

1. According to a certain view, the creation of man is not a matter of the shape of the entire body, but of the face alone. In the Talmud the term used is *du-partzufin*, an Aramaicized syntagm that has been coined from two Greek words: two *prosopa*, namely two faces.
2. In both cases, namely in *2 Enoch* and the Talmud, those two countenances are related to the concepts of small and great, even if the meaning of the terms is 'more important' and 'less important'.
3. In a way, the two hands are also involved, as the terms 'before' and 'last' are related in various other texts to the two hands of God.<sup>193</sup>

However, what is missing here but is found solely in *2 Enoch* is the explicit statement that the two human countenances correspond to the divine face (s). Not that in rabbinic sources there were not faces on high. On the contrary, there are several instances in which the faces of God are described, sometimes replicating human emotions.<sup>194</sup> R. Levi is reported in *Midrash Pesiqta' Rabbati* as follows:

The Holy One, Blessed be he, revealed Himself to them with many faces: with an angry face, with a downcast face, with a dour face, with a joyful face, with a smiling face, and with a radiant face. How? When he showed them the punishment [awaiting] the wicked, he did so with an angry, downcast, dour face. But when He showed them the reward [awaiting] the just in the World to Come, it was with a happy, [smiling], radiant face.<sup>195</sup>

The different countenances of the divine face or faces reflect different parts of the divine revelation, or different verses in the Bible, some dealing with retribution and others with reward. When pronouncing these different verses the divine face changes accordingly, accommodating itself. It is as if the divine face uses different masks attuned to the content of the text recited. In a manner similar to the last quotation, another Midrashic discussion found just before the first passage above, but attributed to another rabbinic figure, argues that:

'I am your Lord' – Rabbi Hanina bar Papa said: the Holy One, blessed be He, has shown to them a face of anger, a face of welcoming, a moderate face, and a laughing face. A face of anger – [corresponds to] the Bible, because when a person teaches the Bible to his son, he has to teach him with awe. A moderate face – to the Mishnah. A face of welcoming – to the Talmud. A laughing face – for 'Aggadah. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: despite you have seen all these appearances: 'I am your Lord'.<sup>196</sup>

Thus, the face of awe is related to the Bible but also to the son. It seems that we have here an evolutionary description from the youthful to the more mature studies, and with time the face becomes more welcoming. Though it should be understood in a metaphorical way, it assumes a facial correlation. However, in these rabbinic sources there is nothing like the correspondence between two lower and two higher faces implied in *2 Enoch*. The emphasis on the two countenances in rabbinic literature and the importance of the two faces in the Zoharic theosophy are, in my opinion, related, and the *2 Enoch* passage is an indication of the existence of a much earlier view about double faces existing on the two levels. I would like to

draw attention to a third source, which may be relevant for its writings, containing a more comprehensive view on the two-faces-theosophy. In fourth-century writings of Basil, there are several discussions in which two divine persons, designated as *prosopa*, are found, one being the father and the other the son. This view, though related to a Trinitarian theology, relegated the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to a lower status.<sup>197</sup> Though *prosopa* stand in these discussions for personae, namely hypostatic full-fledged human figures rather than only faces, it is interesting that this same word plays a role in the thought of different thinkers in the very same period. Or, to formulate the situation differently: some of the most important aspects of the theosophy of the 'Iddra' part of the *Zohar* are quite 'Macedonian', allowing a great importance to two *prosopa*, which are father and son, though in other cases adding a third *prosopon*, the feminine. In both cases, the countenance of Ze'yir 'Anppin plays an important role and is sometimes cast in the role of the son found within the realm of the divinity, a development that will have substantial impact on the theosophy of Lurianic Kabbalah.

To conclude, the Zoharic theosophy of two faces is conceived in the book as the most esoteric aspect of its understanding of divinity. One of the two faces, the Lesser Face, is imagined as having features described in the Introduction as criteria of sonship, and commentators on the *Zohar* quite explicitly have seen this countenance as playing the role of a son, as we shall see further below. Furthermore, the theory of two faces may go back several centuries before the time at which it was articulated terminologically in the book of the *Zohar*, as can be discerned in 2 *Enoch* and some Talmudic discussions. Last but not least, an affinity between the face and sonship has been proposed by Deutsch in relation to some late antiquity texts,<sup>198</sup> and my reading of the Lesser Face as a son of the Great Face may reinforce this mode of thought.

In short, two types of anthropomorphic imagery are juxtaposed in the Zoharic theosophy: that of the divine family, with the emphasis on the son, and the theory of two countenances, stemming from the earlier theories about *du-partzufin*, the two cherubim, as well as the two divine attributes. These two systems overlap but do not completely coincide. This means that though the Lesser Face is a much more comprehensive structure, which comprises many *sefirot*, the son is identical with just one of these *sefirot*. Such partial overlappings notwithstanding, the two intra-divine structures share the designation of the Tetragrammaton.

Before turning to Kabbalists who were contemporaries of the Zoharic literature, let me draw attention to the fact that in the Hebrew writings of R. Moses de Leon, the concept of sonship did not play any significant role. Not only did he not resort to the theory or terminology of the two

countenances, but even the concept of son as a theophoric mediator – unlike the vision of the human soul as son as seen above – did not attract his attention. Though this absence of a central element of the Zohar's theosophical symbolism is not so extraordinary insofar as Moses de Leon's writings are concerned (for example, recurring with regard to other writings such as '*amuddah de-'emtza'ita*'), the fact that the much more widespread symbolism of the son is also absent points to a mode of theosophical thought that differs dramatically from the anthropomorphic Zoharic one.

It is interesting to point out that the anonymous author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* nevertheless deals with sonship both in his Aramaic and Hebrew writings, as we shall see below.

### 7. R. Joseph of Hamadan and R. Joseph Al-Ashqar

The organic nexus between the human and the divine is especially prominent in the case of an interesting passage written by a late thirteenth-century Kabbalist known by the name of R. Joseph of Hamadan.<sup>199</sup> More than any other Kabbalist before him, he was fascinated both by the figures of Enoch and Metatron, and his discussions of their theosophical valences merit a separate study. For our purposes, it suffices to mention that he describes Metatron as the son, as Seth mentioned in Gen. 4.25.<sup>200</sup> In fact, elsewhere in the same text R. Joseph claims that Seth replaces Abel, who was the first Metatron.<sup>201</sup> According to such a view, Metatron is the direct son of Adam,<sup>202</sup> an understanding that is reminiscent of the Zoharic affinities between Adam and Enoch discussed above. In another commentary on Genesis, which I propose to attribute to this same Kabbalist, the affinity between Enoch and Adam is quite explicit: Enoch had some sparks of Adam's soul while the latter was still alive, and after his death he acquired Adam's entire soul, and through Enoch's virtue and his translation on high, Adam's sin is repaired, returning him to the status intended for him from the very beginning.<sup>203</sup> In a way, we have here the assumption that the transmigration of the soul of Adam into Enoch leads to the reparation of the former's sin and his subsequent return to pristine glory.<sup>204</sup> As pointed out above, in some cases, views found in R. Joseph of Hamadan may reflect an earlier view which was by then modified by the *Zohar*, and this is perhaps another example.<sup>205</sup> It should be mentioned that in this fragment on the book of Genesis, Enoch is described as corresponding to the highest *sefirah*, *Keter*, an elevation of the status of Enoch as a symbol almost to the maximum possible level according to this brand of Kabbalah.<sup>206</sup>

Let me turn to another instance of sonship found in the writings of this Kabbalist. R. Joseph describes the emergence of the Messiah as the Son of God as the result of the intercourse between God and His concubine. By

doing so, the Kabbalist interprets a Midrashic view according to which God visited the Israelite prophets during the day and those of the gentiles during the night, just as a king visits his wife and concubine respectively.<sup>207</sup> In his *Commentary on the Rationales of the Commandments* he writes:

How is it possible that David emerged from Ruth the Moabite but not from an Israelite woman? The rationale for this is that because of their sins, God had rendered Israel to the hands of Sammael and his sect, and they received the kingship over them. In the future the kingship will be taken from Sammael and will be given [back] to Israel. And if Sammael will come and prosecute Israel saying: 'Why did You give the kingship to Israel, since they sinned so and so in a certain day? Moreover, it is written 'but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn'.<sup>208</sup> 'This<sup>209</sup> is a parable for a king that has a wife and a concubine. When he goes to his wife he is doing so in public, because it is well known to everyone that she is his wife and spouse. And when he goes to his concubine, he does so modestly during the night, because of the honor of his wife. When he comes upon her [the concubine] she says to him: 'I [agree to] have an intercourse with you [but] with the condition that the sons that you shall have from me will reign in your kingship just like the sons of your wife, or [even] more.' And the king swore it to her. With the time his love for her was so strong that he installed them on his kingship and on most of his riches. Likewise, the Holy One Blessed be He, has a wife and a concubine.<sup>210</sup> The wife is the *Shekhinah*, and the concubine is the other powers. To the *Shekhinah* the covered pipes [arrive] and from those pipes the souls of each and every one from Israel had been created. But from the concubine the souls of the nations of the world had been created. And when the pipes arrive there [namely to the concubine] the language of impurity is used, as it is written 'And 'Elohim arrived to Balaam.'<sup>211</sup> Those powers say to God: 'Lord of all the worlds, remember the condition as Israel do not perform the commandments and transgressed the Torah.' Then God keeps his promise and this is the reason for the dominion of the gentiles over Israel as it is written: 'but he will acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn'. Moreover this is done in order to give them bribery so that they will not prosecute, they take gentiles and convert them and cause them to enter under the wings of the *Shekhinah* and the world is nourished because of it<sup>212</sup> ... Then God tells her: 'Behold, the Messiah son of David emerged from your seed which

is Ruth the Moabite.' Then she remains silent having no complaint against Israel ... I shall tell you a great principle: God has a wife and a concubine, and the sons of the wife, who is the *Shekhinah*, are Israel, born from her and called sons, corresponding to the Holy One Blessed be He, and the *Shekhinah*. But the gentiles are the sons of the concubines.<sup>213</sup>

It is interesting that the Son of God referred to here is quite an eschatological figure, unlike the understanding of the son in all the other examples adduced previously in this chapter. What is fascinating in some of the interpretations offered by R. Joseph in this passage is the fact that he often resorts to examples from pre-Mosaic biblical episodes in order to describe divine processes. This is the case not only in the examples above, but also in his concept of interdictions of incestuous sexual relations known in Jewish tradition under the label of '*arayyot*'.<sup>214</sup> The vision of God as having both a wife and a concubine is conceived of as being a matter of principle, which is conceived of as self-evident, and used in order to make sense of both the state of exile and deprivation of the Jews, and of the special way of their future redemption. The Messiah as the Son of God is, according to this Kabbalist, also the son of the concubine, who is the representative of demonic powers. Interestingly enough, though in some passages by R. Joseph the name of the collective demonic powers is Lilith, in other cases in his writings it is Metatron.<sup>215</sup> The angel that was identified by Abraham Abulafia with the spiritual positive cosmic power has been identified now with the impure powers.<sup>216</sup> This is why the Messiah, perceived by the gentiles as one of theirs, will not be prevented from his redemptive activity. In fact, God's love-affair with the demonic concubine is part of a divine ruse, anticipating the manner in which redemption of the Jews will take place. This vision of salvation assumes that the unknowing evil participates in the final process of redemption. Such a view is reminiscent of Sabbatean understandings of Sabbatai Tzevi's activities, as a descent into the realm of evil.

These forms of understanding the supernal world opened the way to modes of thinking which assume a discrepancy between the normative legalistic post-Sinaitic behavior in the lower world, and another, higher mode of behavior. In my opinion, the development of this propensity has something to do with the mystical rationalization of the breaking of the sexual taboos in Sabbateanism.

Let me address the visions of the supernal concubine as an aggregate of the powers of impurity and/or gentiles. This is a corporate personality, to resort to a term found in modern biblical scholarship, and it was intended to create the dichotomy Jews/Gentiles in the strongest manner possible. By

doing so, this Kabbalist follows the propensity of a number of other Kabbalists of his generation. Nevertheless, his attitude is more sophisticated from this point of view, as in the same context he claims that converting gentiles to Judaism sustains the world. Thus, though dichotomous, the above passage is much more inclusive than the Zoharic, exclusive anthropology. However, this conversion cannot be completed in the historical time given the 'fact' that the end of history presupposes the existence of the gentiles who, as a corporate personality, will generate the Messiah. To a certain extent, this implication is a reversal of the Christian view regarding the necessary existence of the Jews as witnesses until the second arrival of Christ.

Another biblical figure who has been understood in explicitly redemptive terms is Samson, who was described by R. Joseph al-Ashqar, a sixteenth-century Spanish Kabbalist writing in Tlemsen, Tunis, as follows:

he certainly was a perfect righteous [man], and whatever he did was done for the benefit of Israel. The *Shekhinah*, which is the daughter of Abraham our patriarch, was subdued under the powers of impurity, as it is written<sup>217</sup> 'for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel', and he wanted that all the [demonic] powers and opposite [powers] be subdued under his hand, and this is why he wanted to enter to them by means of a cunning, to take a wife from them, in order to be supported by them, so that they will agree with him and will be subdued under his hand. This is certainly a secret known only to God.<sup>218</sup>

The alien woman, who is conceived of as being identical with Lilith, the mother of the demons,<sup>219</sup> was actually part of a cunning ploy to penetrate the stronghold of the enemy, conceived in kabbalistic terms as the demonic powers, which should be destroyed in order to deliver the people of Israel and, on the more spiritual level, to release the divine power, the *Shekhinah*. From this point of view, Samson, a messianic figure, is reminiscent of the theory of the Messiah in the passage from R. Joseph of Hamadan. In fact, Samson's death is conceived of as a self-sacrifice for the sake of the redemption of the people of Israel. He is depicted in terms quoted from Deutero-Isaiah, as the suffering servant; it was Samson who suffered in order to atone for the sins of Israel.<sup>220</sup> The messianic role of Samson has been reiterated in Sabbatean literature where this protagonist has been described as the Messiah, apparently as a result of a misinterpretation of a Midrash.<sup>221</sup>

Another version of the Messiah born from an evil act is represented by texts of Safedian Kabbalists, like Moses Cordovero and R. Moses Galante, who claim that some form of *qelippah*, namely the shell that means an evil

power, must be found in the Messiah, and by a Hasidic text which describes incest as necessary for the birth of the Messiah.<sup>222</sup>

#### 8. R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid: Ben 'Adam as the ten sefirot

We saw above some instances in which the term *Ben* points to a specific sefirotic manifestation within the much more comprehensive theosophical Kabbalistic system, the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* as part of the divine family. Here, I would like to draw attention to a text in which the term *Ben 'Adam*, the Son of Man, may point to the entire sefirotic system. In a passage authored by R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, a late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Kabbalist, we read as follows:

You already know that the Countenance [*Partzuf*] mentioned by our Rabbis of blessed memory, is the Countenance of the Supernal Man. He is the world of ten levels that is called 'Son of Man'. [*Ben 'Adam*.] Accordingly, man is called the microcosm in relation to the supernal world. This is the secret that the Rabbis, of blessed memory, alluded to [by saying] *Du-partzufin*.<sup>223</sup> The Supernal Form is called Countenance, and this Countenance is called the Supernal Man as it is written:<sup>224</sup> 'But whilst I am still in my flesh, though it be after my skin is torn from my body, I would see God.'<sup>225</sup>

The term *Partzuf* stands here for the supernal form which, according to this passage, is the entire range of ten *sefirot* that accumulatively possess an anthropomorphic shape. Thus, a term that regularly means face or countenance stands here for the entire human *morphē*. This semantic phenomenon is not new, as we learn from a study by D. Steenburg regarding an ancient pseudepigraphical book.<sup>226</sup> In any case this interpretation of a term ordinarily meaning 'face', as referring to the entire human body, is important in the context of further development in Lurianic Kabbalah, where the more comprehensive meaning of *partzuf* is evident. From our point of view this extended meaning is significant since it alone may allow a sexual understanding of the son in the text above, and in Lurianic Kabbalah, where the term *Za'yir* recurs together with the form *Nuqbbeih* – his female – thousands of times.

What, therefore, is the meaning of the two faces, the *du-partzufin*? In my opinion, R. David refers to the divine shape and the human one: from contemplation of the latter, the hidden form of the former can be grasped. This interpretation indeed represents a rare approach to the concept of *du-partzufin*, though the way in which the verse from Job is understood has earlier kabbalistic and non-kabbalistic parallels.<sup>227</sup> Indeed, according to

another theosophical discussion found in the anonymous *Sefer ha-Yihud* written towards the end of the thirteenth century, the concept of the *du-partzufin* represents the divine *sefirot*, whose emergence created, like a shade projected from the archetypal form, the human form.<sup>228</sup> The dominant intention of these discussions is to illuminate the structure of the higher anthropomorphic realm, with the human conceived as a lower replica. In any case, and this is an important point, it is not the human face and its illumination or the mystical experience which is involved here, but a structural affinity between two structures called 'face'. Such an affinity appears elsewhere in R. David's book, where he argues that the divine name is inscribed on the human face in order to generate affinity to the supernal form. In this case too the term *panim*, and not *partzuf*, is used.<sup>229</sup> As shown elsewhere, there was a view of *du-partzufin* as existing within the zone of the Infinity.<sup>230</sup> I understand the usage of the phrase *Ben 'Adam*, which may point to both the concept of Man and of Son of Man, as referring here to the Son of Man, which means that just as the human is the son of the sefirotic Son of Man, so is the latter the son of the supernal androgynous man, found within the Infinity. Though such an interpretation of the phrase *du-partzufin* as pointing to two different levels of reality is rather rare, it is not entirely absent from kabbalistic literature of the period.<sup>231</sup>

To summarize: just as the human face or general shape is conceived of as the manifestation of the structure of ten created *sefirot* below, the ten *sefirot* are also conceived to be the reflection of an even higher theosophical structure, the anthropomorphic system of hidden *sefirot*, designated as *Tzahtzahot*, within the Infinity. This is the reason why the revealed or created *sefirot* are called Son of Man: they are the son of the even higher hidden structure, named Man, which reveals Himself in the anthropomorphic structure of the ten *sefirot*. Here, the concept of sonship is related to a process of intra-divine emanation: man emanates the son. I would say that we have here another example of morphonominalism: the anthropomorphic shape of the two systems of ten *sefirot* is understood not only as divine, but also as related to the divine names. In a way, the occurrence of the term Son of Man in this context is paralleling the label of Son of Man for Jesus in the earliest Christian sources, as an anthropomorphical structure found on high. As we shall see in the next chapter, R. Abraham Kohen Herrera and Christian Kabbalists indeed identified the widespread Lurianic concept of *'Adam Qadmon*, which emerged under the impact of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, with the Son of God.

### g. The later forms of the Zoharic literature: *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'ya' Meheimna'*

Sometime at the beginning of the fourteenth century, an anonymous Kabbalist composed two major Aramaic books entitled *Ra'ya' Meheimna'*, the Faithful Shepherd, a commentary on the rationales of the commandments, and *Tiqqunei Zohar*, the *Amendments of the Zohar*, containing 70 interpretations of the theosophical meanings of the word *Bereshit*.<sup>232</sup> There can be no doubt that these constitute the most influential attempts to imitate the language and style of the book of the *Zohar*, while at the same time containing a theosophical system substantially different from that found in that book. Moreover, the anonymous Kabbalist presents his revelations as more important than those found in the bulk of the book of the *Zohar*, imagining Moses to be a higher figure than the alleged author of the *Zohar*, Rashby.<sup>233</sup> In this later Zoharic work the issue of sonship plays a relatively more important role than in the previous layers of the *Zohar*.

This new theosophical system identifies Metatron as a relatively low entity, sometimes of quite an ambiguous nature, a view apparently influenced by R. Joseph of Hamadan whose views are described above, and which include an explicit position on Metatron as the Son of God. Speaking about Isaac, the son of Abraham, the anonymous Kabbalist wrote:

Happy is the son that has been bound to his father and he linked himself to him in order to do the deeds of the Torah, the commandments; and happy is the servant that is bound to his master to perform his will, [since] he is in the place of the son of the king. Metatron, happy are you and happy are your son[s] who are linked and bound by phylacteries under the authority of your Master, and this is the reason why, despite that you are [only] the servant of the king, you are higher than all the angels that are appointed over the other nations, [you are] the king over all the angels, [and] the king of the demons and all his camps are fearing you. What is the reason for it? This is because you are the stool of your Master, and you serve your Master, [you are] *Shadday* of the *Mezuzah* outside the doorpost, the guardian of the entrance, [while] *YHWH* is your master, from within ... When the Holy One blessed be He, descends to rule over the tree of good and evil, the good is Metatron, the evil is Sammael.<sup>234</sup>

The son is not just Metatron, the good person that stands alone, but rather is embraced within a more comprehensive and ambiguous being, the tree of good and evil, in which the demonic power is also present. Moreover, even as a positive power Metatron is an external being to the more divine inner

power, as the discussion on the *Mezuzah* shows. It is the status of the faithful, devoted servant that is the ideal informing the concept of sonship which is presented here. Since Metatron is described as the servant and the son alluded to here is implicitly understood as higher, it may be presumed that in this passage the son stands for a sefirotic power, presumably the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, and shall return to this hierarchy also below. On the other hand, as seen above, according to this Kabbalist, Enoch/Metatron is depicted as related to *Ze'vir 'Anppin*. It should be pointed out that here the concept of double sonship is quite evident: If Metatron is the son, or in his place, he is followed by the humans, who are described expressly as its sons. Let me point out the performative element in this specific type of double sonship: commandments, deeds, phylacteries are expressly mentioned here, and they are strongly connected to sonship.

Elsewhere, the same Kabbalist describes the difference between the servant, as someone who worships God in a general manner, and the son, who knows the details of the secrets of God and is capable of worshipping God in a detailed manner. It is a matter of intimacy that allows the firstborn son to look into the treasures of his father. However, what is important is the fact that in this discussion the servant and the son are described not as two different persons, but as two modes of worship to which the same person may resort.<sup>235</sup> It seems that in this case, it is the Kabbalist that is envisioned as a son.

On the topic of the commandment to donate half a *sheqel*, compulsory for both the poor and the rich, the anonymous Kabbalist says:

The rich is the median pillar . . . the poor . . . is the righteous . . .  
The Faithful Shepherd said to him: 'You are an angel of heaven, beloved by your Master, there is no bizarre issue in all your precious words that are emitted from your mouth, because behold, whoever is a king or a son of a king, [says] no bizarre words . . . [but] elected words, luminous words. But to another man they are bizarre.'<sup>236</sup>

Elsewhere, the son of the king is identified with the Man or '*Adam*, whose name amounts to the plene writing of the Tetragrammaton, as seen several times in previous chapters, while the servant is identical with Metatron, the microanthropos whose name amounts to *Shadday*, namely 314, who is in the higher image of Man.<sup>237</sup> In an interesting passage, the Kabbalist describes two Tetragrammata as pointing to the *sefirot* of *Hokhmah* and the median pillar, identical to the father and son in Prov. 30.4: 'Who knows what is his name and the name of his son.'<sup>238</sup> This verse appears earlier as pointing to the supernal man, on the one hand, and the second or lower man, on the other hand.<sup>239</sup> As seen above, the two Tetragrammata refer to '*Attiqa*'

*Qaddisha*' and *Zeyir 'Anppin*. It should be mentioned that theories of the double Tetragrammaton occur also in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo and Abraham Abulafia, as we have seen in previous chapters, and are also related to son-figures.

#### 10. Some contextual reflections on late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century views of sonship in Castile

A comparison between the early thirteenth-century kabbalistic discussions in Catalonia and the late thirteenth-century kabbalistic discussions in Castile reveals that the latter reflects a much greater interest in sonship. The considerable interest seen in Castile is paralleled by the contemporary treatments of Abraham Abulafia, discussed in the previous chapter. One way to explain the increase in interest in the topic would be to invoke the enhancement in the volume of kabbalistic writings, which multiplied exponentially from the first to the second half of the century. This is a possible explanation, but alone it is unsatisfactory. In the case of Abulafia, it is evident that it is not merely a case of discussing one more issue, but a matter that touches his very mystical system at its core. Moreover, the precise source in the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* demonstrates that there is a clear affinity between earlier discussions and the kabbalistic ones. Discussions of the constellation of themes related to the *cherub/bekhor/son* permutations are found in the writings of at least two kabbalists in the second half of the thirteenth century, as seen in Chapter 2. Also evident is the influence of R. Eleazar of Worms, and his affinity between the image of man and the divine name, on a late thirteenth-century Kabbalist named R. Joseph ben Shalom, an author of Ashkenazi extraction who was presumably active for a while at least, in Catalonia.<sup>240</sup> This phenomenon is also discernible with regard to other topics related to the history of late thirteenth-century Kabbalah. No doubt, this is a common denominator – though not a very crucial one – underlying the processes that nourished the emergence of the new and vast bodies of late thirteenth-century kabbalistic literature.

However, it seems that this concern with the son is connected to another more comprehensive development that is obvious in many of the literary corpora in the above-mentioned period: the increase in Metatron's role and in themes related to Enoch in the kabbalistic writings from the first half of the century. This is evident in Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah and in the variants found in the writings of his followers, especially R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Ḥarar and R. Isaac of Acre, as well as in the writings of R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, in the book of the *Zohar*, in early writings of R.

Joseph Gikatilla, in those of R. Joseph of Hamadan, and in the writings of R. Menahem Recanati.

Moreover, another important change – though of minor impact for our topic – took place in this same period: the unparalleled ascent of the impact of Hermetic literature on several centers of Jewish Kabbalah since the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>241</sup> In the Hermetic literature there are discussions related to a metaphysical son, though I cannot detect precise passages that occur in kabbalistic writings. However, in some cases, Hermes has been identified with Enoch.<sup>242</sup>

We may therefore describe the late thirteenth-century kabbalistic renaissance as part of a major development in the more comprehensive process of the development of the apotheotic phenomena in Jewish mysticism.

### 11. The theosophical interpretation of the figure of R. Hanina ben Dosa' in Sefer ha-Qanah

As we have seen in Chapter 1 Hanina ben Dosa' is among the few individuals addressed by the divine voice as God's son. Yet, there is a clear contradiction between this statement and the fact that Hanina had a father whose name we know: Dosa', which is short for the name Dosay or Dositheus, a name known among Jews and Samaritans in R. Hanina's lifetime. This contradiction is not totally unknown, as we are acquainted with the king of Egypt, who was conceived to be on the one hand the son of the god Re, but on the other hand had a more human father also, or in the more famous case of another Galilean, Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter, who has also been called the Son of God. Christian theology deals a lot with the removal of the human, though formal, father, in order to install the divine one instead. In Judaism the quandary of R. Hanina's real father did not, however, preoccupy Jewish thinkers, except perhaps one. Sometime at the end of the fourteenth century, writing somewhere in the Byzantine Empire, an anonymous Kabbalist offered the following solution to the quandary:

Know my son, that R. Hanina is [the *sefirah* of] *Tiferet*, the written Torah.<sup>243</sup> And it is said 'Ben Dosa' because he was emanated from the [divine] attribute that is called Father, it is the supernal [*sefirah* of] *Hokhmah*, which is *YHWH*, the name of the essence, and from the attribute called *Binah* . . . which is *Yod He' Waw He'*, a *plene* spelling, and it is He who said: 'Let us create man in our image',<sup>244</sup> that is *Yod He' Waw He'*.<sup>245</sup> And those names were taken from the parents, which are *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. And this is the reason why

it is said *Ben* in order to include [also] the emanation of the *Waw*, that is called also *Ben*. And the word *Ben* is twice *Hawayah*,<sup>246</sup> and the word *Dosa'* is *YHWH Yod He' Waw He'*, in gematria *Dosa'*, [that is] 71 and it is 26 and 45, which are *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, [that are] Father and Mother.<sup>247</sup>

This is a theosophical interpretation that addresses some of the details of the name of Hanina such as the fact that he is the son of Dosa', which amounts in gematria to 71, like the two forms of the divine names. Also, *Ben* amounts to 52, like the two Tetragrammata, a reverberation of the views discussed in the two previous chapters. This is an interpretation characteristic of some trends in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah which I propose to call 'comprehensive arcanization', a process that transforms the entire interpreted text into symbols for the divine powers. This form of interpretation is also conspicuous in another Talmudic legend by this Kabbalist.<sup>248</sup> Here what seems to be more important is to reflect on the traditional material as a linguistic texture by means of ingenuous exegetical practices, and less as part of a theosophical structure.

I would like to turn now to the context of the above discussion, regarding a legend found in the Talmud about the wife of R. Hanina. This passage is part of a collection of phantasmagorias, and it reads as follows:

R. Yohanan related: Once we were traveling on board a ship and we saw a chest in which were set precious stones and pearls and it was surrounded by a species of fish called *Karisa*. There went down a diver to bring [the chest], but [a fish] noticed [him] and was about to wrench his thigh. Thereupon he poured upon it a skin bottle of vinegar and it sank. A divine voice came forth, saying unto us: 'What have you to do with the chest of the wife of R. Hanina ben Dosa' who will store in it purple-blue [*tekhelet*] for the righteous in the world to come?'<sup>249</sup>

Again, a divine intervention on behalf of the righteous is described, this time for the wife of R. Hanina, who is considered the owner of the *tekhelet*, a special color necessary for preparing the *talith*. Like many other legends on this page, it is not a simple task to make sense of the story, though we are concerned with its theosophical interpretation. For the anonymous Kabbalist, the sea implied in the passage stands for the *sefirah* of *Binah*, the mother, the plenitude of the seven supernal days, from which the fish emerges. The fish is identical to those seven days, the seven lower *sefirot*, since the gematria of *Dag*, the Hebrew word for fish, is seven. The seven, represented by the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, have been put in the box in order to preserve them for the wife who is now in exile. In the world to come, the

*tekhelet* will be given to the righteous and the wife will be unified with her husband.<sup>250</sup> This interpretation brings together various themes found elsewhere in another legend in the Talmud, and in other sources according to which the primordial light is stored for the righteous in the world-to-come.<sup>251</sup> This legend was understood by the anonymous Kabbalist to be linked to yet another legend, immediately following that relating to the wife of R. Hanina, which tells of two monsters, Leviathan and his spouse, whose terrible sexual desire could destroy the world. For this reason, God kills the female and castrates the male.<sup>252</sup> Leviathan, the castrated male, is understood as union, an interpretation found much earlier in Kabbalah,<sup>253</sup> and is related by the Kabbalist to R. Hanina and the future sexual relationship the righteous will have in the world to come. No doubt we see here a sexualization of the image, emerging out of the specific logic of the theosophical system, which operates with male/female polarities.

To turn to the eschatological aspect of the discussion: the *tekhelet* in the box, the female monster killed by God, and the primordial light, will return in the eschaton when a union that is currently not possible will take place. Meanwhile, the fish is found within the sea or in the supernal mother. This retreating of the seven lower *sefirot* into the third *sefirah* is a standard view found in a number of kabbalistic schools, including that from which *Sefer ha-Qanah* emerged, that describe the cyclical reintegration of the seven lower *sefirot* within the *Binah*, and their subsequent display for another cosmic cycle. There is no doubt that there is a kabbalistic eschatological dimension to our discussion, in addition to its eschatological valence related to the world-to-come. In the framework of these two eschatologies the Kabbalist's interpretation of the fish is interesting. It stands for the seven powers returning within the third *sefirah*. However according to this kabbalistic text, it also stands for the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, which has been identified, as the Kabbalist makes explicit, with Hanina as son of the two higher *sefirot*. Though not totally explicit, the seven *sefirot* are identified with the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*. Thus, the seven *sefirot*, or that of *Tiferet*, are related to Hanina, creating a link to the fish that amounts in gematria to seven. In this way, Hanina is understood not only as the Leviathan but also as the fish. Both the Leviathan and even more so the fish are symbols for Jesus's existence since early Christianity.<sup>254</sup> That another Galilean charismatic, Hanina, whose name also has a clear messianic overtone, has been associated with these two terms is an interesting coincidence. In any case, it is important to point out that in the thought of this Kabbalist the affinity between *Tiferet*, the son, and the *sefirah* of *Yesod* is quite evident, pointing to some sexualization of the son:

The *sefirah* of *Yesod* was emanated from the light that is *Tiferet* and

prepared and drew from darkness another light, which is appointed over night . . . and 'night' is comprised together with *Tiferet*, and *Tiferet* ascends to Wisdom of God [*Hokhmat 'Elohim*], and together with *Hokhmah* [it ascends] to *Keter* '*Elyon*. And it takes influx and blessing from *Keter* and *Hokhmah*, which is father, and from *Binah* which is mother, and irrigates the building<sup>255</sup> and the night is with it in [a state of] embracing, adherence, and kiss . . . and from there [namely from *Yesod*] all the influx and blessing enter the woman, and from the woman [down] to the lower world.<sup>256</sup>

This is just another instance of the portrayal of the quaternary divine family that we discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The mentioning of the mother and father on the one hand, and of the woman on the other, demonstrates that the *Tiferet* is conceived of as both a son and a husband. Its association with *Yesod* points to the sexual role it plays in relation to the last feminine *sefirah*, according to the last part of the passage. What is well exemplified by this passage is a more general position according to which the lower *sefirot* are not fixed in a given place in a system, but rather move up and down, generating a variety of processes. Despite this dynamism, characteristic of many of the theosophical systems, we may easily discern in the discussions in this section, as we shall see also in the passages to be adduced below from Cordoverian and Lurianic Kabbalah, a sense of precise control of the structure of the divine realm, which becomes in fact a code by means of which it is possible to clarify the obscurities or the phantastic content of sacred texts. For many of the Kabbalists the sacred texts are less the prism through which it is possible to perceive the unknown, transcendent, imponderable deity (as scholars that follow the pansymbolic theory of Scholem would claim) than, on the contrary, exegetical instruments by means of which it is possible to make sense of texts that become semantically obscure or problematic from theological or other points of view.

## 12. Sefer ha-Meshiv: *The birth of the Messiah from a supernal virgin*

In the theosophical-theurgical forms of Kabbalah discussed above the son does not have a clear eschatological function. R. Joseph of Hamadan's passage previously analyzed constitutes an interesting exception in early theosophical literature. I assume that in this case some kind of response to the eschatological role of the Son of God in Christianity should be presupposed insofar as the genesis of his particular view is concerned.

However, an even more pronounced articulation of the theme of the

eschatological Son of God is evident in a description of the theosophical Messiah as a son born from divine parents, found in a vast literary kabbalistic corpus written late in fifteenth-century Castile and known as *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, 'The Book of the Responding Entity', (namely God) or according to some other titles, *Sefer ha-Mal'akh ha-Meshiv*, namely the 'Book of the Responding Angel'.<sup>257</sup> This book, or literature, is, indubitably one of the most anti-Christian documents found in Judaism, though in this kabbalistic literature we may also detect one of the most outstanding influences of Christology on any of the extant Jewish documents.<sup>258</sup> In a way, it adopts Christian views in order to invert them, as I proposed to understand this pattern of cultural creativity some 20 years ago.<sup>259</sup> According to an interesting passage from this corpus, two Messiahs, one the son of Ephraim and the other the son of Joseph, are born as the result of the mythical intercourse between, on the one hand, the divine attributes that are symbolized by Jacob and Esau, incorporated into the ninth *sefirah* of *Yesod*, and the feminine attribute which is the last *sefirah*, *Malkhut*, on the other. In this case, the intercourse was oral rather than genital (again a possible instance of the Christian impact), which means that the efflux of the male organ into the mouth of the *Shekhinah* was presented as:

[t]he secret of a virgin, 'neither had any man known her'<sup>260</sup> ... There is an actual virgin, made of fire, and she is sexually receptive [namely has a receptive vessel] and this likeness was created for Israel, as a wife and as a virgin ... At the end of the redemption the secret of the Messiah will come forth for Israel. Until that time she will remain a virgin and then the supernal spirit will enter her mouth and a spirit of consuming fire will come forth at her opening and will emerge from that sanctuary, for there it will reside, shut away. At that time, when the spirit emerges, it will take the form of fire. This is the secret of the constellation of Virgo. Therefore, it is the constellation of Israel, and this is the esoteric meaning of the verse:<sup>261</sup> 'Rise, the virgin of Israel!' ... that is the secret interpretation of the verse,<sup>262</sup> 'A virgin, neither has any man known her' until the Lord's anointed one will come.<sup>263</sup>

Israel here refers to two different powers. It stands for the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* or of *Yesod* (Jacob who was mentioned just previously), and plays the role of the male divine potency. Yet at the same time, it points to the people of Israel. We have here a kabbalistic version of the immaculate conception. The virgin female power is penetrated by the influx descending from the two higher *sefirot* in her higher opening, the mouth, and as a result there is an expected birth of two Messiahs. The nexus between virginity and the

birth of the Messiah seems to be significant evidence for a kabbalistic interpretation of a central Christological tenet. This unusual concern with the birth of the Messiahs seems to me totally unrelated to any specific historical event, and there are good reasons to assume that the above passage was composed before the expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Another major Christian tenet, the divinity of the Messiah, is also well represented in the writings of this kabbalistic circle. For example, in one instance it is said that 'the secret of My Messiah is the secret of My Divinity'.<sup>264</sup> Unlike the Abulafian theory discussed above and the Sabbatean versions of sonship to be discussed below, dealing with the profound relation between the Messiah and the divinity as forms of apotheosis, we can speak about a theophany rather than a case of apotheosis, as seems to be the case with another Messiah also, Sabbatai Tzevi, who will be discussed later in this chapter. Elsewhere in the same book the time of redemption is described as follows:

[t]he verse said:<sup>265</sup> 'For as a young man marries a virgin', this is the secret of the restoration of the *Shekhinah* to Her former state and first strength, as the verse suggests. That is the secret of the descent of My Messiah from heaven before the eyes of all living creatures.<sup>266</sup>

The explicit reference to a relationship between a virgin and the *Shekhinah* is conspicuous here, and may represent the first instance of the impact of a Marian theology on Kabbalah. Earlier possible instances are far less explicit and in my opinion, as discussed above, also quite problematic from the point of view of the proofs offered to substantiate such affinities. Though the term 'son' is not mentioned here, the themes cited above about the miraculous birth leave no room for speculation that the Messiah, son of Efrayyim, is the son of the *Shekhinah* and the supernal Jacob. Given the recurrent resort in this literature to the view of the Messiah as reflecting the divinity of God, we may conceptualize him as a Son of God, as he is imagined to be born out of the *Shekhinah*. In fact, what we have here is an unmistakable example of the impact of Christian theology on Kabbalah. It is hardly a continuation of early Jewish or Judeo-Christian traditions, but rather represents a full-fledged example of appropriation, through kabbalizing various elements of Christology. Here the lateral influence of Christianity, maybe by the mediation of *conversos*, is quite plausible, and it reflects the tense relation between the Jews and their Christian contemporaries.

Let me draw attention to the difference between this type of discourse, which is not afraid of resorting to Christological material where it is easy to detect the sources, and the tenuous efforts of scholars to find hints of a Marian cult in the *Bahir*, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. If the early

Kabbalists were to have used such explicit language, there would be no room for serious doubt about the impact of Christian theology on Kabbalists, as is the case in *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, just as it is difficult to doubt the Christian impact on Sabbateanism.

### 13. R. Ḥanina ben Dosa the Tzaddiq according to R. Moses Cordovero and his followers

I would now like to compare the way in which R. Ḥanina is treated in *Sefer ha-Qanah*, as pointing to an intra-divine event – the emanation of the son, represented by the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* from the two higher *sefirot* – to another pattern, one of momentous impact on the history of Jewish mysticism. With the development of Kabbalah, a new model made its way into the larger consensus of Kabbalists from the sixteenth century onwards: the mystical-magical model, one which assumes that it is possible, for the select few, to ascend on high, cleave there to a supernal power, bring down influx from above, and then distribute such in the world.<sup>267</sup> Here the special status of R. Ḥanina as a Son of God and his magical attainments are combined within a more comprehensive paradigm that is entirely new, and has nothing to do with the character of the ancient charismatic figure. It is the importance of talismanic magic or a hermetic type of magic that is added to the ancient-ecstatic and the medieval theosophical-theurgical elements, that enables the Kabbalists to envisage a more complex account for the way in which a perfect Kabbalist should operate – this perfect Kabbalist understood to be no other than R. Ḥanina, the Son of God. While in the theurgical type of sonship, as described above, the center of gravitation was the well-being of the higher structure of the *sefirot*, the supernal pipelines, or the well-being of the *Shekhinah*, the magical model is concerned with the well-being of the lower world.

In R. Moses Cordovero's kabbalistic classic, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*, there is an explicit nexus created between the Talmudic treatment of R. Ḥanina, where his sonship is mentioned, and the figure of the righteous. The Safedian master writes in the context of the Talmudic passage in *Berakhot*, fol. 17a that:

[i]n accordance to the amount of the intention [of the pious man in his prayer] [and] if he intended to cause the influx from one rank to another, in accordance to the ranks of the ladder,<sup>268</sup> and will adhere to his creator by his knowledge concerning the performance of the commandments, his soul will ascend and be elevated from one degree to another, from one generator to another and from one cause to another, until an abundance of

influx will emanate upon him and he will be the place of the seat and the dwelling for that influx; and from there it will be distributed to the world, as it is written in the *Zohar* . . . and in accordance to those words he will become the dwelling of the *Shekhinah*, because the influx comes by his means, so the righteous is instead of the great pipeline, the foundation of the world, and this is the reason why he merits that the *Shekhinah* adheres to him . . . when a *Tzaddiq* and a *Ḥasid* is present in this world, the entire world is nourished by him, as it is written 'the entire world is sustained for the sake of R. Ḥanina, My son'.<sup>269</sup>

Let me emphasize first the paramount theurgical dimension of this text: though the man in prayer is not directly described here as a son, this seems to be Cordovero's basic intention. Though indeed the concept of son may occur only because it was part of the Talmudic proof-text, I nevertheless accord to it a certain weight, since it would be consonant with the cosmic picture that emanates from this passage. For a strong parallel to the above passage, as well as others to be adduced below from Cordovero, suggesting a more significant role for sonship, we may cite Cordovero's other writing, the much more popular booklet entitled '*Or ha-Ne'erav*':

Whoever studies Kabbalah and worships according to Kabbalah, by the secrets of the intentions of the commandments, is called Son.<sup>270</sup>

In another of Cordovero's writings the status of the righteous is depicted in an even more pronounced manner:

Everything depends upon the spiritual forces, the influx that flows by means of the *Tzaddiq* and of his proper deeds . . . the world was blessed by the spiritual force flowing because of the merit [of the *Tzaddiqim*]<sup>271</sup> . . . and all the worlds and things are subjected to the *Tzaddiq* . . . and everything depends upon the secret of the Torah that is transmitted to him.<sup>272</sup>

In contrast to the portrait of the righteous as a pipeline or pathway, an expert who can 'plug' into the supernal system and operate with the potential inherent in it, this last quotation portrays a more majestic picture, almost that of a cosmokrator who rules the world. In lieu of the pontifical role or that of the mediator who distributes, the last quotation contains a much more dramatic assumption that is closer to a supernal sonship, and we shall return to the metamorphosis of this issue below. These passages are paraphrased and somewhat amplified by Cordovero's followers, and even copied anonymously in Lurianic writings. Describing again the Kabbalist as

related to righteousness, this Kabbalist invokes again the theurgical impact of the ritual in connection to the ninth *sefirah*:

The man whom his Creator has bestowed with the grace of entering the innerness of the occult lore<sup>273</sup> and knows and understands that by reciting [the blessings of] *Barekh 'aleinu* and *Refa'enu* the intention is to draw down the blessing and the influx by each and every blessing to a certain *sefirah*, and the blessing of *Refa'enu* to a certain *sefirah*, as it known to us. Behold, this man is worshipping the Holy One, blessed be He and his *Shekhinah*, as a son and as a servant standing before his master, by means of a perfect worship, out of love, without deriving any benefit or reward because of that worship . . . because the wise man) by the quality of his [mystical] intention when he intends during his prayer, his soul will be elevated by his [spiritual] arousal from one degree to another, from one entity to another until she arrives and is welcome and comes in the presence of the Creator, and cleaves to her source, to the source of life; and then a great influx will be emanated upon her from there, and he will become a vessel [*keli*]<sup>274</sup> and a place and foundation for [that] influx, and from him it will be distributed to all the world as it is written in the *Zohar*, pericope *Terumah*, until the *Shekhinah* will cleave to him . . . and you will be a seat to Her and [then] the influx will descend onto you . . . because you are in lieu of the great pipe instead of the *Tzaddiq*, the foundation of the world.<sup>275</sup>

The beginning of this passage should be compared to the brief quotation we adduced above from *'Or ha-Ne'erav*, where the Kabbalist has been explicitly described as son. The position in Cordovero's passage should be understood in the context of his talismanic view of the righteous person, which presupposes the role of mediation on the part of the righteous, who serves as a pipeline that transmits divine influx to the lower worlds.<sup>276</sup> The Hebrew term used for expressing the dependence of the world upon Ḥanina is *bi-shevil*, which has been translated as 'for the sake of'. Therefore, it can be seen that the text refers quite exclusively to the role played by the *Tzaddiq* in this world, which is created for his sake, just as much earlier Jewish authors affirmed that the world was created for the sake of Israel. However, the Hebrew word can also be construed to mean 'by the path'. Such a reading is not explicit in the passage but is suggested by the use of the term 'pipeline' in the quotation. In both cases, the idea is that the world is nourished by a transmitted divine energy that reaches us through a particular mechanism. According to such a reading, Ḥanina as a person stands for a concrete pathway, just as the *Tzaddiq* is a pipeline or tube. It seems very plausible that

in keeping with the widespread kabbalistic symbolism of the *sefirah* of *Yesod* as both *Tzaddiq* and the divine phallus, the earthly *Tzaddiq* was conceived in similar terms, as the locus that both receives the influx and distributes it. We shall revert to this image below.

Let me now draw attention to the disappearance of R. Ḥanina in the text (as quoted by Cordovero's followers). His presence is implied in a less personal way as the worshipper performing acts of worship as a son and a servant, both terms reflecting R. Ḥanina's characterization in rabbinic sources, as seen above in Chapter 1. A significant shift takes place in the way Ḥanina is understood by Cordovero and his followers, as the talismanic system is imposed upon the Galilean charismatic. His figure is portrayed here much more as a mediator (illustrated by the figure of a pipeline) than as an intercessor, as was the case in the late antiquity traditions. To be sure, the liturgical element is also discernible in the above passage, though it seems that the pipeline theme is the main way in which the function of R. Ḥanina is conceptualized. At the same time, Cordovero introduces two other elements that subsequently play a central role in the perception of Ḥanina by many subsequent authors. He emphasizes the righteous aspect that he describes elsewhere in his book, by identifying R. Ḥanina with the function of the *Tzaddiq* as a Kabbalist. Moreover, following on from various kabbalistic theosophical understandings of the righteous as mediating both within the divine realm, namely between the male and female powers, and outside of that world, namely in the sphere in which the influx descends from the higher level of the divinity toward the mundane world, Cordovero offers what can be described as another phase of the apotheosis of the role of the *Tzaddiq*, again in the context of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa'. Cordovero describes a distinct type of righteous – *rashum*, writing that:

There is a righteous whose power is great, so that the Holy One, blessed be He inscribes him on high among the saints, and the issue of his prayers and commandments are not like those of one of the people, but he is inscribed that he excels in comparison of the other people. So also below he is not part of the people but he is a person inscribed for himself . . . and he is the tabernacle for holiness. And despite the fact that the *Shekhinah* is found upon all the people of Israel, the *Shekhinah* is essentially dwelling upon him, and from there she spreads to the entire world. And the reason is that he is a righteous, and despite the fact that the entire world [namely all the people] are unifying the [divine] unity, it is his unification that excels over all. This is the reason why the *Shekhinah* will adhere to him in her [very] essence, while her branches are upon all. And he is the well of the blessings upon the

world, as it is said: 'The entire world is nourished because of Ḥanina, My son etc.,' and he is the chariot for the *Shekhinah*<sup>277</sup> . . . . He causes the existence of the *Yesod* and *Tiferet* in the world, bound with the *Shekhinah*. And this is the reason why the *Shekhinah* adheres to him, as she is pursuing [*rodefet*] for *Yesod* and *Tiferet* and does not find them but with him.<sup>278</sup>

Here, however, unlike the passage from *Pardes Rimmonim*, the magical element is much less visible, while the erotic element that draws upon forms of Zoharic sources is put in relief. The righteous human is conceived of as some form of embodiment of the two supernal powers: *Tiferet*, the son, and *Yesod*, the phallus. Reference to these divine manifestations together constitutes another instance of the explicit sexualization of the son.<sup>279</sup> By his identification with them, the righteous human represents them both while he is in this world, serving as their counterpart, and the figure that the feminine power is predisposed to prefer. The righteous human becomes some form of surrogate for the supernal righteous and, at the same time, a tabernacle where the divine presence as a feminine power resides. In a way, the righteous human becomes the center of the world, where the essence of the *Shekhinah* dwells, while other secondary parts of her are present in the world at large. It is interesting that in this passage the active, paramount role of the supernal feminine is conspicuous, while the righteous male is described, in the last text at least, in more passive terms. Furthermore, while the righteous human is described as the center, the *Shekhinah* is understood in much more comprehensive terms: she is found everywhere, though essentially on the righteous.

The verb 'inscribe', *rashum*, appears as part of the interpreted Zoharic passage, and it relates to the fact that the righteous described here is an outstanding one. Yet, I assume that the Zoharic emphasis on sexual purity as a defining moment for a righteous human is also integrated into this discussion. I further assume that the inscription points for the circumcision relate to the phallic status of the righteous. This reformulation of the figure of R. Ḥanina neutralizes the issue of the ascent on high and of the drawing down of power, assuming that the righteous operates by attracting the supernal feminine downward. Here, the concept of sonship is strongly sexualized: the righteous is not only the sefirah of *Tiferet* but also, and quite emphatically, that of *Yesod*, the phallic *sefirah*.

Several interesting discussions regarding Ḥanina ben Dosa' and Cordovero's interpretation as presented above may be found in the writings of R. Sabbatai Sheftel Horowitz, a late sixteenth-century follower of the Safedian Kabbalist who was active in Prague.<sup>280</sup> An important discussion can also be found in the writings of seventeenth-century R. Isaiah Horowitz, a

relative of the former Kabbalist and the author of the very influential *Sefer ha-Shelah*, 'The Book of the Two Tables of the Law', in which he presents the views we found in the two Cordoverian passages discussed above:

The tabernacle has been built in Shilo, the part of [the tribe of] Joseph . . . and despite the fact that it has been destroyed, Joseph nevertheless opened the pipe of holiness and holiness remained afterwards in the eternal edifice, because Joseph was the pipeline as he is the pillar upon which the world stands, in accordance to the secret of his attribute 'The Righteous is the foundation of the world' that all the variety of influx are passing through this pipeline to *Malkhut*, that is called 'World' despite the fact that the kingdom and the temples were removed from him [namely from Joseph]. And this is the matter that 'the entire world is nourished because of Ḥanina My son, and Ḥanina My son is nourished by one kab of cabot from the eve of Sabbath to the eve of Sabbath.' And the issue is that R. Ḥanina was in his generation the great righteous, the one single pillar upon which the world stands, and this is the reason why it is said, 'For the sake of Ḥanina': *Bi-shevil*, means a pathway and a pipeline.<sup>281</sup>

The elected son, Joseph, the pure sexual righteous in Jewish tradition and especially in the book of the *Zohar*, becomes a paradigm, subsequently represented – according to this Kabbalist – by Ḥanina. The latter is described as the single most important figure of his generation, not an insignificant assessment in the context of the generation of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai. Here, the righteous and the tabernacle, or temple, are treated as part of the same larger category. Though Ḥanina lived while the Second Temple was still active, he is understood to be a surrogate for it, as is Ḥoni the circle-driver, according to the analysis of Mark Hirshman.<sup>282</sup>

In short, Cordovero and his influential followers reinterpreted the devotional figure of Ḥanina, a charismatic ancient wonder-maker described as a Son of God, as reflecting a more complex supernal structure, rather than being merely successful by virtue of intense devotion. The transformation of an elect son into a form of metaphysics of sonship is reminiscent of the transition from the Jesus-movement to the metaphysics of sonship in the Patristic literature, especially as seen above in the case of Origen. The casting of the human figure in a cosmocratic and hypostatic role represents the more general development of creating larger ontological schemes that absorb the idiosyncrasy of the unique individual. In both cases, the extraordinary status of the outstanding individual is attenuated by subsuming it within a more comprehensive scheme, and the details of the broader system move closer to the center of complex speculations. However, while

in the history of early Christianity the historical Jesus is systematically desexualized, in the above texts the figure of R. Ḥanina is heavily sexualized. The emphasis placed on purity and holiness in the kabbalistic sources is, to be sure, not intended to prevent a sexual encounter or to sublimate it by emphasizing the contact with the spiritual *Shekhinah*, but to describe the achievement of the righteous who refrains from illicit forms of intercourse.

To formulate this last remark in more general terms, R. Ḥanina's sonship is adopted in the basic scheme of the theosophical system as understood by Cordovero, and interpreted as one of the most outstanding representatives of the divine hypostasis, also understood as the divine phallus. However, cardinal for grasping the way this hypostasis is understood in the specific contexts discussed in this chapter is its role in the transmission of energy and of souls to the lower worlds. As such, R. Ḥanina becomes part of the couple, which includes the feminine aspect of divinity and is entangled in the classical Zoharic sexual drama, and which has nothing to do with the historical figure as we know it from rabbinic sources. This position is articulated in Cordovero's commentary on the *Zohar*, and the less magical worldview of this book attenuates the more magical approach expressed in the other writings of this Kabbalist as discussed above. The inclusion of the Cordoverian theory of the sonship of Ḥanina ben Dosa' in Horwitz's book represents a major channel of the dissemination of the ideas of the Safedian kabbalists, and contributed greatly to its integration in Ḥasidism.

Let me point out that in this more magical understanding of sonship, the attenuation of the morphic aspects of the similarity between man and God, to which I referred above in my discussion of the souls as sons in the *Zohar*, is itself attenuated, and other aspects are evident, both the morphic and the functional dimensions becoming more prominent. In any case, the occurrence of terms like pipe, tabernacle or seat represent another approach when compared to the main line of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, to which he nevertheless subscribed as his main source of inspiration. In any case, let me mention that though the discussions above reflect views related to the Kabbalist as having a theurgical and magical impact, it should be pointed out that Cordovero resorts many times to the pattern of the fourfold divine family, which includes the view of the son as representing the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*.

#### 14. R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi and R. Ḥayyim Vital Calabrese: The apotheosis of double sonship

Following the death of Cordovero in 1570, another major kabbalistic system emerged suddenly in Safed, initiated by R. Isaac ben Shlomo Luria

Ashkenazi, known as ha-'Ari, the acronym of the Hebrew phrase that means 'the divine R. Isaac'. Though he was active in the small Galilean town for a very short period before his own death in 1572, the selected circle of his students generated over years an immense body of kabbalistic literature, which had a decisive role in the subsequent history of Kabbalah. His views had a lasting impact on generations of Jewish Kabbalists first, and then on Christian thinkers, an issue that will be discussed in the next chapter. In fact, it would be better to assume that there are several versions of Lurianism, which, close as they are to each other on some important topics, still differ on other topics. Here we shall address the version of Lurianism expressed in the writings of R. Ḥayyim Vital. I am less concerned with the other important version as formulated by R. Israel Sarug.

Luria and his many followers were much less concerned with Cordovero's magical-talismanic understanding of sonship described in the previous section, and instead returned to some elaborate expositions of the Zoharic theosophy, hence noting the importance of the son and of *Ze'vir 'Anppin*.<sup>283</sup> It is in this vast kabbalistic literature, that draws from the more anthropomorphic layers of Zoharic theosophy, the treatises known as the *'Iddrot*, or the two Assemblies, that the centrality of the *Ze'vir 'Anppin* and his female can be discerned in several important discussions, some of which explicitly relate to sonship in general and to double sonship in particular. Though it is indubitable that such a complex theosophical literature does not have one single conceptual center of gravitation, the role played in this system by the Lesser Countenance and his female, sometimes described as equal, as cosmocratic figures can hardly be overemphasized. As part of the ascent of the importance of the Lesser Countenance in this system, we may discern also a more positive attitude to it, in comparison to the Zoharic emphasis on the negative aspects that characterize the divine Son in comparison to his divine Father. This development is paramount when thinking about the role to be played by the concept of *Za'vir*, which should sometimes be understood as a son-figure in the history of Jewish mysticism, and also in Christian Kabbalah. Moreover, following developments related to R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, the term *partzuf* comes now to point not just to the head, but to a structure of ten *sefirot*, which has a corresponding human shape, and thus also to *Ze'vir 'Anppin*, one of the five countenances in this literature, which also takes this shape. In other words, Lurianic Kabbalah operates with sets of full structures of human bodies, unlike the Zoharic approach to *'Arikh 'Anppin* and *Ze'vir 'Anppin*. Thus, the son-figure entails now a full body, which however, is conceived, born and growing in a cyclical manner, out of the womb of his mother.

Let me start with an aside, which may point to a certain continuity between the earlier discussions found in Chapters 2 and 3 and Lurianism.

One of the most important among the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists, R. Ḥayyim Vital Calabrese, was revealed as being of a spiritual rank higher than that of his master, the famous R. Isaac Luria. It is said of him that it is destined that:

the angel Elijah will speak with you mouth to mouth, in a state of wake, this is why you should unify by the unification of this name, you should elevate it to secret of 'Eliyahu who is the name Ben.<sup>284</sup>

To be sure, the name *Ben* is one of the plene forms in which the Tetragrammaton is spelled according to Lurianic Kabbalah. Yehuda Liebes has already pointed out the possible affinity between the Lurianic resort to this plene writing and the Ashkenazi passage of R. Nehemiah discussed in Chapter 2,<sup>285</sup> though we may add that it is also possible that the Zoharic reference to Elijah as the son and the name, pointed out above in this chapter, could have influenced the Safedian Kabbalist. This is the extent thus far of the possible linkage between the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and Lurianic Kabbalah.

However, in this complex theosophical-theurgical literature the role of the son, especially in the context of the category of *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, is quite variegated. We may distinguish three main moves related to this figure in this literature: the ascent of the *Za'yir* – sometimes together with his female – to his supernal parents within the theosophical system on high, namely to the countenances of 'Abba' and 'Imma'; the descent of the *Za'yir* into the non-divine worlds; and the process of cyclical growth and decay that is attributed to it. The first two vectors represent elaborations upon earlier kabbalistic traditions. It should be pointed out that the Lurianic theosophy operates, in a manner reminiscent of some aspects of the Zoharic theosophy, with a double type of anthropomorphic structure: one dealing with the configurations or countenances, in which the *Za'yir* plays an important role, and one which represents the family structure, in which the son is described as born out of the *sefirot* of 'Abba' and 'Imma'. This is the reason why *Za'yir* and the son, both corresponding to the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, play very similar roles in structural terms. Here we have an example, which is neither a direct identification between the two concepts in all the many occurrences of this term, nor a case of oblique connection. In many Lurianic texts the two concepts overlap systemically, since each of the two plays a role similar to the other, albeit in a different set of symbols found in the very same composition. In some quite important and explicit instances, there are clear connections between the concepts of *Za'yir*, *Ben*, sometimes qualified as the supernal Son, *Ben 'Elyon*, firstborn son, *Bekhor*, and the supernal Israel, all of them related commonly with the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, thus allowing a more

definitive statement about the stability of the identity of the son as the Lesser Countenance in this major form of Kabbalah. Let me translate a major passage dealing with the supernal son in Lurianic Kabbalah which recurs verbatim in two main Lurianic treatises. It deals with the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, when the latter is described as wishing the disappearance of the son under discussion, and consequently the disappearance of the lower sons, Israel:

Since Pharaoh was wicked and he was denying the existence of the essence of *YHWH*, which is *Z[e'yir] 'A[nppin]*, the nice son. And he thought that [the son] will not return [from his immersion within the mother] to reveal himself and grow [again], but will remain forever in the womb [*me'ayim* literally intestine] of [his] mother [namely the configuration of 'Imma'] and because of it Israel on low – that are linked to Him – this being the reason why they are called Israel, because of the name of *Z[e'yir] 'A[nppin]* as it is known, will remain in his dominion, within exile [in Egypt] ... because he [Pharaoh] wanted to deny the supernal son [*ha-ben ha-'elyon*] ... and this is the reason why God said 'My son, the firstborn Israel' corresponding to the supernal son. But in return to it there was the plague of the firstborn sons, because he denied the firstborn son, the supernal Israel.<sup>286</sup>

It should be pointed out that in the lengthy discussions found in this sermon, as in Lurianic Kabbalah in general, the relationship that is dominant is between *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, expressly described as son, and the supernal mother, *Binah*, to whose womb he returns cyclically, and from where he emerges. From the psychoanalytical point of view this passage, like many others in Lurianic Kabbalah, is exciting: the son's return to the supernal mother is not conceived of as incestuous, or extraordinary, but as a regular event that is part of a rhythm that regulates the life within the divine world. Following earlier theosophical traditions Luria conceived processes taking place within the divine realm as not reflecting interdictions found in the halakic legislation, thus diminishing the quandary of the incestuous relationship. The cyclical reintegration of the supernal son within the womb of his supernal mother is a process taking place between two divine countenances: *Ze'yir 'Anppin* and 'Imma', but it seems that no sexual overtones may be discerned here or elsewhere in discussions of the son/mother axis within Lurianic Kabbalah. In many other instances in this literature, however, the *Ze'yir 'Anppin* is described as having sexual relations with his female, *nuqebbeih*, in quite explicit terms. The explicit affinity between *Ze'yir 'Anppin* and sonship attracted the attention of Christian Kabbalists in the late seventeenth century, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Another issue that is worth highlighting in this passage is the theory we described as double sonship: here we have another instance of explicit affinity between the lower sons and the higher son. The cyclical return of the supernal son is a moment of danger for the lower sons, who are prone to remain in exile, in the domain of the evil Pharaoh. It should be mentioned also that the morphonominal aspect of sonship is also quite explicit here: Israel is found in both cases. Interestingly enough, the more pronounced expressions of sonship have been formulated in Safed, a place where the impact of Christianity was less likely than in the other centers of Kabbalah.

Let me exemplify the existence of the double sonship theory in Lurianic Kabbalah in an even more explicit passage. In R. Naftali Bakharakh's influential book *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, a classic of Lurianic Kabbalah written and printed in the mid-seventeenth century, there is a fascinating presentation of this theory:

*Ze'yir 'Anppin* and his female are called the sons of 'Abba' and 'Imma', and we the humans in this world 'are the sons of God, our Lord', that are *Ze'yir 'Anppin* and his female, and behold that the feminine waters by means of which we elevate the [sefirah of] *Malkhut* to [have an intercourse with] the *Za'yir*, are the secret of the souls of the righteous that are their sons.<sup>287</sup>

Again, here double sonship is quite obvious, and is also strongly related to the concept of theurgical son. In fact, immediately following this quotation, the lower couple, whose sexual intercourse has been triggered by the souls of the righteous – who themselves are described as sons – are understood to become feminine waters that serve as triggers for the intercourse between their parents, the two higher supernal countenances, 'Abba' and 'Imma'. Interestingly enough, while the importance of the two divine couples is evident, the human couple is not mentioned here at all, but instead the activity of the souls of the righteous, plausibly intending to males alone, is regarded as quintessential for the activation of the divine world. Nevertheless, at least insofar as the souls of the righteous, or of the Kabbalists are conceived, they play a role similar to that played by the lower divine pair, in relation to the supernal divine pair. We may speak here not only about theurgy, which is obvious in this passage, but also about a certain mystical solidarity, to return to an expression of Peter Brown's mentioned above, between the divine powers and the humans. This theurgical activity is conceived of as quite important in the Lurianic Kabbalah, though it is not the only understanding of theurgical activity in this system: more important is the reconstruction, or the well-known *tiqqun*, of the shattered structure of the 'Adam Qadmon, which is more characteristic of Lurianism, but this issue is less important from our point of view.

Before turning to a few other related topics concerning sonship and *Za'yir* in Lurianism, let me address some possible implications related to the last passages we analyzed in this section. The theurgical operations are conceived of as efficient because the higher entities generate the lower ones, and there is a possibility that the lower will return within the higher and have an impact on it. This descending principle of derivation by emanation that resorts to the terminology of the divine family is described as sonship, while the rising impact that lower entities have on higher ones is described as the 'female waters' – *mayyin nuqebbin*. The descending process is a matter of giving birth, while the ascending one is related to the efforts of inducing the hierogamos, which will later give birth. The lower entities are conceived of as penetrating the higher and so they are able to produce an effect there. We may therefore presuppose in both cases the importance of an ontological continuity between the different realms of reality: just as on high the two couples within the divine structure are organically connected to each other, so are the souls of the righteous connected with the sons of lower divine couple. Thus, both the themes of derivation and of theurgical operation are based not only on some form of sympathetic structure, or on the principle of isomorphism, but also on the principle of organic contact and continuity. Both the emanative principle and the organic/familiar one allow a symbolic representation, as described in modern Kabbalah scholarship, which reflects the unknown within the lower realm. The lower is a contracted form of the higher, and between the two realms there is substantial linkage. Indeed a recurring theme in Lurianism is the idea of each higher configuration covering the former one, imagining thus the supernal world as consisting of anthropomorphic configurations that are in clear contact with each other.

To these processes of descent and ascent based upon concepts of different types of continua, I have devoted an entire study, *Enchanted Chains* (see also the section on Cordovero's thought in this chapter). However, what I have found little of there is the principle of incarnation, as describing a concatenation between the various layers of existence. In our case, anthropomorphism is evident, though again the terms informant and embodiment seem to reflect better the way in which the linkage is imagined to operate. *En passant* let me draw attention to the fact that the stronger the claims about informant, embodiment or incarnation are, the weaker the claims about symbolic representation become. If the leading principle is the event of contraction that occurs when the entity is derived from a higher one, it is the form that is preserved, as represented in the concept of Lesser versus the Longer. The *Za'yir* is the *morphē* of the father, just as the righteous's soul descends from the divine world, and has, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, a form. We have already seen above in this chapter, in a

short quotation from R. Moses de Leon's book *ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah*, how he claimed that the soul is in the image of God, as a form of building. I would say that in that text, it is the etimological understanding of *Ben/Binyan* that inspires the architectural aspect of sonship, which reflects the supernal building of the last seven sefirot in his own structure.

A universe that is more familiar, intimate, continuous and interactive is construed by the imaginaire of the divine family, a structure where the son plays such a central role. In other words, the human son, or the righteous, is not the shadow of the supernal son, neither his symbol – in the specific way modern scholars of Kabbalah define kabbalistic symbols – but is rather strongly connected to him and even has a strong impact on him. In this context, let me reiterate the other dimension of many theosophical discussions as adduced above: the kabbalistic theosophy is frequently formulated in rather precise terms, which do not reflect the transcendence or the obscurity that scholars attribute so categorically to the divine realms. Their worldview was definitely more kataphatic than apophatic. This does not mean that apophatic expressions do not exist in the vast literature known as Kabbalah but, in my opinion, their place is much more modest than is assumed by scholars. The theories of sonship as we have seen in the above passages from the Lurianic corpus, reflect not a feeling of alienation or radical difference between different layers within the divinity, or between the righteous men and their divine parents, but on the contrary, one of concrete intimacy, and intense solidarity. However, let me emphasize, many of the components of this picture are not new: we have seen instances of the supernal quaternity that constitutes the divine family since the late thirteenth century, and the vision of the souls as the Sons of God is well testified in the same period. Thus, let me emphasize that at least insofar as these elements are concerned, Lurianism does not represent a dramatic novelty in the phenomenology of Kabbalah, but rather reflects a more systematized organization of earlier elements, especially stemming from the Zoharic literatures and other kabbalistic systems that emerged at the end of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. This is the reason why sonships plays such an important role in the new articulations of kabbalistic theosophies, which already paid attention to this mythologoumena, as we have seen in some of the sections above.

Let me turn now to another instance of sonship in this school of Kabbalah. R. Hayyim Vital theosophically interprets the following Talmudic statement:

Our Rabbis taught: A Hebrew male slave serves [his master's] son, but does not serve [his] daughter; a Hebrew female slave serves neither son nor daughter; one who was bought, or is sold to a

heathen, serves neither son nor daughter. The Master said: 'A Hebrew male slave serves [his master's] son, but not [his] daughter.'<sup>288</sup>

in the following manner:

Man has a soul from the world of Making ... [*Assiyah*] and it is called a maidservant [*shifhah*] ... and spirit from the [world of] Formation [*Yetzirah*] ... and it is called servant [*'eved*] namely '*Ev* [and] *Ḍ*, and this means that the Tetragrammaton is found in the *Za'yir*, and the *Za'yir* nests in [the world of] Formation ... and higher world from [the world of] Creation and it is called handmaid [*'ammah*] ... The high soul that descended from you should not serve neither the son nor the daughter, because she is not subordinated to the *ZUN* [acronym for *Za'yir* – male, and for *Nuqbeth* – his female] but to the Father, and this is the reason she does not serve but the master. And the spirit, that is the aspect of the *Za'yir* ... who descended as a servant serving the son, who is depending on the *Za'yir*, but does not serve the daughter, because it is not subordinated to *Malkhut* ... and just as Metatron has a female in the [world of] Formation and [also] sometimes descends and copulates in the world of Making, also this servant if he has a legitimate wife he receives from his master also a Canaanite maidservant.<sup>289</sup>

Here five main topics are described as part of the same constellation of ideas: the *Za'yir*, the son, the servant, the divine name, and Metatron. They occur in the different discussions cited above from the later layers of the book of the *Zohar*. All are described as related to the world of formation, though the first four descend from the configuration of the *Za'yir* within the world of emanation. We may discern that the son and servant are the same entity, as both are represented by the Tetragrammaton and by Metatron. Metatron and the servant are also connected to the world, that of 'making', and we may assume that this is not the case with either the son or the *Za'yir*. Thus, we witness a clear case of morphonominalism, in which the terms son and *Za'yir* represent the morphic aspect while the Tetragrammaton represents the nominal one. In the line of the Safedian Kabbalah, and especially the statement of R. Menahem 'Azariah of Fano adduced above, we read in a text preserved in the early eighteenth-century R. Elijah ha-Kohen Itamari of Smyrna's widespread anthology of kabbalistic passages arranged alphabetically and entitled *Midrash Talpiyyot*:

*Ben* and '*Eved*: What we say in the *Rosh ha-Shanah* [prayer]: 'If as sons, if as servants etc.,' From the side of '*Eliyahu* which amounts

in gematria *Ben*, we say 'If as sons' and from the side of Enoch, that is called faithful servant we say 'if as servants' . . . 'Your graces' from the side of Elijah, and 'your mercies' from the side of Enoch, who is 'the servant of Abraham' in gematria Metatron, whose attribute is the attribute of grace . . . those two men you took and gave them two worlds, *Yetzirah* and '*Assiyah*.'<sup>290</sup>

Thus, the distinction between son and servant is less a matter of a stark ontological bifurcation in the supernal world, and more a description of two different modes of worship, in a manner found in several texts, for example, in a passage quoted above from Cordovero. Here, Metatron is no longer the son but a servant, while Elijah, both because of the gematria of *Ben* as seen above and because of the special position he holds in rabbinic thought, takes the place of the righteous Enoch and Metatron together.

I would like to point out the existence of a theory in Lurianic Kabbalah according to which *Ben* represents a higher presence found within the last *sefirah* of the highest configuration known in Lurianic Kabbalah, the so-called '*Adam Qadmon*'. According to Lurianism '*Adam Qadmon*' is the anthropomorphic structure that is situated between the infinite and the system of four worlds. Constituted too of ten divine powers, or *sefirot*, the last of them belonging to this configuration, *Malkhut*, contains the name *Ben*, which encompasses within himself the world of '*Atzilut*', the highest of the four worlds in the Lurianic system.<sup>291</sup> This vision is the most cosmic instance of understanding the son as a comprehensive structure, in addition to the theory of the *Za'yir* as the Son of God within the world of emanation, discussed above.

### 15. Sabbatai Tzevi, a Son of God and a Messiah

As seen above in the chapter on Abraham Abulafia, in the writings of this Kabbalist there is a clear nexus between his messianic attitude on the one hand, and his self-awareness and emphasis upon sonship, on the other. This seems to be the case also insofar as another messianic figure is concerned, the seventeenth-century Kabbalist Sabbatai Tzevi. Thus, in the lives of three of the most important messianic figures who emerged in Judaism: Jesus, Abraham Abulafia and Sabbatai Tzevi, the concept of sonship plays an obvious role in their self-perception. There can be no doubt that the two later Messiahs were acquainted with the sonship of Jesus and with some of the ways in which this figure has been understood.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, I assume that Sabbatai Tzevi was also acquainted with at least some of the kabbalistic material written by Abraham Abulafia, as he studied *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, an anonymous book in which several lengthy texts stemming from the ecstatic

Kabbalah are copied verbatim.<sup>293</sup> Perhaps he was also acquainted with some of the other material dealt with in the previous chapter, from studying manuscripts found in the Byzantine area. Thus, different as Sabbatai Messianism is from all the other prior messianic concepts, at least in principle it was aware of some of the theories of sonship related to earlier forms of Messianism.

In a passage printed in Tzevi's lifetime he was expressly described as the Son of God. So, for example, we read in John Evelyn's testimony about the Messiah's address to the people of Israel: 'The Only, and First-borne Son of God, Sabatai Sevi, the Messiah and Saviour of Israel, to all the people of Israel.'<sup>294</sup> According to Evelyn, the epistle was originally written by Tzevi in Hebrew, and translated for him into Italian, after which he translated it into English. Scholem also mentions an Armenian parallel to the epistle.<sup>295</sup> If we trust the specific formulation of the evidence, Tzevi's self-proclamation as the 'Only, and First-Borne Son of God', *L'unico figliolo, e primogenito d'dio*, has conspicuous Christological overtones, including an implicit incarnationalist overtone. I see no way to explain its affinity to the understanding of Jesus on merely phenomenological grounds, but rather propose to view this as an important case of the direct influence of Christian views of sonship on the self-perception of Tzevi. In discounting the reliability of this testimony or by underestimating its Christian and very plausible source, no account of Tzevi's self-awareness and its sources in Christianity – or an attempt to minimize this influence – can be satisfactorily completed, and the scholarly account may even be significantly distorted.

At the same time, as Avraham Elqayam has elaborated in much detail, in Nathan of Gaza's writings and in traditions cited in his name there are many theosophical descriptions of sons who sometimes refer to Sabbatai Tzevi himself.<sup>296</sup> Thus, the precious testimony of Evelyn is corroborated by additional sources. It is possible to distinguish in his writings between three types of son: one within the zone of the infinite, where it is related to an important entity called 'thoughtless light'; another within the sefirotic realm, where it stands, like in many theosophical writings, for the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*; and finally, one in the mundane world where Sabbatai Tzevi is conceived of as the reverberation of the higher sons. All three are related, sometimes existing in harmony, and at other times competing among themselves, at least insofar as the two lower sons are concerned, or competing with other sons like Sabbatai Tzevi and Nathan of Gaza (understood as Abel). So for example, the primordial act, *mif'al qadmon*, and the primordial thought, *mahashavah qedumah*, the first emanation emerging from the depth of the infinity, is called the firstborn son, in Aramaic *Bera' Bukhra'* – a Zoharic syntagm – while within the realm of the ten *sefirot*, the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, commonly referred as the 'God of Faith', is also called by the same name.

According to some sources, Sabbatai Tzevi himself attempted to ascend and take the place or rank of this theosophical power.<sup>297</sup> In fact, as a perusal of Nathan's writings demonstrates, Tzevi was sometimes identified with Cain, another firstborn son and a figure conceived here in rather positive terms in the context of the view that he was destined to repair the realm of evil.<sup>298</sup> It should be mentioned that the name of Sabbatai has been 'found' in the first word of the Hebrew Bible, *Bereshit*, whose consonants have been interpreted by Nathan of Gaza as referring to *Sabbatai R[fo]sh*, namely 'Sabbatai will be the head'.<sup>299</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, this word has been interpreted as dealing with the son by both Jewish and Christian Kabbalists.

Especially important for understanding this form of Sabbatean theosophy is the specific appropriation of the Lurianic emphasis on belief in the centrality of the two lower configurations, *Za'yir* and *Nuqbbeih*, namely the Lesser Face and His Female. Unlike Lurianism, in Sabbateanism there is a certain concentration on belief in *Ze'yir 'Anppin* alone, without mentioning the Female configuration, mentioned along with the *Za'yir* thousands of times in that literature, generally depicted as lower than the *Za'yir*, but sometimes as equal to the male counterpart. So, for example, the spiritual adventure of Tzevi has been depicted in one document as follows:

At the beginning, he had a faith in [the *sefirah* of] *Tiferet*, and the significance of faith [*'Emunah*] is sucking like from a nurse [*'Omen*], and *Tiferet* was his nurse. Afterwards he ascended and his nurse turns then to be '*Attika' Qaddisha*'.<sup>300</sup>

The passage is based upon a pun: faith, '*Emunah*', and nurse '*Omen*', stem from the same root and the Kabbalist established a relationship between the two meanings. The faith in the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* should be understood, in my opinion, as reflecting the configuration of *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, which is found in a relationship to the Ancient Holy One, described elsewhere as his father. I further assume that the aspect of son, related to both *Tiferet* and *Za'yir*, though an oblique connection in this case, should be addressed seriously in this context. As mentioned above, this *sefirah* was understood at times as representing a son, and Sabbatai Tzevi conceived himself, as seen above, to be a Son of God. Thus, I see no reason not to assume that at the beginning of his spiritual career, Tzevi believed in the sefirotic son, just as later he shifted to a belief in the even higher sefirotic father. The resort to the Hebrew term '*omen*', a male nurse, reflects a much earlier rabbinic understanding.<sup>301</sup> Though no doubt it is a male noun from the grammatical point of view, the Midrashic reference to Num. 11.12, where the concept of the suckling child is mentioned, in the context of the bosom of a male, is a view that is reminiscent of the discussions about the bosom where the son is

elevated in earlier Jewish literatures, surveyed in Chapter 1. In any case, the image used reflects a special type of intimacy related to the 'infantile' state of the mystic in comparison to the theosophical hypostases. However, while in the Bible the situation described is not a positive one, as it is part of Moses' rejection of responsibility for the people of Israel based on the fact that he is not the progenitor, in the Sabbatean text Sabbatai Tzevi understands himself as, or was understood by others as, the infant drawing directly from the divine realm. The above discussion can be cast in the following manner: Sabbatai, who believed that he is a son, believed first in the supernal son, a part of what I called double sonship, but he then substitutes the supernal son, himself becoming a hypostatic son.

In an important passage written by Nathan of Gaza, found in one of his famous epistles, he mentions that faith in Sabbatai Tzevi, accepted by the believers, will ensure the reception of 'the inheritance of the Lord'<sup>302</sup> or the mystery of the Jubilee Year, which will become manifest at this time, and the 'rest' [menuhah], the mystery of the manifestation of '*Attika' Qaddisha*', within the configuration of *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, in the year 1670.<sup>303</sup> Here, there is no ascent to the height of the heights, to the Ancient Holy One, but only to His manifestation within a lower configuration. As in the text of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid discussed above, Tzevi sees everything within the structure of the *Za'yir*. In terms of sonship, the father is seen solely by his presence within the structure of his son.

Two different aspects of the same event are explicated in this passage. Let me start with the most obvious one: in 1670, a high revelation will take place, when the highest divine hypostasis, '*Attika' Qaddisha*', will illuminate the lower configuration found in the intra-divine structure. This is a view found both in the Zoharic theosophy and in Lurianic Kabbalah, and connected at times with the glory of redemption.<sup>304</sup> This illumination or discovery of the highest countenance is related to another theory, that of the year of the next *Shemittah*, a term standing for a cyclical cosmic recurrence. According to Nathan of Gaza:

And in the seventh [year] *ben David* will come and in the seventh year is Sabbath, which is the king Sabbatai, and at that time the abovementioned rabbi, [namely Sabbatai Tzevi] will come from the river of *Sambatyon* together with his spouse, the daughter of M[oses], our master . . . and her name is Rebecca, and the wife that he has now will become a servantmaiden and the wife he will take will be a *Matronita*' and the servantmaiden will be a *Matronita*' . . . and in order to understand it it is [necessary] a mouth to mouth [disclosure].<sup>305</sup>

This passage is a good example of the linguistic strategy used by the author. Three different words, Sabbat, Shabbatai and Sambatyon, though originally stemming from the same Hebrew root, came to mean, in the subsequent development of Judaism, different things, but they are connected here again to each other. Thus some form of coherence that is essentially linguistic had emerged. No doubt, this enigmatic passage is understood as pointing to a secret, but it is hard to guess what exactly is hinted at in this apocalypse. It deals no doubt with Tzevi's future marriage, with a distinguished lady, who is also described immediately afterwards as *Matronita*, a matron. I wonder to what extent this term, quite widespread in theosophical Kabbalah, is referring to a divine feminine power, some parallel of the *Shehkinah*, and thus to a form of hierogamos between her and Tzevi.

As seen above, Tzevi has been described as ascending into the sefirotic realm. In that passage, like in the quotation under scrutiny here, the issue of the transformation of a lower entity into a higher entity is involved. This is why I suggest understanding this passage on grounds of the parallelism between the Hebrew phrases *Ben David* and *Bat Moshe Rabbenu*. In both cases a male and a female person are described as children of major Jewish figures. The syntagm *Bat Moshe Rabbenu* is totally unknown in the Jewish tradition, and it seems to be the pure invention of the Sabbatean author. Though in numerous Hebrew sources the expression *Ben David* is a fixed phrase for the Messiah, I propose to read it here as referring specifically to the sonship of Tzevi, namely that he is designated as a son of a supernal power named David, just as his future [?] wife Rivka [Rebecca] – in fact another name for his present third wife Sarah – is a daughter of Moses. Redemption culminates, therefore, in the marriage of the son-figure of Sabbatai Tzevi with a special feminine figure. We have an interesting case of a combination of a theosophical terminology [*Matronita*] with a mythical understanding of the activity of Tzevi.

Let me finish the discussion of this point with a passage in which a Sabbatean writing, the so-called 'Yemenite apocalypse', an early Sabbatean text in which elements found in Abulafia's hypostatic sonship: Metatron, Israel and the Agent Intellect, are combined with the theme of righteousness, related to Enoch in many other sources:

This Psalm refers to the advent of the redeemer and the gathering of Israel and the issue of [the war of] God and Magog, and its destruction, since *Yisra'el* is a special entity in the [lower] world just as the Agent Intellect is on high, and *Yisra'el* is numerically identical to *Sekhel ha-Po'el*, [Agent Intellect] and to *ShTzM HNKhL*<sup>306</sup> that will be in their ascent, and [then] the *illuminati* will brighten<sup>307</sup> namely the Righteous, like the splendor of the

celestial firmament, which is the palace of Metatron, which is the Agent Intellect.<sup>308</sup>

The association of several specific concepts like Metatron, the Agent Intellect, Israel, the *illuminati*, and the Messiah, indubitably reflects the impact of Abulafia's Kabbalah as it has been discussed in the previous chapter. Unlike the more universalistic approach of the ecstatic Kabbalist, whose view assumes some form of intellectual *Venus Israel*, the Sabbatean author is also concerned with the national corporate personality. Much less Abulafian in this context however is the ideal of righteousness. Indeed in Sabbateanism, righteousness is sometimes attributed to the Messiah Sabbatai, especially because the biblical phrase *Tzevi le-tzaddiq*, the plain meaning of which is 'the loveliness of the righteous', found in Isa. 24.16, was understood as pointing to the family name Tzevi as righteous. Last but not least, Tzevi has been related several times to the plene spelling of the name *Shadday*, to Metatron, and to the phrase the 'name is within him'.<sup>309</sup> These designations are plausibly related to a vision of him as a divinized being, a view especially embraced in the traditions of another important Sabbatean thinker, Shmuel Primo.<sup>310</sup> Such linguistic games are part of a more substantial phenomenon, which amounts to a personalization of the son. While in all the above treatments in this chapter, the sefirotic son is not identified with a specific human being – the closest example is the interpretive reading of the name of a dead person, Hanina' ben Dosa', in the passage from *Sefer ha-Qanah* and from Cordovero's school – it is now a living person who is called both the name of God and His son. Interestingly enough in the case of Tzevi, like in that of Jesus, sonship did not precede a strong form of sexualization, in contrast to the many other examples adduced above from the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah.

In short, various forms of sonship can be discerned in statements attributed directly to Tzevi and to his prophet, Nathan. They reflect the impact of a variety of conceptual sources, including Christian lateral impact, Zoharic views, and themes that reflect the possible impact of ecstatic Kabbalah. In a way, we may discern in Nathan's writings an interpretation of the status of Tzevi within the framework of broader theosophies, especially the Lurianic one, just as Jesus has been interpreted in the framework of Hellenistic theology. Himself deriding of Lurianic Kabbalah, Tzevi's image fell prey to the metaphysical and exegetical tendencies of his most important follower, who turned to this elaborated theosophy in order to make sense of the more personalistic self-understanding of the Messiah, and his religious vicissitudes. However, substantially different from the views of these two main protagonists of the Sabbatean drama are the views

of the third major thinker in the Sabbatean camp, Abraham Miguel Cardozo.

### 16. Abraham Miguel Cardozo and theosophical sonship

Jews were quite rarely great theologians. The first two classical books of Jewish religion, the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, are not theological books in any regular sense of this word. We can hardly define a loose unified theology in these books, even less so a systematic or unified theology. Those who attempted to move in this direction in a significant manner, thinkers like Philo and Maimonides, were either marginalized by rabbinic authorities (as was the case with the former), or sharply disputed as was the case with the latter. The complexity of the preceding discussions only demonstrates the extent to which the material that we are dealing with is rather fragmentary, associative and non-systematic. Indeed, as a biblical scholar has recently pointed out:

Theology has never been a major feature of Jewish religion. The highly theoretical, philosophical constructions that constitute theology are very much at home in Christian thinking, whereas Jewish movements have tended to eschew such speculative constructions in favor of halakhic and textualist procedures. There are, of course, exceptions to these generalizations (e.g. the Kabbalah tends to be mystical, speculative, and comprehensive) but generally the nature of the theological in Judaism is different from that in Christianity.<sup>311</sup>

Nevertheless, there is an interesting propensity among Jews who come from the *converso* background to build up more systematic structures, mainly because of the strong impact of Christian thought on them, Barukh Spinoza being the most outstanding example. A second chief example is found in the writings of two brothers of *converso* extraction: R. Isaac and R. Abraham Miguel Cardozo, each representative of a different branch of Judaism: the former the more philosophical one, the latter the kabbalistic one.

Placed among the more original minds in the Sabbatean camp, Abraham Miguel Cardozo occupies a special place due to his independent religious approach.<sup>312</sup> Unlike Tzevi whose Messianism gravitated around his special experiences of the divine, or Nathan of Gaza whose Kabbalah represents, among other things, an attempt to transfer the relationship between the persona of Tzevi and his own paradigm within the theosophical world,<sup>313</sup> Cardozo is much more a theologian who operates in a domain in which his knowledge of Christianity and his kabbalistic-Sabbatean faith overlap. A *converso* who returned to Judaism and later found

his way to Sabbateanism, his thought often reflects his broad acquaintance with Christian theology through its history along with some aspects of Renaissance thought, as part of an attempt to clarify the 'true' faith by distinguishing it from the 'mistaken' Christian one.

Like Nathan of Gaza, Cardozo also indulges, *mutatis mutandis*, in many speculations regarding the highest aspects of the divinity, some of them higher than the regular system of ten *sefirot*. The starting point of one of his most important discussions comparing kabbalistic and Christian views of trinity commences with the assumption that there is a *Causa Prima*, which is totally unknown, sometimes called the unknown divinity, and then a primordial light, 'Or Qadmon, which intelligizes that cause and by doing so emanates two further entities: the primordial thought and the primordial wisdom.<sup>314</sup> Cardozo sharply distinguishes between the *Causa Prima* and all the other beings that emerge later on, though he assumes that the former participates together with the primordial light in lower processes.<sup>315</sup> Following a distinct philosophical approach, the Sabbatean thinker assumes that from a 'simple' entity, another simple entity emerges.<sup>316</sup> Below it lays the primordial light, primordial thought and primordial wisdom, which constitute a unity as none of the three have a temporal beginning nor pre-exist the others. This tri-unity is compared to the much earlier triplet of supernal lights known as *Tzahtzahot*, namely white supernal entities, known from a certain school of mid-thirteenth-century Kabbalah.<sup>317</sup> Thus Cardozo describes a transcendental cause, which is in no way part of the Trinity. This cause cannot be understood, has no will, nor is it an intellect. Adopting such a negative theological position, Cardozo is critical of the Christian views of Trinity, in which the Father and the Son are understood as equal and co-substantial.<sup>318</sup> His *Causa Prima* has, therefore, nothing to do with the father – whom Christians identify with the transcendental divinity – nor is the son the wisdom as in the common view of Trinity, since the *Causa Prima* does not intelligize itself, in contrast to what Cardozo claims Christians believe.<sup>319</sup> In fact, the Sabbatean thinker distinguishes between the Roman – *ha-Romiim* – namely Catholic views of the Trinity, and the Orthodox-Eastern one, *ha-Yevaniim*. The former surmise that there are three persons, including the second and the Son, that emerge from the first and the Holy Spirit, which means that there are in fact four entities. The latter assume that both the Son and the Holy Spirit emerge equally from the Father. Cardozo argues that the ancient Jewish sages, namely the early Rabbis, were well aware of the different types of Christologies, and that they formulated their theology in a manner that counteracts them.<sup>320</sup>

Cardozo claims that since his youth he had spoken with Christian sages who attempted to convince him to believe in the Trinity on the basis of kabbalistic faith in another triunity: the First Cause, the Holy One, blessed

be He, and the *Shekhinah* – also conceived by Kabbalists as the Holy Spirit, corresponding to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively.<sup>321</sup> Elsewhere he describes this kabbalistic triunity as '*Attiqa' Qaddisha*', the King and the *Matronita*'.<sup>322</sup> The innovation characteristic of Cardozo's thought is, as pointed out by Yehuda Liebes, the emphasis he places on the superiority of the second of the elements found in this triunity: the King, who is identical with *Ze'yr 'Anppin*, and with the divine son.<sup>323</sup> Christian theologians drew upon the kabbalistic view that the Holy One, blessed be He, who is the Creator, is called Son, on the basis of the verse from Proverbs: 'A wise son delights his father.'

According to Cardozo, the Christian theologians began to investigate rabbinic theology after the publication of the *Zohar* in 1558 in Italy, in order to prove that the faith of the ancient Jews was a triunian one, and that the Jews were ignorant enough not to remember their ancient theology. No doubt we have here a reference to the theory of *prisca theologia*, an influential approach to religious knowledge we shall discuss in the following chapter. Arguing that they had forgotten their true faith, it was thought that the Jews were living in exile without knowing the God of truth.<sup>324</sup> Accordingly, even Kabbalah as understood by Jews is to be recognized, in Cardozo's view, as an erroneous tradition. The verbal controversies Cardozo had with Christians are presented as the major reason why he engaged in the discussion of the kabbalistic triunity, as an answer to both Catholic and Orthodox views.<sup>325</sup> However, it should be pointed out that though this claim is true, Cardozo also attacked various Sabbatean visions of apotheosis of the Messiah, namely of Tzevi, a view that assumed that this figure was or eventually became a divinity.<sup>326</sup> No doubt such an opinion could be related to Tzevi's awareness of himself as the only Son of God, as shown above. Again, Cardozo fought against a Christian interpretation of Messianism. Indeed, in another interesting discussion to this effect, he wrote as follows:

Behold I find it appropriate to remove you from the ugly beliefs that emerged in our time, to the effect that the Messiah will become God, like the faith of the Christians, and interpret this issue well. From what they have seen that the *Ze'yr 'Anppin* of [the world] of Emanation is [both] a man and God, he is '*Adam* and *Havayah*, [the Tetragrammaton] because the Great Name has clothed itself within his soul, namely in the [*sefirah* of] *Da'at* [knowledge], is the Tetragrammaton as an aspect of the intellectual soul by means of which *Ze'yr 'Anppin* become a speaking spirit, similar to the first Man, who is Adam of [the world of] *Beri'yah* . . . so also Adam of [the world of] Emanation because of the Supreme Name, is the intellectual soul, become similar to God, like the

Name itself, and the Name itself become and was called Adam, like the *Za'yr* himself . . . because of the light of the supreme name the soul of *Ze'yr 'Anppin* become a God united with the name, and the name become in the *Da'at*, a speaking soul.<sup>327</sup>

The triunity found in this passage consists in the identification of the divine name, the *Ze'yr 'Anppin*, and Adam. Cardozo presents this view as close to Christianity, a religion that assumes that Jesus is both man and God. The entrance of the divine name within the morphic entity, described as *Ze'yr*, and Adam's position within the divine world is an interesting example of what we previously called morphonominalism: a divine name not only designates an anthropomorphical structure, but it is found within it or was transformed in it, in a manner reminiscent of the presence of the divine name within the angel that guides the Israelites according to Exodus. Following on immediately he compares this theosophical theory to Christianity: 'So indeed the Christians believed that the Son, who is a God, was united with the soul of Jesus<sup>328</sup> and he became [both] man [in Hebrew '*Adam*] and God.'<sup>329</sup> Cardozo's main concern was a theory formulated by another Sabbatean author very close to Tzevi, Shmuel Primo, who considered Tzevi to be a divinity (and this may well be Tzevi's view of himself in some cases), and Cardozo made efforts to counteract this.<sup>330</sup>

More specifically Cardozo engages a theory stemming from Primo's entourage according to which the Messiah will receive the spiritual power: *Yehidah de-'Atzilut*, the unique soul stemming from the world of emanation, a supremely high soul from the loftiest world in the emanated theosophical system, and by the dint of this power he will be united with the divinity. Only very few individuals, according to most Kabbalists, attained this spiritual capacity. Those sources adduce, according to Cardozo, a proof-text from the Rabbis using the verse from Isaiah:

'Behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, elevated to the heights.'<sup>331</sup> 'Exalted' – more than Abraham; 'Lifted up' – more than Moses: 'And elevated' – more than the servant angels.<sup>332</sup> This is vanity and stupidity and also the Christians bring as a proof for their faith this [biblical] passage.<sup>333</sup> But see that Adam the first, who was the *Yehidah de-'Atzilut*<sup>334</sup>, and he was the son of the supreme great name, higher than Abraham and Moses and all the seraphins and he is the supernal and splendid creature among the creatures, because servant angels come to prostrate themselves before him and say to him 'Holy' and accept him as God,<sup>335</sup> was [nevertheless] not a God, because about him it was said: 'thou hast made him a little lower than 'Elohim.'<sup>336</sup> Therefore, according to all the interpretations, the Messiah will

be a man but not a God, even if he will be greater than Adam. If the intention of the Rabbis would be that he is a God they would not compare him to Abraham, Moses and the angels, to say that he is higher than them, because no one compares between a God and a creature, since there is no comparison between them.<sup>337</sup>

Therefore, the refutation of Christian theology that envisions the Messiah as Godhead serves not only an inter-religious fight but also a sharp inner Sabbatean dispute about the nature of the central figure in this messianic movement.<sup>338</sup> Whether Christianity has impacted the position of those Sabbatean figures criticized by Cardozo is still a question that requires detailed analysis, but Cardozo repeatedly and explicitly points to such an affinity. Interestingly enough, we have here again an explicit statement about Adam as the Son of God, a view that was already explicit in the influential writings of R. Yehudah ha-Levi and in R. Isaiah Horowitz, and we may assume that according to Cardozo this may also be applied to the Messiah, without assuming that such a statement necessarily implies a divinization of the Messiah. In any case, if other Sabbatean thinkers personalized the notion of the son as Messiah while divinizing him, Cardozo made all the exegetical efforts to de-divinize this person. Nevertheless, there is a question that I cannot answer: why is Adam referred to here as a human entity, high as he may be, while in the passage we adduced before the last Adam is described in an explicit statement as synonymous to *Ze'vir 'Anppin*, namely a divine being?

Before addressing the theological quandaries, Cardozo develops a theory of fatherhood and divine sonship of his own. He distinguishes between the corporeal elements in man and his spiritual qualities. The former consist in the body, and the vegetable, animal and speaking qualities, while the latter consist in the higher soul, the spiritual *Neshamah*, and the intellect that emanates from it. As to the former aspects, they are identical in the son to as in the father – as is the case of animals where the essence of the father is identical to that of the son<sup>339</sup> – while in the case of the latter, the genetic father has nothing to contribute since they emanate from the Holy One, blessed be He, and the *Shekhinah*, who are conceived of as the father and mother of the soul.<sup>340</sup> The author insists that while there is an essential identity insofar as the body is conceived, this identity would be heretical if applied to the spiritual elements in man. According to his novel theosophy, following some threads in earlier kabbalistic theosophies, there is an essential difference between the *sefirot* that serve as vessels or instruments of divine action on the one hand, and the divine power on the other, which is a form of divine essence dwelling, in a manner reminiscent of the spirit, within the human body understood as a vessel.

The Sabbatean theologian understands the intellect as the presence of the divinity within the *sefirot*. This element is called the Tetragrammaton, the Holy and sublime Son, who is also described as the creator.<sup>341</sup> The supernal Father and Mother of that spiritual son are the *sefirot* of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, or the configurations 'Abba' and 'Imma' respectively.<sup>342</sup> It is possible to assume, says Cardozo, that the more spiritual aspect of the theosophic son may stem from the First Cause and thus may be called the son of the First Cause, just as man is called, because of his soul, the son of the Holy One, though this is not a sonship like the corporeal one. Father and son are conceived of as metaphorical expressions pointing to types of relationship between cause and effect.<sup>343</sup> In Cardozo's vision of the nature of the three divine elements, no identity and union between them is allowed. Unlike the triunity in orthodox Christianity, which implies equality between the three hypostases, according to the Sabbatean thinker such an identity negates the importance of worship insofar as the relationship between two lower powers is concerned.<sup>344</sup> According to this Sabbatean thinker, a Christian theologian would conceive of the theurgical operations, like the induction of the union of the Holy One with the *Shekhinah*, as an anathema in theological terms.<sup>345</sup>

Interestingly, as a student of Christian theology in his youth Cardozo was acquainted not only with what happened in his lifetime in Christian thought, as we can discern from his reference to the Renaissance concern with Hermeticism among Christians,<sup>346</sup> but also with ancient theologies concerning the status of Jesus, which became heretical, and which he enumerates one by one. He mentions in an explicit manner several Christian theories of sonship that Scholem has identified as Subordinationism, Macedonianism and Eunomianism.<sup>347</sup> Elsewhere in his writings Cardozo mentions Arianism explicitly too.<sup>348</sup>

What is the contribution of this thinker to the view of theosophical sonship in Jewish thought? According to one of his treatises it is the presence of a soul within the *sefirot*, which he conceives as the focus of worship, which is his seminal theological 'rediscovery'. Though there were several Kabbalists who had already described the presence of the divine essence within the sefirotic system, like R. Asher ben David,<sup>349</sup> and after him other eminent Kabbalists such as R. Menahem Recanati and much later R. Moses Cordovero,<sup>350</sup> and even R. Isaac Luria, who developed the theosophical system more than anyone preceding him in the history of Kabbalah, these Kabbalists did not disclose or were not aware of – according to Cardozo's historiography of theosophy – the centrality of the divine presence within the *sefirot* as vessels, as constituting what he calls 'the God of Israel'. This theosophical manifestation quintessential for both creation and worship is a central divine power in Cardozo's thought. However, let me emphasize that

this presence is described, though only metaphorically, as son, as we have seen above. Therefore in one way or another, despite the theological divergences between the views of Cardozo and those of Christianity in terms of the nature of and affinities between the three divine powers, one point is nevertheless shared in the two cases: the divine power known as the son is the recipient of worship.<sup>351</sup>

However, in contrast to the strong personalistic structure of most Christologies (exceptions being the relatively few cosmic visions of Christ), Cardozo is less interested in a personalistic concept of sonship, as described in the *Zohar* or in Lurianic understandings of the *Ze'vir 'Anppin* or in other Sabbatean understandings of the son, though he uses these terms explicitly, but rather he adopts a more diffuse understanding of the dwelling of the divine essence within the sefirotic system functioning as a soul, which is especially operating within the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*.<sup>352</sup> This emphasis on the concept of son as a form of dwelling for the higher divine power within a lower form is paralleled by Cardozo's emphasis on the *Shekhinah* as the omnipresent divine power in the lower world.<sup>353</sup> This vision of both the son and the daughter, of the two countenances as presences of the highest powers within lower ones, also includes a tendency to depersonalize these divine entities, which again is an interesting departure from the main lines of Christian understanding of the Son and lies closer to the cosmic visions of some of the figures we are going to discuss in the next chapter, as well as of Jesus in Origen, in some Christian thinkers in the third and fifth centuries and in Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>354</sup> Though the morphonominal mediator is still evident, as the affinity between son and the Tetragrammaton is maintained in an explicit manner, the role played by the anthropomorphic element has been strongly diminished. I would say that we have here two instances of embodiment of higher spiritual entities within lower ones. Needless to say, this depersonalization implies also a process of desexualization concerning both the divine son and daughter. It should nevertheless be pointed out that one of the main claims in his writings is that the Jews, under the impact of philosophers, have worshipped the First Cause since the early Middle Ages. This is indeed a depersonalized entity, disregarding the more personal God of Israel, *Tiferet* or *Za'vir*. In this context he specifically criticizes Maimonides, whom he otherwise admires greatly. It seems that this attack also has something to do with the critiques he addresses elsewhere to the deistic theories of God, some of them described as contemporary Jews.

Last but not least, Cardozo believed that his special type of theosophy constituted a hidden view to be revealed only at the time of redemption, which he expected to take place in his lifetime, in the year 1674.<sup>355</sup> This nexus between the final religious revelation on the one hand, and the realization of eschatological hopes on the other hand, is certainly not new in

Jewish mysticism although the specifics of the newly 'revealed' theological system are quite characteristic of Cardozo's special background: he produced and propagated an innovative blend of Lurianic, Christian and Sabbatean themes. Writing in an Ottoman environment, Cardozo was less inhibited by Christian censorship and, at the same time, less inclined to adopt material from Christian sources than the Jewish Renaissance authors who we will consider in the following chapter. Interestingly enough, though the revelation of the theology that deals with the son is related to eschatology, the son himself is not depicted in eschatological or apocalyptic terms. At least in the case of Cardozo, a thinker well acquainted with the different theologies found in the history of Christian thought, we may speak of a de-eschatologization of the function of the hypostatic son. We shall see a similar tendency among the Jewish thinkers of the Renaissance in the next chapter. In any case, let me draw attention to a common denominator between *Sefer ha-Meshiv* and Cardozo: both Kabbalists were acquainted with Christian theology more than many of the other Kabbalists mentioned above – R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, who will be dealt with in the next chapter, aside – but at the same time they nevertheless developed anti-Christian theological approaches.

### 17. Some comparative remarks

First, let me first draw attention to the diversity of the views found in the quotations cited in this chapter. Though they all belong to the main kabbalistic paradigm, the theosophical-theurgical one, their specific interpretations of the nature of a divine son reveal significant systemic differences. In what may be conceived of as a single school or movement, different types of sonship are competing between themselves. However, despite the relative openness to divergence, it is hard to find in the interpretations above either the impact of or an opposition to the Abulafian understandings of sonship. His intellectualistic proclivities, interpreting Metatron as the Agent Intellect, generally left a rather substantial heritage in the main schools of Kabbalah, as in the case of the discussions of the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, who copied extensively from Abulafia's two books, possibly in R. Meir ibn Gabbai<sup>356</sup> in the Sabbatean Yemenite apocalypse, and more certainly in the nineteenth-century R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov's various kabbalistic writings. However, only rarely did those Kabbalists also adopt Abulafia's distinct theory of sonship. Some of the kabbalistic systems described above were concerned more with theurgy and the theurgical son, while others put a greater accent on symbols related to the theosophic system and mentioned theosophical sons. Nevertheless, in

none of these systems have either of these two conceptual pillars of the theosophical-theurgical systems been excluded.

It should be pointed out that unlike Abulafia's emphasis on intellectual sonship, a central concept that reflects a more 'universal', though quite elitist understanding of Kabbalah that marginalized most of the particularistic aspects of rabbinic Judaism and is, at the same time, also reminiscent of Philo's view on this topic, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah in all its various formulations is much more particularistic. It deals much more with the themes of corporate personality and election in the past and in the present, as strongly associated with the concept of election of the people of Israel, and much less with their intellectual capacities. In a way, it is closer to the static form of sonship as a primordial datum, though ritual action is very important in its impact on the supernal world. The essence of the people of Israel – though much less the name 'Israel' as a linguistic unit that played a greater role in Abulafia's writings<sup>357</sup> – is strongly connected to the concept of hypostatic son in the passages scrutinized above in this chapter, either designated as *Tiferet* or as *Ze'yir 'Anppin* – theosophy – and the religious deeds of Israel are of utmost importance for the intra-divine processes – theurgy. Though a very dynamic figure in himself, the supernal son nevertheless belongs to what is called static sonship, since the quality of sonship is a given. The theurgical events, related to the performance of the commandments as intended to sexually unify *Tiferet*, the Son, or *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, with the female divine potency, is conceived of as a ritual which presupposes the central place of the divine son and the human son, not only in the economy of kabbalistic theosophy but also in kabbalistic theurgy. Such a ritual is totally absent in the understanding of the son in ecstatic Kabbalah. Concerned more with the souls of the Jews as God's sons, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists were much less interested in the role of the intellect – human or metaphysical – as a Son of God, in the way ecstatic Kabbalists were. In these cases, as in many other central issues, it is easy to distinguish between the drastic divergences in the approach of Kabbalists who belong to the two different schools.<sup>358</sup> However, what nevertheless unifies these two diverging kabbalistic views is the belief that performances, be they rituals or mystical techniques, much more than faith, have something to do with attaining sonship: either the process of becoming an actualized intellect by resorting to a mystical technique, as in Abulafia, or by performing commandments, in the various kinds of Kabbalah described in this chapter, are intimately related to sonship.

It should also be pointed out that the texts analyzed above are much more related to the *morphē* of the son, namely his external manifestation, rather than to the *eidos*, the internal intellectual form, as is the case in Abraham Abulafia. The attribution of forms described in graphic ways in the

supernal world is a topic that recurs in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah: the notion of the two countenances or heads and the many details concerning the skull, brains, the eyes, eyelids, the nose, and the hairs of these anthropomorphic entities in the Zoharic theosophy, and their important recurrences in Lurianic Kabbalah being the most important examples. Moreover, as in the book of *Bahir*, and in fact in a much greater number of Kabbalists, there are many 'sons' on high, in many cases six or seven lower *sefirot*,<sup>359</sup> unlike the single cosmic son in Abulafia and his followers, the cosmic Agent Intellect. Also the wide recurrence of the term *Binyan*, building, to refer to the structure of the seven lower *sefirot*, borne out of the supernal mother, the *sefirah* of *Binah*, reflects a propensity for the *morphē* to representing sonship, rather than the *eidos*, as is the case in ecstatic Kabbalah. This does not mean that this etymology is totally absent in Abulafia, where it stands for the actualization of the intellect as something lasting, but it certainly does not refer to the seven divine attributes. In any case, his vision of the supernal world is not constituted by an architectural structure, as is the case according to theosophical Kabbalah.<sup>360</sup>

In other words, while in the case of the Jewish philosophers and subsequently Abulafia and his school, an intellectual entity, whose gender is not important, rules over the forms generated and corrupted in the sublunar realm, in the case of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists the mundane world is ruled by a strongly sexually qualified feminine entity, defined less in intellectual terms, and more by her double affinity to the higher sefirotic world, especially as a daughter to her counterpart, understood in many cases as a son, and in the lower world as some sort of queen. The complexity that is characteristic of the theosophical-theurgical system, especially its complicated inner dynamics, requires the lower sons to hold an attitude toward the governing entities that is dramatically different to what we have seen in the ecstatic forms of Kabbalah. The lower son in the former types of Kabbalah is essentially envisioned as a righteous person who focuses his worship on the lower couple, in order to unify them. Sometimes, especially in Lurianic Kabbalah, this aim is fulfilled by the ascent of the souls of the 'lower sons' to their divine parents, in order to exercise their impact on them, acting as 'feminine waters', or triggers for the higher sexual union. Nothing similar is found in Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah, or in the writings of his direct disciples, where the main transformation takes place within the human consciousness. While in most of the systems of Kabbalah surveyed in this chapter the importance of the differentiated supernal structure is paramount, it is difficult to find something like that in the more homogenous supernal realm inspired by Neo-Aristotelian philosophy. Neither the strongly anthropomorphic imagery found in the Zoharic theosophy, nor its combination with a cyclical rhythm of growth and decay

in Lurianism, nor the talismanic approach of Cordovero, are starkly different from the more static approach to the hypostatic son in ecstatic Kabbalah.

To return to a remark at the beginning of this chapter: the theosophical son, commonly identified as the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, or *Ze'vir 'Anpin*, is part of different axes: the sexual axis, in his affinity to the daughter, *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah*; the paternal and maternal axes, in his relationship to mother and father (or the *sefirot Hokhmah* and *Binah*), separately or together (his filial status is part of the six or seven lower *sefirot* seen as sons); and finally, the relationship between the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* and the non-sefirotic realm, as part of the double sonship, namely in the affinity between the *sefirot* and the souls of the Jews as sons.<sup>361</sup> Not all those axes received, to be sure, the same status in the different theosophical kabbalistic systems, neither do they occur together in all those systems. Nevertheless, many of these systems reflect more than one single theosophical model. The propensity toward elaborating upon intra-divine relations in the vast theosophical literatures differs from the main tendency of ecstatic Kabbalah toward simplification (probably stemming from Neo-Platonic sources), where the affinity between the hypostatic son and intellect of man as a potential son does not depend upon the complexity of the divine sphere. In a way, the participation of God in the process of procreation, as described in rabbinic literature, finds its elaborations in the theosophical Kabbalah, where the act of conception is understood as consisting in the cooperation of father, mother and God, each contributing a certain share to the foetus.<sup>362</sup> In a way, the rabbinic assumption of such cooperation transforms all the Jews, and perhaps all the humans as sons or daughters of God, by a sort of substantial contribution to the foetus. However, it is hard to find any explicit interpretation of this rabbinic view in Abulafia's writings.<sup>363</sup>

An important aspect of the sexualized son is seen in the reproductive role he plays in one of these axes, which describes the impact of the intra-divine processes on the extra-divine realm. Reproduction, which in most of the kabbalistic systems surveyed above also means the production of souls, which may initially originate in the supernal mother, is generated by the hypostatic son, and represents one of the most important impacts on the extra-divine world, according to the logic of most of the theosophical systems.<sup>364</sup> A similar reproductive aspect is also found in ecstatic Kabbalah, but there it is not the soul that is generated by the supernal realm but the human intellect, and the Agent Intellect is not only the Son of God but, implicitly, also the father of the human actualized intellect. The human son should also reproduce himself, but this is done much more by generating spiritual students, than by means of producing genetic sons.<sup>365</sup> While the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists are concerned with actualizing sonship by

deeds done by the body, namely by the performance of the commandments, the ecstatic Kabbalists are concerned more with inner deeds done by the mind. In both cases, the different logics of the divine structure include not only moments or layers of transcendence and ideals of perfection, but also theories of immanence and forms of intervention in the lower world. Sonship, especially the double form, is one of the forms of the extension of the divine within this world.<sup>366</sup> However, while for ecstatic Kabbalah sonship is acquired by an inner development, which culminates in the rise of the intellect in a later stage of development, in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah we may speak more about a static and congenital type of sonship, which is the *sine qua non* condition for the possibility of theurgical operations. Only a divine soul, that is a presence of the divine within this world, will be able to exert influence on the divine realm by its performance of ritual.

Last but not least; unlike the centrality the worship of the divine Son enjoyed in most forms of Christianity, and unlike the rich iconic representations that are focused so dramatically on the One and Unique Son, much more so than on any other part of the Trinity, the kabbalistic theories surveyed in this chapter gravitate around the Son as one part of a much more complex theosophical system, sometimes understood as an entire divine family, but in many cases as part of the entire sefirotic realm. Though in Christianity we also see that the Son is conceived, from the theological point of view, to be an integral part of a broader structure, the Trinity, representations of the Son alone are nevertheless quite widespread; we do not see one member of the sefirotic system represented in this way, alone. Though there are some 150 commentaries on the ten *sefirot* as a whole system, I do not know of one single kabbalistic treatise dealing with the *sefirah* that represents the divine son alone, a central one no doubt in the theosophical system as we have seen above, or for our purpose here, with any other single *sefirah*.<sup>367</sup> According to a more general principle recurrent in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, any special attention paid to a single divine power, without being aware of its being part of the more comprehensive system, is conceived of as a cutting of the plants, in Hebrew *qitzutz bi-netiy'ot*, the capital sin in those kabbalistic systems, and the transgression against which Kabbalists warn more than any other sin.<sup>368</sup> Since the main religious aim of these forms of Kabbalah is to cause union between the male and female potencies – the Son representing sometimes the former – any separation and fixation of attention on the Son alone is conceived of as sinful. The relationship between the theosophical son and other entities within the divine realm may be filial, facial, or sexual, but it should be seen as part of a correlational situation, which takes into consideration not only the members of the divine family as it has been

described above, but also the other sefirotic powers, and even the impact of the entire theosophical system on the lower worlds, and that of the Jews or, according to other versions, the Kabbalists, on the supernal realm. At least in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah the hypostatic son is not a solitary figure but participates in a variety of simultaneous processes that take place in both the supernal and the lower worlds. In these kabbalistic schools, the hypostatic son is much more a theophoric mediator within the theosophical world than between the theosophical world and the lower world.

Let me mention here the fact that in the next stage of development in Sabbateanism, the eighteenth-century sect of Frankism, sonship does not play a significant role, though the role played by the daughter is extraordinary prominent. Eva, the daughter of Jacob Frank, the founder of this sect, whose members converted to Christianity, was conceived of as an eminent figure: in addition to the incestuous relationship she had with her father Jacob, she was described by him as some form of messianic figure, and an impersonation of the *Shekhinah*.<sup>369</sup> No doubt the kabbalistic traditions concerning the union between Jacob, as *Tiferet* and as the divine son, and the last *sefirah*, especially the Zoharic ones, contributed much to a personal understanding of the elevation of both father and daughter to the unparalleled status of semi-divine powers. It seems that for the first time the central role of the divine son has been mitigated in favor of that of a daughter.

## Notes

- 1 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 156–99; Mopsik, *Les grands textes*, passim; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Mystical-Theurgical Dimensions of Prayer in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*', in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, vol. 3 (1988), pp. 41–80; and more recently Lorberbaum, *Image of God* and Jonathan Garb, 'Power, Ritual, and Myth – a Comparative Methodological Proposal', in eds, Ithamar Gruenwald & Moshe Idel, *Myths in Judaism, History, Thought, Literature* (The Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 2004), pp. 53–71 (Hebrew), and his *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2004) (Hebrew).
- 2 See e.g. Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 284–5 and Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 40, 122, 124. Compare already to the view found in Valentinian Gnosticism that the divine name represents the pleroma. Cf. Jacques-É. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité* (Leiden, Brill, 1972), p. 178. For the use of what I call linguistic iconism in order to represent anthropomorphically the ten *sefirot* by a special arrangement of the letters of the Tetragrammaton see R. Naftali ben Jacob Bacharach, *Sefer 'Emeq ha-Melekh*, and then in Leibniz, cf. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, p. 145. This is a special form of morphonominalism. More recently this anthropomorphic representation by means of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton recurs in some paintings.

- 3 The emphasis on unity within diversity in the realm of the *sefirot* as expressed terminologically in this passage is especially characteristic of R. Isaac the Blind's writings. See Idel, 'The Interpretations of the Secret of Incest', p. 104.
- 4 The anonymous *Commentary on Ten Sefirot*, MS. Varsau 204, fol. 175b and MS. Paris BN 859, fol. 83a. I hope to publish this anonymous commentary in a future study. For the view of a supernal tetrad or quaternity, which constitutes a double family structure, see Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Avon Books, New York, 1978), pp. 121–52; Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, p. 11. For some of the numerous kabbalistic texts where the four members of the divine family are mentioned explicitly and together see R. Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Me'irat 'Einayyim*, ed. Amos Goldreich (Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 157–8. See also in *Midrash Ruth ha-Ne'elam*, fol. 75a; *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 219a, vol. 3, fols 10b, 34a; 'Iddra Zuta', vol. 3, fol. 290ab; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 341–2; *RM, Zohar*, vol. 2, fols 94b and 119a, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *Tiqqun* 56, fol. 89b, the text belonging to this layer printed in *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 27b, and the Hebrew text of the same author printed in Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings*, pp. 80–1; R. Moses of Kiev, *Shushan Sodot*, fol. 67a. Since the mid-sixteenth century, the tetradic structure recurs much more especially in the writings of R. Moses Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*, 7-2, 1, fol. 32c, 8.13, 1, fol. 45c, 8.14, 1, fol. 45a, 19.3, 1, fol. 88a, 20.11, 1, fol. 95bd, 22.1, 1, fol. 105ad. An interesting discussion is found in a treatise by the Italian Kabbalist R. Mordekhai Dato, writing in the second part of the sixteenth century, under the impact of Cordovero. See Jacobson, *Along the Paths of Exile and Redemption*, p. 228. See also the resort to this imagery in the early seventeenth-century Moroccan Kabbalist R. Jacob Ifargan, *Minhah Hadashah*, vol. 1, pp. 119, 150, 151, 153, 184, 263, 265, 267, 268, 314, 321, 373, and below the passage translated beside note 256. The imagery is widespread in one of the most influential books of popular Kabbalah, inspired by the views of Cordovero, R. Isaiah Horowitz's *ha-Shelah*. See also the view of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, *Qelah Pithei Hokhmah*, no. 59. See also below, note 214. With the increasing centrality of the theory of the divine countenances in the *Zohar*, and its major impact on kabbalistic theosophies, especially the Lurianic one, where the countenances of 'Abba', Father, 'Imma', Mother, *Za'yir*, the Lesser Face, and *Nuqbba'*, the feminine countenance – the divine family *imaginaire* – became much more influential than in early Kabbalah. See e.g. Abraham Cohen de Herrera, *Gate of Heaven*, tr. Kenneth Krabbenhoft (Brill, Leiden, 2002), p. 68, or R. Naftali Bakharakh, *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, fol. 97a, a passage that will be analyzed below in this chapter; and Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, pp. 256, 265. For more on this issue see below in this chapter. See also Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah*, pp. 69, 207–10, 350–1, 362–3. It should be pointed out that while in pre-Lurianic Kabbalah the terms son and daughter are recurring explicitly in the texts we referred to above, in Lurianic Kabbalah the anthropomorphic terminology, namely *Ze'yir 'Anppin* and *Nuqbba'*, definitely prevails. For the recurring dictum, known since late thirteenth-century theosophical Kabbalah, that argues that God has a son and a daughter, see Liebes, *'Middotav shel ha-'Elohim*', pp. 72–4. For the representation of the Holy Family in Christianity see Koschorke, *The Holy*

- Family. For the juxtaposition of the two comprehensive symbols, the Tetragrammaton and the divine family, see Zohar, vol. 3, fol. 290ab ('*Iddra Zuta*'); R. Menahem Recanati, *Commentary on the Torah*, fol. 79d; and R. Meir ibn Gabbai, '*Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 4.8, fol. 119b. See also the compilation completed in the circle of the Great Maggid, entitled the *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov*, printed as *Liqqutim Yeqarim*, fol. 48b, par. 142; and R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye, *Kutonet Passim*, ed. G. Nigal (Mekhon Peri ha-'Aretz, Jerusalem, 1985), p. 153. These few examples, among many others, evince the approach of those Kabbalists to the quaternary family as explicitly divine. It should be pointed out that this quaternary differs dramatically from the Jungian one, which emerged through the addition of one feminine power, Maria, to the trinity of non-feminine entities. In the case of the kabbalistic divine family, there are two feminine powers within the supernal quaternary. Let me also point out that the quaternary structure documented here should be added to the models of erotic relationships in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, which I have enumerated in my *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 131–3.
- 5 See *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 165–8; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 157–82 and *On the Kabbalah*, p. 106; there, the kabbalistic identification of the *Ecclesia* and the *Shekhinah* as symbols of the last *sefirah* is described as a 'specifically Jewish metamorphosis in which so much of the gnostic substance entered into Jewish tradition'.
- 6 See especially Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 30–2 and the pertinent bibliography.
- 7 Schaefer, *Mirror of His Beauty*; Arthur I. Green, 'Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in its Christian Context', *AJS Review* 26 (1) (2002), pp. 1–52, and more recently in his *Shekhinah*. Though the explanation offered by these two scholars is quite similar, it does not always coincide in the details. See e.g. Green, *Shekhinah*, p. 21 note 67. The textual problems related to the very existence of formulations found in the book of *Bahir* and their emergence and reception are huge and have been addressed recently in an important article by Daniel Abrams, 'The Condensation of the Symbol "Shekhinah" in the Manuscripts of the Book Bahir', *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 7–82.
- 8 See especially Schaefer's cavalier discount of Scholem's Gnostic theory in his *Mirror of His Beauty*, pp. 218–24, 223–4 or of Wolfson's Jewish-Christian explanation. My phenomenological description of the thought of the book of *Bahir* differs from those three understandings because of my emphasis on the centrality of the theurgical elements that have been marginalized or totally neglected in the views of these scholars. For Wolfson see his *Along the Path*, pp. 63–88. This theory should be seen in the larger context of Jewish-Christian traditions that reached the Middle Ages, as hinted at in several cases above. See e.g. Chapter 2 above and Chapter 3 note 224.
- 9 *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Oriental Institute, Chicago, Ill. 1989), pp. 165–6.
- 10 See e.g. Schaefer's neglect of some pertinent bibliography, such as Mayer I. Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1992), pp. 3–16 and Moshe Weinfeld, 'Feminine Features in the Imagery of God in Israel: the Sacred Marriage and the Sacred Tree', *VT* 46 (1996), pp. 515–29, while Green adduced it: see his *Shekhinah*, p. 21 note 66. Both scholars ignored, however, the interesting remarks of Charles Mopsik, 'Une querelle à Jerusalem: la féminité de la Chekhina dans la cabale', *Pardes* 12 (1990), pp. 18–21; or Nicolas Sed, 'La *Shekhina* et les amis "Araméens"', in R.-G. Coquin, *Melanges Antoine Guillaumont* (Patrick Cramer, Geneva, 1988), pp. 233–42; and Vajda, *Le commentaire*, pp. 320–2, as well as the importance of the text referred to below in note 15.
- 11 See Ronit Meroz, 'On the Time and Place of Some of the Passages in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Daat* 49 (2002), pp. 137–80 (Hebrew).
- 12 Prov. 28.24.
- 13 Deut. 32.6.
- 14 Prov. 1.8.
- 15 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 35b. Compare, however, Urbach, *The Sages*, vol. 1, pp. 646–7, vol. 2, pp. 988–9. This passage should be compared to the view of the Talmud elsewhere, where the sonship of the Israelites is described as depending on their performance of the divine will. See BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 10a. It is obvious that unlike his earlier views, in some later discussions Gershom Scholem became aware of the hypostatical content of the concept of *Knesset Israel*, as his remark in *Kabbalah*, p. 22 explicitly demonstrates: 'the Jewish concept of *Knesset Yisrael* ... as a heavenly entity that represents the historical community of Israel', and see also *ibid.*, p. 43. However, despite this very interesting observation, he ignores the mythical and mystical potentialities of this key concept when he quotes the 'Erwin passage. It seems that in the period in which he wrote the two earlier essays referred to in note 5 above, Scholem did not accept the hypostatical status of *Knesset Israel*; see especially his *On the Kabbalah*, p. 106, cited above. However, if we accept Scholem's own view in his book *Kabbalah*, that *Knesset Israel* was conceived of as a hypostatic entity in the rabbinic literature, then the alleged Gnostic contribution becomes superfluous. For more on the 'Erwin passage see Urbach, *ibid.*, p. 334. As we have seen already in ancient Jewish sources, Israel was not only the name of a people on the mundane level, but also the name of an angel, thus representing a hypostasis; see above, Introduction, and Isaac F. Baer, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People* (Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 150–1 (Hebrew). On the special status of the people of Israel as the wife of God see D. Buzy, 'L'allegorie matrimoniale de Jahve et d'Israel et la Cantique des Cantiques', *Viver et Penser* 3 (1945), pp. 79–90. Compare the reticence of Green to attribute to *Knesset Israel* a full-fledged feminine status in his book *Shekhinah*, pp. 25–6. Cf. my earlier claim in 'Kabbalism and Rabbinism; on G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 281–96, ignored by all the scholarly discussions in this context.
- 16 Song of Songs 7.14.
- 17 BT 'Erwin, fol. 21b. See also *Song of Songs Rabbah* 3.15–19, p. 35. For more on the Song of Songs in rabbinic texts see Vajda, *L'Amour*, pp. 44–7. For the Song of Songs in Kabbalah see especially Green, *Shekhinah*, *passim*.

- 18 *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, vol. 3, p. 331. The context is worthwhile of a detailed analysis because of its strong sexual components. See, for the time being, Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 38–42 and compare to Green, *Shekhinah*, pp. 20–1 note 63, and to R. Abraham ben Azriel, *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, vol. 1, p. 129.
- 19 See Green, *Shekhinah*, p. 36.
- 20 Prov. 10.25.
- 21 BT *Yoma*, fol. 38b.
- 22 *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, pp. 160–1, par. 71; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, p. 95; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 152–4; Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, p. 74; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 232–3 note 36; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 71–2. See also Green, 'Zaddiq', p. 333 and Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 258–60. For a Christological understanding of this text see Machado, *The Mirror*, pp. 162–3. For Jesus, a figure related to righteousness, as a foundation according to some early Christian texts see Henne, *La Christologie*, pp. 244–5, 246–8.
- 23 Some of the elements of the description of the righteous are reminiscent of the depiction of the person who is deemed worthy of receiving the tradition of the pronunciation of the divine name according to a rabbinic discussion found in BT *Qiddushin*, fol. 71a.
- 24 *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, pp. 188–9, par. 105. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 94–5. My translation and interpretation differ substantially from Scholem's in this article but it is closer to both his translation and his own interpretation elsewhere, in his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 155–6. See also Liebes, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', pp. 121–2, and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 80ff. For the resort to this passage see in R. Meir ibn Gabbai's influential *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1.26; 3.8. See also *ibid.* 3.39, where an interesting discussion on the Jews, more exactly their souls, as the sons of God is found. In this case we have a more explicit instance of double sonship, based on the passage from the book of *Bahir*.
- 25 See e.g. *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, pp. 198–9, par. 114.
- 26 For this methodological caveat see also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 70.
- 27 *Genesis Rabba* 11.8.
- 28 R. Yehudah ben Yaqar, *Commentary on the Prayerbook*, ed. Shmuel Ashkenazi (Me'orei Yisrael, Jerusalem, 1979), vol. 2, p. 42. The affinities between this passage and the *Bahir* may point to a tradition that stems from Jewish sources, not from the Jewish-Christian ones, as proposed by Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 80–3. In any case, it is plausible to surmise the existence of a tradition that antedates the two kabbalistic sources mentioned here. I hope to elaborate upon this source and other similar ones in manuscripts in a separate study.
- 29 Ps. 97.2.
- 30 Gen. 1.3.
- 31 In the Munchen manuscript 'Israel' is not found. I see it nevertheless plausible that the parable will deal with Israel as the son. See Green, *Keter*, p. 143 note 31.
- 32 *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 12, pp. 122–3. On this passage see Green, *Keter*, pp. 142–4. It should be mentioned that like other passages in this book, this one also has repercussions in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah. So, for example, we read about the *sefirah* of *Yessod*, as righteous and *Ben*, in the anonymous *Sefer*

*ha-Peliy'ah* that the Hebrew word for sacrifice, *Qorban*, is constituted by two words, derived from the consonants of this term, *Raq* – solely, only, and *BN*, *Ben*, which means that the sacrifice should be dedicated to the 'Son of *Binah*', that is *Yessod*. Moreover, the anonymous Kabbalist argues that the righteous men are attracted to the righteous, since every species is attracted to its like. There is here some form of double sonship. See *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, 1, fol. 57a. The anonymous Kabbalist assumes that 'only by the son' namely the righteous, or the *sefirah* of *Yessod*, can the sacrifice ascend higher, a view reminiscent of the Christian emphasis that only by the mediation of Jesus can anyone arrive at the Father. However, in this specific case, it is to the Mother, *Binah*, that the sacrificial smoke should arrive. In any case, there is here an instance of a relationship between a divine Son and worship. See also below, notes 247 and 269.

- 33 See BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12a.
- 34 *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 36, pp. 136–7. See also *ibid.*, pars 98–9, pp. 182–5, par. 124, pp. 206–7, par. 136, pp. 220–1.
- 35 See *ibid.*, par. 49, pp. 144–5.
- 36 See *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 116, pp. 200–1; cf. Green, *Keter*, pp. 145–6 and his *Shekhinah*, p. 24 note 68. I am not sure that in this specific passage the *Shekhinah* has a distinct feminine character. On the concept of diadem as a feminine entity, it is possible to find many manuscript passages that deserve a separate discussion. See above note 28 and note 38 below.
- 37 See e.g. pars 61, pp. 152–3, par. 65, pp. 158–9, par. 131, pp. 214–16.
- 38 I cannot address here in detail the issue of sexualization of the *Shekhinah*, which deserves a new analysis, along other methodological lines. Here I shall attempt to describe solely the sexualization of the son. On this topic see, for the time being, Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 45–52 and my planned book on the ascent of the feminine elements in Jewish mysticism. See also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 83–6.
- 39 *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 115, pp. 198–201; Green, *Keter*, pp. 144–5.
- 40 *Yatz'u le-tarbut ra'ah*. This is a topos in Jewish literature where it stands for the process of entering another culture than Judaism – it seems to be the meaning of Elisha' ben Abbayah, known as the Aher, in the legend of the four sages.
- 41 Exod. 2.25, quoted earlier in this paragraph of *Sefer ha-Bahir*.
- 42 Hab. 3.2.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Ps. 18.2.
- 45 Compare to the dwelling of the *Shekhinah* with the righteous by the deeds of Israel, according to *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 85, p. 171. I am not convinced that here – the most important discussion of this concept in the *Bahir* – the *Shekhinah* has a sexualized, or even a feminine role, as claimed by Schaefer, *Minor of His Beauty*, pp. 132–3. On the other hand, in another important treatment of the feminine hypostatic presence, in the *Bahir*, par. 70, p. 175, the *Shekhinah* is not mentioned at all. It is scholars, following perhaps some later Kabbalists, who put the different passages together as if reflecting focused descriptions of the *Shekhinah*. But following this methodology exactly, someone

could build a theology of *Knesset Israel* or the *Hokhmah* as central for the theosophy of this book.

- 46 *Zakhor* reflects also the masculine, while *Rahem* stands for the feminine. The latter word is sometime related to the root *RHM* which is also the root of the noun *Rehem*, womb.
- 47 1 Kgs 5.26.
- 48 Ed. Abrams, par. 51, pp. 147–9. On this passage see some brief remarks in Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 96, 174, 176 and his *Das Buch Bahir* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1970), pp. 52–3.
- 49 Schaefer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, pp. 132–3. It should be noted that Schaefer does not translate or analyze the content of the second part of the passage, where wisdom is mentioned explicitly, and leaves the reader with the impression that the passage really deals with the *Shekhinah*, and then analyzes the passage as such!
- 50 See *The Book of Bahir*, ed. Abrams, par. 85, p. 171 and par. 116, p. 201.
- 51 See also elsewhere, *ibid.*, pp. 128–30, where Schaefer introduces the concept of the *Shekhinah* in another passage of the book of *Bahir*, where the term does not occur, neither is it found in its context. Such a practice represents a major methodological surprise; I would say a philological sea-change. The relevance of those analyses to the understanding of the concept of the *Shekhinah* – which does not occur in an analyzed text but is ‘innocently’ introduced by the scholar – is therefore, to put it mildly, quite dubious. A scholar must first prove the relevance of his discussions to this missing concept, and only afterwards attempt to draw conclusions as to the shift in the function of the concept he analyzes, otherwise it presents quite a circular analysis, or a vicious circle. Compare also to Green’s resort to the expression ‘virgin fiancée’ in relation to the feminine hypostasis in the book of *Bahir* in *Shekhinah*, p. 36. For more on the pitfalls of obliqueness in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah see below in this chapter.
- 52 See ed. Abrams, par. 45, p. 143.
- 53 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 161–2; Mopsik, *Les grands textes*, pp. 109–15.
- 54 Compare to the analysis of Schaefer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, pp. 132–3. He ignores clear rabbinic sources, already discussed in scholarship, and works instead with what I conceive to be feeble parallels. Were the rabbinic sources mentioned above unavailable, or conceived of as unreliable? Were they not an essential part of the reservoir of associations that nourished the thought of the early Kabbalists? Indeed adopting a theory that ignores the importance of the concept of influence, Schaefer can overlook the available Hebrew sources, which unfortunately do not serve his theory, and concentrate on vague ‘parallels’ alone.
- 55 2 Chron. 3.13.
- 56 See BT *Babba’ Batra’*, fol. 99a. Compare also *ibid.*, fol. 10a, where the assumption is that sonship depends, as in the quoted text, upon the performance of the divine will.
- 57 BT *Yoma’*, fol. 54a.
- 58 Let me remark that Schaefer seems to ignore the fact that precise sources can be, and have been found as an alternative to Scholem’s Gnostic theory of the

Pleroma, in texts written in Hebrew and dealing with *Male’*, indubitably available to authors in the Middle Ages, in the book of *Shi’ur Qomah*, in *Sefer ha-Razim* and in rabbinic literature. See Idel, ‘On the Problem’, pp. 67–70; Abrams, in his Introduction to his edition of the book of *Bahir*, pp. 5–6; and Yair Lorberbaum, *Imago Dei: Rabbinic Literature, Maimonides and Nahmanides* (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997), pp. 208–18 (Hebrew). Thus, Schaefer’s claim that I do not supply historical sources for the impact on the *Bahir* (*Mirrors of His Beauty*, pp. 234–5), is a sharp misrepresentation of facts, based on an ignorance of the pertinent material found in studies dedicated to the *Bahir*, as presented both by myself and other scholars. The fact that we do not have now a solution for the channel of transmission of other mythologoumena found in the *Bahir* does not detract from the relevance of the parallels that can be proposed, if there is no other better explanation. To fall into a historicistic mindset, as an alternative for such a complex problem as the *Bahir* is, is a reduction of the multiple contexts that are operative in shaping any complex religious change, and creates instead a monocausal type of explanation. What I stressed in all the instances related to the *Bahir*, including in my Introduction to Abrams’ edition, p. vi, and more conspicuously in note 35, is the need to resort to many and variegated sources in order to understand this book, and that is what I practice. As to the emergence of divine family structures in medieval Jewish mysticism, one should be acquainted with a variety of possibilities, like the Shi’a theories, for example.

- 59 See Schaefer, *Mirrors of His Beauty*, p. 242.
- 60 Ed. Abrams, par. 89, p. 175. Compare, however, the opinion of Shulamit Shahar, ‘Catharism and the Beginnings of the Kabbalah in Languedoc’, *Tarbiz* 40 (1971), pp. 503–7 (Hebrew), who attempts to relate Bahiric theurgy to Cathar sources, without dwelling upon the Jewish classical texts. For the impact of the *Bahir*’s theurgical sonship on the influential and classical work of R. Meir ibn Gabbai see his *Avodat ha-Qodesh* 3.39, fol. 100a.
- 61 Ed. Abrams, par. 82, p. 169. This seems to be a kabbalistic reworking of the passage from BT *Babba’ Batra’*, fol. 10a, which will be mentioned several times in the present study. See above, note 56. For another, mid-sixteenth-century reworking, in which sonship is explicit, see Jacobson, *Along the Paths of Exile and Redemption*, pp. 126, 364 note 53.
- 62 See also *ibid.*, par. 24, pp. 129–30.
- 63 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 160–1; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 245–6. See, nevertheless, Dan, *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle*, *passim*, who prefers to ignore the relevant material and flatly denies the existence of this religious modality in the Hasidei Ashkenaz literature. For more on this issue see Idel, ‘The Commentaries of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo’, pp. 170–1 especially note 71, and p. 192.
- 64 See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 39–41. Compare, however, the neglect of the assumption that there are Ashkenazi sources for the *Bahir* in Schaefer’s analyses, *The Mirror of His Beauty*, *passim*. See, however, insofar as the *Shekhinah* is concerned, Farber, *The Concept of the Merkavah*, pp. 241–2; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 193–6. In another context, see again Farber, *ibid.*, pp. 115, 120.

- 65 On this core-formula see Moshe Hallamish, *Kabbalah, in Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs* (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 2000), pp. 45–70 (Hebrew) and Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, passim.
- 66 As Green indeed does. See his *Shekhinah*, p. 60.
- 67 It is exceptionally important to point out the continuity between the discussions about the *du-partuzfin*, the androgynous creation of Adam in rabbinic literature, and the understanding of the structure of the theosophy according to this scheme, as we shall see immediately below. One of the first Kabbalists, R. Abraham ben David, commented on this concept by resorting to theosophical terms, without resorting, however, to the theme of *Shekhinah*. See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 61–5. See also the other couple of God and the hypostasis of Jacob on high, which sometimes has sexual overtones, in a variety of late antiquity and medieval sources analyzed in Wolfson's important study, *Along the Path*, pp. 1–62, as well as the gigantic angelic couple, male and female, attributed to Gnostic texts, Judeo-Christian or Elksaia, cf. the literature adduced above, Introduction note 134, and for some possible medieval reverberations see Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 276–80.
- 68 The book reflects, therefore, stands concerning sonship that are not resonant in Provençal Kabbalah.
- 69 See Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 207–15. It should be added that both in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* and in the *Commentary on the Haftarah* one the one hand, and in a relatively early kabbalistic fragment about Enoch on the other hand, he is described as a righteous, a view not found in early rabbinic literature. See more on this issue below, Appendix.
- 70 See also below in Chapter 6 the discussion on the state of Grandeur and Smallness in Lurianism.
- 71 On the degree of Adam see below, Chapter 6 note 63.
- 72 *Genesis Rabba* 13.3, p. 115; 15.1, p. 135. On this topic in early Kabbalah see Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, passim.
- 73 This sequel of adjectives is found already in the book of *Bahir*.
- 74 *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, p. 510.
- 75 P. 14. See also Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, p. 105. The same phrase occurs also in Heikhalot literature see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 69. Interestingly the term 'great seal' refers there to the name of an archon. See also Alexander Altmann, 'The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism', in his *Von der Mittelalterlichen zur Modernen Aufklärung: Studien zur Juedischen Geistgeschichte* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1987), p. 12 notes 83–4. For the influence of the mystical concept of man as a seal on the Catalan Jewish philosopher Hasdai Crescas see Ze'ev Harvey, 'Kabbalistic Elements in R. Hasdai Crescas's 'Or ha-Shem', *JSJT* 2 (1983), pp. 97–8 (Hebrew). See also above, Chapter 2, in the discussions about R. Eleazar of Worms. The concept of seal [*hotam*] pointing to the entire realm of the ten *sefirot* as present in man recurs in the late thirteenth-century Kabbalist R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi. See his *Commentary on Genesis Rabba*', pp. 136, 228, 229.
- 76 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 118–19.
- 77 Compare the talismanic view of the *Golem* in *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, cf. Idel, *Golem*, pp. 86–91.
- 78 *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 95–102, 286.
- 79 It should be mentioned that the most important documents reflecting R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's and Nahmanides' kabbalistic views, namely their commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*, do not address issues related to the concept of the *Shekhinah* at all. Neither were those documents concerned too much with the symbolism of hypostatic or theosophic types of sonship. See, however, Nahmanides' readiness to describe some of the first humans as Sons of God. Cf. above, Chapter 3 note 184. Interestingly enough, Nahmanides was well acquainted with Christian theology, as we learn from both the controversy with Paulus Christiani, and Nahmanides' own writings. Nevertheless he avoided any sonship symbolism in his theosophy or that of his followers. On Nahmanides and Christian thought see Pines, 'Nahmanides on Adam in the Garden of Eden', and Amos Funkenstein, 'Nahmanides' Symbolical Reading of History', in eds, J. Dan & F. Talmage, *Studies in Jewish Mysticism* (Association of Jewish Studies, Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 129–50. For a very brief resort to the symbolism of sons for the lower *sefirot*, and of sons of sons for two angels emanating from the last *sefirah* in a text by R. Isaac the Blind, see Idel, 'On R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's Mystical Intention', p. 29, and following this, some other Kabbalists, see *ibid.*, pp. 48, 49, 50.
- 80 *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–52; see also Green, *Shekhinah*, p. 46.
- 81 See Elqayam, *The Mystery of the Faith*, p. 365 note 173; Huss, 'The Sage', pp. 126–7. For more on the Christian impact on the *Zohar* see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 139–61, and Wolfson, 'The Body in the Text'.
- 82 Exod. 4.22.
- 83 *Zohar Hadash, Ruth ha-Ne'elam*, fol. 84c. For more discussions on the firstborn, *bekhor* as a son related to the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* see the commentary of R. Moses Cordovero on the *Zohar, 'Or Yaqar*, vol. 16, pp. 18–19. Compare also to Chapter 3 note 118, and Chapter 6 note 203.
- 84 *Zohar Hadash*, *ibid.*
- 85 See e.g. *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 79b. Interestingly enough, the names of the two *sefirot* are grammatically speaking, feminine. See also *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 197a, and vol. 3, fol. 191b. For the impact of the description of the son in the latter passage in Sabbateanism see Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, p. 211.
- 86 See *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 197a as interpreted, correctly in my opinion, by R. Nathan Shapira of Crakau, *Megalleh 'Amuqqot*, pars 73, 138, 144, 151. The passage will be analyzed immediately below. See also Concluding Remarks, the interpretation of R. Elijah of Vilnius.
- 87 Scholarly studies on the Zoharic literature are growing rapidly. See, in English, e.g. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 326–92; Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar, The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2001); Melilah Hellner-Eshed, 'A River Issues Forth from Eden': *On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar* (Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 2005) (Hebrew), and Daniel Matt's translations and commentaries in the three-volume Pritzker edition of the *Zohar*

- and the more popular survey by Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2004). For the emerging approach, that assumes that the bulk of the *Zohar* is not the exclusive work of Moses de Leon, see Liebes, *ibid.*, and Ronit Meroz, 'Zoharic Narratives and Their Adaptations', *Hispania Judaica* 3 (2000), pp. 3–63.
- 88 *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–52; Huss, 'A Sage', pp. 126–7. For more on the *Zohar* and Christian thought see Steven D. Benin, 'The Mutability of an Immutable God: Exegesis and Individual Capacity in the *Zohar* and Several Christian Sources', in ed., J. Dan, *The Age of the Zohar* (Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 67–86.
- 89 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 90 *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 3b, *Zohar* (Pritzker edn), vol. 1, p. 19 and Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146, 149.
- 91 See 'Or *Yaqaq*, vol. 1, pp. 38–9.
- 92 See vol. 1, fol. 219a. See Liebes, 'Middotav shel ha'Elohim', pp. 72–4, who discusses the impact of this stand; and Matt, *Zohar* (Pritzker edn), vol. 3, pp. 322–3.
- 93 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 290b, R. Moses Cordovero, 'Or *Yaqaq*, vol. 4, p. 1; and R. Jacob Ifargan, *Minḥah Ḥadashah*, vol. 1, p. 263. See also similar speculations of Alfonso da Valladolid, in Baer, *Studies*, vol. 2, p. 372.
- 94 *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 148–9.
- 95 Namely in front of R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai, the main protagonist of the book of the *Zohar* and its alleged author. Interestingly, the topic of the following story is the relationship between God and the people of Israel described in terms of father and son. Here two males are dealing with the role of the feminine divine power. In a way they are blaming the plight of Israel on the lack of education the Mother has given to the sons.
- 96 *Medoreih*. Compare to the Aramaic translation of Gen. 30.20, where this term translates the verb *Yzbleny*, which is rather obscure but understood as the cohabitation of Leah and Jacob. See also below, note 155.
- 97 Exod. 4.22.
- 98 See the passage from BT *Berakhot*, fol. 35b dealt with above.
- 99 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 74b. See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 139–40.
- 100 'Sefer Masoret ha-*Hokhmah*', printed by G. Scholem in QS 7 (1930), p. 451. It is obvious that there this Kabbalist interprets the Talmudic dictum in BT *Babba' Batra*, fol. 99a, which has been adduced above in Section 1.
- 101 Prov. 24.21.
- 102 *Zohar Ḥadash*, fol. 45c. For other discussions of the relationship between son and father see *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 163a–163b, and Benin, *The Footprints of God*, pp. 174–5.
- 103 Idel, 'On R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's Mystical Intention', pp. 28–30.
- 104 See *ibid.*, p. 30. It should be pointed out that the different axes: son/mother, son/daughter, which can in principle be understood as illicit incestuous relationships, did not neutralize the sexual valences of the supernal son, nor the family structures, above or below. Compare to the different views insofar as Christianity is involved in Koschorke, *The Holy Family*, pp. 12, 14.
- 105 *Knesset Yisrael*, i.e. the *Sefirah* of *Malkhut*.
- 106 *Sefirat Tiferet*.
- 107 Deut. 14.1. More on this issue in the Concluding Remarks.
- 108 Ps. 2.7. This verse, which played an immense role in the formulation of Christian sonship, was used in some Jewish-Christian sects as part of the ritual of baptism, by which the infant was conceived of as becoming God's child. See Quispel, 'The Birth of the Child', in his *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 234–5.
- 109 *Sitra* 'ahra', namely the demonic side, was upon him beforehand.
- 110 *Zohar*, vol. 2, fols 97b–98a, *Sabba' de-Mishpatim*. See Oded Israeli, *The Interpretation of Secrets and the Secret of Interpretation: Midrashic and Hermeneutic Strategies in Sabba de-Mishpatim of the Zohar* (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2005) (Hebrew). See also the view of the son as the 'power of the soul' in the view of R. Yehudah Leib Alter of Gur, *Sefer Sefat 'Emmet* (Jerusalem, ND), vol. 2, fol. 32d, in a sermon committed to writing in 1902.
- 111 See *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 82b. See also *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 11b and vol. 3, fol. 174a, dealing with Moses as the son of the two *sefirot*. On the souls of Israel as the sons of God see also Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, p. 88 note 286.
- 112 (Basle, 1608), fol. 3, col. 2b. See also e.g. *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 82b, vol. 2, fol. 57a, 88b, 266a, and the important parable about the soul as the Son of God and the *Matronita* in *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 245b, and the view of a later Kabbalist, the author of *Tiqunei Zohar*, in texts discussed by Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings*, pp. 7, 80–1. On the soul as son see also R. Meir ibn Gabbai, 'Avodat ha-Qodesh', 3.39, fol. 100a; R. Moses Cordovero, *Sefer 'Or Yaqaq*, vol. 16, p. 3, and *Pardes Rimmonim* 31.2, vol. 2, fol. 72b, 31.3, vol. 2, fol. 73b, and below, Chapter 6 note 115. On the son as building see above, Chapter 3 note 164. See, however, the view of the *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 7a, where the *nishmatah qaddisha*, the holy soul, is described as the daughter of the King, born out of the intercourse between him and the *Matronita*, namely the *sefirot* of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*. See R. Aharon Shmuel ben Moshe Shalom of Kremenitz, *Nishmat 'Adam* (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 105–6. This is a significantly different position, which deserves a separate study.
- 113 *Sefer ha-Shem*, p. 19, capitalizing on Jer. 31.8.
- 114 For a rite of passage in Ashkenaz especially in R. Eleazar of Worms, where the beginning of the study of the Torah is described in terms that assume some form of sonship see Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood, Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1984), p. 27.
- 115 See, e.g. BT *Niddah*, fol. 71a and Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, *passim*, and see also below, Concluding Remarks.
- 116 On this topic see the discussion in Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 133–44, 215–20.
- 117 See *RM*, *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 228b.
- 118 For a discussion of those powers of the soul see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, pp. 648–98.
- 119 The importance of begetting sons according to the book of the *Zohar* is paramount. Without it, not even a righteous man is capable of entering the

- paradise unless he has a son. See Charles Mopsik, 'The Body of Engenderment in the Hebrew Bible, the Rabbinic Tradition and Kabbalah', in eds, Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff & Nadia Tazi, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, tr. Matthew Ward (Zone, New York, 1989), vol. 3, pp. 61–2; Yair Lorberbaum, 'The Image of God and the Commandment of Be Fruitful and Multiply: Early Rabbinic Literature and Maimonides', *Law Review* 24 (2001), pp. 738–9 (Hebrew); Jeremy Cohen, 'Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It': *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1989), pp. 207–9; Azulai, 'Or ha-Hammah', vol. 1, fol. 186cd and the important discussion in his *Hesed le-Avraham*, fol. 17b.
- 120 *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 69ab. For a French translation see Charles Mopsik, *Le Zohar, Cantique des Cantiques* (Verdier, Lagrasse, 1999), pp. 147–8. For a short discussion see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, pp. 627–8. For a discussion of this passage in the context of other Zoharic views of Enoch see R. Me'ir ibn Gabbai, *Sefer 'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 2.18. Cf., R. Naftali Bacharach, *Sefer 'Emeq ha-Melekh*, fol. 20b: 'The image of Jacob was as that of Enoch, and that of Enoch was as that of Adam, because Enoch received the soul of Adam, from whom an upper brilliance sprouted.' See also Isaiah Tishby, *Torat ha-Ra ve-ha-Qelippah ba-Kabbalat ha-'Ari* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 95, 103 (Hebrew). This passage is paraphrased by Abraham Michael Cardozo in the text printed by Wolfson, 'Constructions of the Shekhinah', p. 126.
- 121 See MS. Roma-Casanatense 186, fol. 60b; Farber-Ginnat, 'Inquiries in *Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 387 note 151. See also below in this chapter our discussion of R. Joseph of Hamadan, beside note 204. For an ancient text that speaks rather openly on Enoch as a child of Adam see a hymn of Ephrem the Syrian: 'Enoch and Elijah were the first that won life in his symbols when they were snatched away and translated into Paradise, The two that won went in; the two that were ashamed went out. The pair of victors went in into Paradise, in order that the two should reprove the two, who were overcome in Paradise. The two judged the two, the children judged the parents. Adam was conquered and went out, since he was obedient to his wife; the two went in as victors, since they were [clothed] in splendour.' See Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian, with particular reference to the influence of Jewish exegetical tradition* (CWK Gleerup, Lund, 1978), pp. 157–8. On the context of this passage see Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 184–5.
- 122 See Gershom Scholem, 'Levush ha-Neshamot ve-Haluqa' de-Rabbanan', *Tarbiz* 24 (1956), pp. 294–6 (Hebrew).
- 123 See also Odeberg, in his Introduction to *3 Enoch*, pp. 122–3.
- 124 See Idel, 'Adam and Enoch', pp. 187–8.
- 125 The Aramaic phrase is 'azal be-qushta', and it is reminiscent of the pseudo-Jonathan Aramaic translation of Gen. 5.24: *palah be-qushta*, 'He worshipped in truth or righteousness. See also *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 69b, where again Enoch is described as walking on the path of truth. It should be mentioned that *qushta*' sometimes also means righteousness. See Roy A. Rosenberg, *The Veneration of Divine Justice: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity* (Greenwood Press, London, 1995), p. 22. See also Appendix note 33.
- 126 The issue of perfection related to Enoch, who repairs Adam's sin, appears in an even clearer manner in a text of R. Joseph of Hamadan to be dealt with below in this chapter.
- 127 Is this a hint at the *Book of Adam*, which is also part of the library that is alluded to in the book of the *Zohar*? The revelation coming from a tree in Paradise is found both in the *Testament of Abraham* and in an untitled book of Abraham Abulafia's, and I have dealt with this similarity in a forthcoming article. See meanwhile Dale C. Allison, Jr, 'Abraham's Oracular Tree (*T. Abr.* 3.1–4)', *JJS* 54 (1) (2003), pp. 51–61, and see also our discussions below, dealing with the motif of book as related to the tree of life. See also the interesting Christian Syrian seventh-century passage adduced by Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, p. 61, where the tree of life is described as a teacher of Adam. Compare also to the suggestion of identifying the tree of life with the king according to scholars mentioned by Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, p. 68 note 14.
- 128 Compare to *2 En.* 33.8, *OTP*, vol. 1, p. 157, especially version A, where it is said that from the book of Enoch people will know God.
- 129 *Tzani'a be-go Havrayyia*. Is this an allusion or a testimony dealing with the presence of a book of Enoch in the circle of the Kabbalists who participated in the writing of the *Zohar*?
- 130 It is not clear whether those accusers are angelic beings, as in *3 Enoch*, or just the spirits of the beast as in *2 Enoch*, ch. 58.
- 131 Prov. 22.6. I mistranslate the verse in order to reflect the way in which the *Zohar*, like many other authors, understood it. This is another case of Enochic exegesis, discussed in Chapter 2. See also below, note 142. It should be pointed out that in *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 233b, the term youth is parallel to son, thus providing a direct nexus between the two concepts, and strengthening the oblique affinities to be adduced below.
- 132 No doubt this is a discussion influenced by the view of Metatron, which is described in kabbalistic literature as comprising the supernal world.
- 133 *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 42d. I cannot enter here into all the details of this dense passage but what is of importance for the further development of kabbalistic theosophy is the alternating states of Enoch as a youth and as elderly. Compare to *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 217a–217b. A similar stand, related to *Ze'ir 'Anppin* as growing and returning to infancy is evident and very central in Luria's theosophy. I see in the substitution of Enoch for *Ze'ir* in these passages a proof for the fact that some Kabbalists perceived both figures not only as related, but also as related to the concept of son. See also Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, pp. 627–8, 630. It should be pointed out that Tishby, *ibid.*, p. 629 (and following this, Kaplan, 'Adam', p. 117), sees a contradiction between what is written in this passage and in other discussions of Metatron in other parts of the Zoharic literature. However, there is no need to harmonize different concepts in such a vast, diversified literature as the Zoharic one is. Moreover, Kaplan's claim, *ibid.*, that the concatenation between Adam, Enoch and Metatron is not

- found explicitly in texts before the sixteenth century is obviously invalidated by the content of this Zoharic text. See also below, note 145.
- 134 I would say that in general the place of the Enochic traditions in the general economy of the Zoharic literature has not received the attention it deserves in scholarship. See, nevertheless, Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, pp. 22–3.
- 135 See Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron', and 'Adam and Enoch'.
- 136 See *2 Enoch*, cf. Andersen, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 196–7.
- 137 See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 56. R. Abraham ibn Ezra knew books dealing with astronomical issues and attributed to Enoch. See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism'.
- 138 See *2 En.* 33.8–9, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 156–7, 47.1–2, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 174–5, 48.6, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 174–5, ch. 54, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 180–1 and Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 56.
- 139 See also Orlov, 'Secrets of Creation', pp. pp. 55–8.
- 140 *Pistis Sophia*, vol. 3, ch. 134, p. 349. See also a parallel passage in vol. 2, ch. 100, p. 247. For a strong relation between a god and a tree see Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Lundequistska bokhandeln, Uppsala, 1951); Parpola, 'The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 161–208; and Amar Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Finland, 2002), pp. 156–62. Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 192; Odeberg, *ibid.* note 3, already compared this passage with *2 Enoch*, where the issues of the writing and the preservation of Enoch's book were addressed. In Bogomil mythology, Enoch is described as a messenger of Satan, and the author of 72 books in which he described the lower part of the heavenly realm and revealed impure rituals. See Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, pp. 203–4, Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, p. 122–3; and Stoyanov, *The Other God*, p. 261. See also *Jub.* 4.19, 23, discussed by Najman, *Second Sinai*, pp. 121–2. If a passage like this caught the attention of medieval Jewish authors, it could be easily adopted and related to the concept of Enoch the supernal scribe. It seems that all the passages mentioned in this note reflect a common Jewish tradition. See Pearson, *ibid.*, note 68.
- 141 Gen. 5.24.
- 142 Prov. 22.6. This is just another case of Enochic exegesis. See also above, note 131.
- 143 Ps. 25.14.
- 144 *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 37b according to the translation of Matt, *Zohar* (Pritzker edn), vol. 1, pp. 236–8; see the important footnotes there. For the keys given to Enoch see also *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 46b, quoted in R. Jacob Ifargan, *Minḥah Ḥadashah*, vol. 1, p. 218. This text has been copied with some changes in R. Menahem Recanati's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, fol. 17cd, and from him it has been translated in Hebrew in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 2, fol. 68ab.
- 145 See also Farber-Ginnat, 'Inquiries in *Sefer Shi'ur Qomah*', p. 387 note 151. I would say that the transmission of the precious entity that creates the continuity between Adam and one of his descendants here is reminiscent of the 'amr 'ilahi in ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, in that it can skip one generation. If this is indeed the source of the *Zohar* – a literature well acquainted with *Kuzari*, much of Tishby/Kaplan's quandary is solved. See above, note 133.
- 146 See Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 59.
- 147 It is interesting that many passages quoted as if from the book of Enoch in R. Moshe de Leon's Hebrew writings deal with the structure of the Paradise.
- 148 *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 55a. For the view that the book of Enoch is based on a book of Adam see R. Naftali Bakharach, *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, fol. 5d. For Scholem's dismissal of the possibility that the titles of the ancient books may be significant as a real source for the Zoharic authors see *Major Trends*, p. 174, and see also Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels*, p. 233 note 2. See, however, Scholem's important remarks that point in quite another direction, mentioned below in note 154.
- 149 See, e.g. several of R. Abraham ibn Ezra's remarks. See below, Appendix note 40.
- 150 *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 27a. See also *RM*, *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 223b, as well as our discussion below about Metatron as servant, but as standing instead of the son. Metatron is sometimes identified with the feminine *sefirah* of *Malkhut* in the writings of Kabbalists belonging to Nahmanides' school. See e.g. in R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, *Keter Shem Tov*, printed in *Sefer 'Amudei ha-Qabbalah*, p. 7, or in R. Isaac ben Shmuel of Acre, *Sefer Me'irat 'Einayyim*, ed. Amos Goldreich (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 112–13. See also below, note 175.
- 151 See above, Chapter 2, Section 3.
- 152 *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 197b. See also below, in the Concluding Remarks, the discussion of R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilnius, on the same verse from Proverbs.
- 153 For some earlier discussions of the special status of Elijah see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 236. It should be pointed out that according to a quotation in the name of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, both Elijah and Enoch had an angelic component in their nature, which allowed them to ascend on high. See the short citation in R. Menahem Tziuni, *Tziuni* (Jerusalem, 1962), fol. 7a.
- 154 See Moses Gaster, 'Cabbala, Its Origin and Development', printed originally in Romanian in *Anuar pentru Israeliti* 6 (1883/4), p. 26, reproduced in Mariuca Stanciu, *Necunoscutul Gaster* (University of Bucharest Press, Bucuresti, 2006), p. 191. Later, he reworked this essay in a shorter form in English under the title, 'The Origins of the Kabbala' (Ramsgate, London, 1984). This view is part of Gaster's larger approach to the medieval religious history, as mentioned above in the Introduction note 176. See also his later item on the book of the *Zohar* in *Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 12 (1921), pp. 858–62, where the issue of Manichean sources is not mentioned at all. See his even later article, 'A Gnostic Fragment from the *Zohar*. The Resurrection of the Dead', *The Quest* 14 (1923), pp. 452–69, where he argues for a Mandaean origin of two passages in the *Zohar*, a view that I see as implausible. For the possible impact of the Manichean themes on the book of the *Zohar*, see Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 123–7. See also Scholem's interesting remarks, *Devils*, p. 176 note 126, drawing attention to

- the fascinating correspondence between a Zoharic discussion and the Aramaic version of a passage from 1 *Enoch* preserved in a Qumran manuscript, a small but important piece of evidence which could add support to Gaster's thesis about the *Zohar* and late antiquity apocryphic literature. Elsewhere in the same book, Scholem adduced another remarkable parallel from 1 *Enoch* and the magical book *Havdalah de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*. See his *Devils*, p. 172 note 103. See also above, end of Introduction.
- 155 On this phrase, see above, note 96.
- 156 For the assumption that Metatron is not only the Prince of the Face but also appointed upon the divine face see Idel, 'Metatron'.
- 157 *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 85c. For use of this passage see also Recanati, *Commentary on the Torah*, fol. 17cd and R. Jacob Ifargan, *Minḥah Hadashah*, vol. 1, p. 218.
- 158 On these two main hypostatic countenances in the Zoharic literature see Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 224–8; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 295–7; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 44–7, 60–3; Ronit Meroz, 'Two Early Lurianic Treatises', eds, Rachel Elior & Yehuda Liebes, *Lurianic Kabbalah* (Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 312–14 (Hebrew). For an appropriation of these two countenances as pointing to the first two persons of the Trinity see the Quaker author Ragley Keith, cf. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, p. 187. For the hypothesis that the concept of *Ze'yir 'Anppin* reflects the impact of Philo's theory about the Logos, see Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 228–31.
- 159 For another discussion about the dew in the context of *Ze'yir 'Anppin* in the book of the *Zohar* see *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 45b. Compare also to Cordovero, 'Or Yaqar', vol. 8, p. 199.
- 160 *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 61b. Compare also to vol. 2, fols 62b, 98a, vol. 3, fol. 288a ('Idra' Zutta'); Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 334–41.
- 161 The most explicit statement about the affinity between the Lesser Face or countenance and the concept of the Holy Son, *Bera' Qaddisha'*, is found in a text printed in addition to the *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 276b, which is a passage identical to that printed in *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 44d. Especially relevant for my point here is the passage in *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 192b, where a single son – *Bera' Yaḥiyda'ah* – is described as born to the White Head, *Reisha' Hiwra'*, a term that stands for the countenance of the Holy Ancient. This view is attributed explicitly there to a certain 'Book of Enoch'! Thus, the assumption that two hypostatic beings that are faces or countenances, as found in a hypothetical earlier 'Book of Enoch', may represent a parallel to the view of 2 *Enoch*, to be discussed immediately below. I wonder whether this parallel has been hinted at by Gaster when he wrote that he found 'precise quotations' from apocryphal literature in the *Zohar*. See his Romanian article referred to in note 154 above. See also below, note 341.
- 162 Ibid., fol. 64b, vol. 3, fol. 129a. On the other hand see the affinity between the Tetragrammaton and Metatron in other instances in the *Zohar*. Cf. below, Concluding Remarks note 69.
- 163 Ibid., fol. 138a.
- 164 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 292a ('Iddra' Zutta').
- 165 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fols 15a–15b, 131a.
- 166 Ibid., fols 128b, 129a.
- 167 See, e.g. *Zohar*, vol. 3, fols 137b ['Iddra' Rabba'] and 147a. According to *ibid.*, fol. 15a, the theurgical impact of the good deeds of people below induces the revelation of the higher countenance onto the *Ze'yir 'Anppin*.
- 168 Ibid., vol. 3, fol. 147b.
- 169 See especially Chapters 2 and 3 of this cryptic composition.
- 170 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 129a.
- 171 See e.g. *ibid.*, fol. 137b.
- 172 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 141b.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 See 'Or Yaqar', vol. 14, p. 28, and *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 64. See already Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael I*, p. 226. See also the Lurianic commentary on the 'Iddra' Rabba' by R. Joseph ibn Tabul, a major student of Luria's, edited by Israel Weinstock, in *Temirin*, vol. 2 (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1982), p. 147, where the sons, namely the seven lower *sefirot*, and the *Ze'ir* are quite explicitly identified.
- 175 See e.g. *Fragment d'un commentaire*, p. 20 (Hebrew). It should be pointed out that in some cases R. Joseph of Hamadan identifies the *Shekhinah*, which is explicitly described as *Ze'yir 'Anppin*, with Metatron, creating an oblique identity between Metatron and *Ze'ir*. See also above, note 150. For a tentative identification between Metatron and the Great Face, 'appei rabati', see Cordovero, 'Or Yaqar', vol. 13, p. 19. See also Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael I*, p. 225.
- 176 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 134–5. For another possible example of a similar phenomenon, see below, note 205.
- 177 See *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 2, fol. 6a, and *Shushan Sodot*, fol. 58b.
- 178 See note 176 above.
- 179 Elsewhere I shall discuss the importance of the emphasis of the face of Enoch in the anonymous Hebrew *Sefer ha-Yashar*, and in 2 *Enoch*.
- 180 See Idel, 'Gazing at the Head'.
- 181 F.I. Andersen, 2 *En.* 44.1–4, *OTP*, vol. 1, pp. 170–1. See also Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 101–2 and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 171–2 note 86.
- 182 Ibid., p. 171 note c. See Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 151, 153 line 7.
- 183 Winston, *ibid.*, p. 151.
- 184 Gen. 2.7.
- 185 Ps. 139.5.
- 186 Gen. 2.22.
- 187 Lev. 10.12.
- 188 Gen. 3.14–20.
- 189 Gen. 5.2.
- 190 Gen. 9.6.
- 191 Gen. 2.22.

- 192 BT *Berakhot*, fol. 61a. For Rabbinic androgyny see Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, pp. 42–6. For the possible impact of the Jewish vision of androgenity on the first treatise in the Hermetic corpus see Walter Scott, *Hermetica* (Shambala, Boston, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 4–5.
- 193 See e.g. *Midrash 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*, in Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 412. This text has been copied in Yehudah Hadassi's *'Eshkol ha-Kofer*, fol. 36c.
- 194 See Idel, *'Panim'*, pp. 23–4.
- 195 Ed. M. Friedmann (Kaiser, Vienna, 1880), p. 101, par. 21; cf. the translation of Yohanan Muffs, *Love & Joy, Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York and Jerusalem, 1992), p. 146; see in general, *ibid.*, 146–7. See also the similar version in *Pesiqta' de-Rav Kahana'*, vol. 1, p. 223–4, and Benin, *The Footprints of God*, 131–2.
- 196 *Pesiqta' de-Rav Kahana'*, vol. 1, 223–4; *Yalqut Shimoni* on Exodus, par. 286, p. 172; Benin, *The Footprints of God*, p. 131.
- 197 See Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 692–5. For the importance of just the father and son see the discussions of Origen adduced above in the Introduction.
- 198 See above, Chapter 1 note 232.
- 199 Gershom Scholem, *Einige Kabbalistische Handschriften im Britischen Museum* (Soncino-Blaetter, Jerusalem, 1931), pp. 19–21; Alexander Altmann, 'Concerning the Question of the Authorship of *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* Attributed to R. Isaac ibn Farhi', *QS* 40 (1964–5), pp. 256–76, 405–12 (Hebrew); Altmann, 'An Allegorical Midrash on Genesis 24 According to the "Inner Kabbalah"', *Sefer Ha-Yovel Tifereth Yisra'el likhevod Yisra'el Brodie*, eds S.Y. Zimmels, Y. Rabinovitz & Y.S. Feinstein (Soncino, London, 5727), pp. 57–65 (Hebrew Part); Menachem Meier, *A Critical Edition of the Sefer Ta'amry ha-Mitzvot, Attributed to Isaac ibn Farhi, Section I – Positive Commandments* (University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1987); Jeremy Zwelling, *Joseph of Hamadan's Sefer Tashak* (Ph.D. Thesis, Brandeis University, 1975); Charles Mopsik, 'Un manuscript inconnu du *Sefer Tashak* de R. Joseph de Hamadan suivi d'un fragment inedit', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 167–205; Mopsik, *Fragment d'un commentaire sur la Genese*, and two of my studies mentioned in notes 213–14 below.
- 200 See the *Commentary on Genesis*, printed by Mopsik, *Fragment d'un commentaire*, p. 7 (Hebrew), p. 60 (French). It should be mentioned that this Kabbalist is among the few who was aware of the affinity between Metatron and Yaho'el. See his discussion in Jeremy Zwelling, *Joseph of Hamadan's Sefer Tashak* (Ph.D. Thesis, Ann Arbor, 1975), p. 228 and especially Menachem Meier, *A Critical Edition of the 'Sefer Ta'amey Ha-Mizwoth' Attributed to Isaac Ibn Farhi*, p. 392, where he cites a view that God has two sons: a son and a daughter, who are respectively, Metatron and Yaho'el. Here the two angels are explicitly described as descendants of God. Thus Metatron is envisioned as a Son of God in the clearest possible terms. As to Yaho'el as a feminine power, see the Gnostic sources cited by Scopello, 'Youel'. On the dictum that God had two sons see Liebes's Appendix, *'Middotav shel ha-'Elohim'*, pp. 72–4. See also Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah*, p. 400 note.
- 201 *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 8 (Hebrew), p. 63 (French). Compare also to *ibid.*, p. 53 (French), where Metatron is none other than Abel. It should be mentioned that in this fragment R. Joseph confuses Enoch the son of Cain and Enoch the son of Yared.
- 202 See also *ibid.*, p. 20 (Hebrew), p. 90 (French). See also p. 24 (Hebrew), p. 105 (French).
- 203 See MS. Paris BN 228, fol. 214ab, which overlaps in several important instances with MS. Paris BN 841, printed in Mopsik, *ibid.*, p. 84 (French), pp. 17–18 (Hebrew), offering some better versions.
- 204 See also above, note 121. I cannot tackle here the fascinating possibility that Enoch replaces Adam but also repairs his sin. This issue will be dealt with in my monograph currently in preparation, *Adam, Enoch, Metatron*. Especially interesting in this context is the stand found in R. Hayyim Vital's *Liqqutei Torah* (Vilnius, 1880), fol. 15ab or in R. Shne'or Zalman of Liady, *Torah 'Or* (Kehot Publication Society, Brooklyn, 1984), fol. 5b. To be sure, other figures, like Joseph, have been understood as repairing that sin. See R. Isaiah Horowitz, *ha-Shelah*, vol. 2, fol. 81a.
- 205 See above, note 176.
- 206 See *Fragment d'un commentaire sur la Genese*, p. 20 (Hebrew), pp. 92–3 (French). An issue that deserves special attention is the recurrence of the name Yaho'el in the writings of this Kabbalist. In one example preserved anonymously in *Sefer ha-Malkhut*, fol. 70a the affinity of Yaho'el to Metatron is quite explicit. It should be pointed out that, as in Nahmanides, in his writings it is possible to identify an embodiment of the divinity. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 64 note 51. Whether embodiment should be referred to as incarnation is indeed a great phenomenological quandary, as we may see from the conflicting statements found in *ibid.*, pp. 324, versus 395.
- 207 See *Genesis Rabba* 52.3, pp. 546–7. See also the editors' notes, who adduce numerous manuscript varia of this parable, especially *Leviticus Rabba'* 1.13.
- 208 Deut. 22.17.
- 209 The quotation from *Genesis Rabba'* 52.3 starts here.
- 210 On this issue see in more detail Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 109–17. See also in the text printed in Mopsik, *Fragment d'un commentaire*, p. 97 (French) and p. 22 (Hebrew).
- 211 Num. 23.4. Balaam is the symbol of the powers of impurity. The name of this prophet occurs in various Midrashic and kabbalistic passages dealing with apparitions of God to the gentile prophets by night. See also R. Joseph of Hamadan's similar discussion in *Sefer ha-Malkhut* (Casablanca, 1930), fol. 103d and in his *Commentary on Ten Sefirot*, MS. Paris BN 824, fols 91a, 92a.
- 212 I have not found any precise source for this view in classical rabbinic texts.
- 213 MS. New York, JTS 1722, fol. 221a, printed in Idel, 'Additional Fragments', pp. 47–8. On the entrance of the disguised redeemer into the world in a manner that circumvents the powers of evil, in order to explode them, compare with the view of the secret Jesus in the monophysite theory of Jacob of Sarug: see Chesnut, *Three Monophysite*, pp. 128–32.

- 214 See e.g. Idel, 'R. Joseph of Hamadan's *Commentary on Ten Sefirot* and Fragments of His Writings', *'Alef Sefer* 6–7 (1979), pp. 76–8 (Hebrew). I hope to deal with this Kabbalist's original view of incest interdictions in a separate study. The assumption, which becomes much more explicit after the mid-fourteenth century in *Sefer ha-Temunah* and later in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, that what is interdicted below is allowed on high, even had an impact on Lurianic Kabbalah, which rejected the authority of these two books. See also Gershom Scholem, *Alchemy and Kabbalah*, tr. Klaus Ottmann (Continuum, New York, London, 2006), p. 24. This discrepancy between processes going on in the supernal world and the lower one transpires in a statement found after the members of the divine family are listed, where the anonymous Kabbalist says: 'And those things should not be revealed in the lower world.' See *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 2, fol. 1c. See also below, our discussions of Lurianism and the return of the son to the bowels of his mother.
- 215 See the material adduced in Idel, 'Additional Fragments', pp. 50–1, and Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 109–17.
- 216 This is just one of the numerous profound differences between ecstatic Kabbalah and the various theosophical-theurgical systems. For more on this issue see the Concluding Remarks.
- 217 Jud. 14.4.
- 218 *Tzaphnat Pa'aneah*, MS. Jerusalem NUL 4<sup>o</sup> 154, fol. 79a. The facsimile of this manuscript has been printed by Misgav Yerushalayim (Jerusalem, 1991), and in the Introduction to this edition I have discussed some of the issues treated below; see pp. 51–3 (Hebrew).
- 219 See *ibid.*, fols 80b, 81b.
- 220 *ibid.*, fol. 82a.
- 221 See Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi* (Hebrew version) p. 745. This discussion is missing in the English, expanded version of the book.
- 222 Compare the view of Cordovero, discussed in Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 97–8; for R. Moses Galante, see the passage adduced by Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi*, pp. 57–8, who assumes that there must be some power stemming from the demonic world into the Messiah, in order to be able to succeed in his mission. Scholem, *ibid.*, assumes, however, that this view is part of Lurianic Kabbalah. For the assumption that incestuous sexual relations are necessary for the birth of the Messiah see also the early eighteenth-century Ḥasidic author R. Qalonimus Qalman Epstein, *Ma'or va-Shemesh* (Mekhon 'Even Yisrael, Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 103–4, who writes in a manner reminiscent of Cordoverian views. See also Sack, *ibid.*
- 223 On a vision of *du-partzufin* as pointing to higher levels within the divine world see the rather cryptic responsum of R. David printed in Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalistic Material from the Circle of R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid', *JSJT* 2 (2) (1982/83), pp. 194–7 (Hebrew), and the further analysis in Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 132–3.
- 224 Job 19.26. In all the kabbalistic literature I am acquainted with I find this quite an unusual understanding of the biblical verse. For other kabbalistic readings of this verse see Alexander Altmann's study referred to below in note 227.
- 225 *Mar'ot ha-Zov'ot*, p. 202. See also the parallel passage found in his commentary on liturgy *Sefer 'Or Zarua'*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1624, fol. 10b. For a somewhat similar stand see R. Joseph of Hamadan's passage translated and discussed in Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 104. See also Moshe Idel, 'Une figure d'homme au-dessus des sefirot [A propos de la doctrine des 'eclats' de R. David ben Yehouda he-Ḥassid et ses developpements]', tr. Charles Mopsik, *Pardes* 8 (1988), pp. 131–50.
- 226 See his 'The Case against Synonymity of *Morphē and Eikon*', *JSNT* 34 (1988), pp. 77–86, as well as his 'The Worship of Adam and Jesus as the Image of God', *JSNT* 39 (1990), pp. 96–7.
- 227 See Alexander Altmann, *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1987), pp. 1–33. It should be pointed out that in the writings of R. David, the reflection of the higher within the lower levels is quite an important theosophical assumption. Such a case is discussed in this section. However, in numerous other cases, we find assumptions that in each *sefirah* all the other *sefirot* are reflected, especially in the *Ze'ir* understood as *Tiferet*. See, especially, the passage I use in 'On R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's Mystical Intention', p. 44, where the different *sefirot* found in the *Ze'ir* are addressed during the prayer. This text is of paramount importance for understanding the history of the increased importance of the *Ze'yir 'Anupin* in the worship of Kabbalists, especially in Lurianic Kabbalah.
- 228 MS. Milano-Ambrosiana 62, fols 112ab. See also the late thirteenth-century compilation from different sources printed by Gershom Scholem, in his *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum* (Hebrew University, Hierosolymis, 1930), p. 207 (Hebrew).
- 229 *Mar'ot ha-Zov'ot*, pp. 246–7. For the view that the divine name represents the divine presence upon man, see above in Chapter 2 and Idel, 'Gazing at the Head', p. 273.
- 230 See note 223 above.
- 231 See e.g. the material I discussed in the context of R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah, in the Introduction to Idel, *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 320–4.
- 232 On this layer of the *Zohar* and additional material belonging to its author see Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings*; Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine, Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1993).
- 233 Huss, 'A Sage', p. 127 note 89.
- 234 *RM, Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 282b. On the double valence, or even the ambivalence of the nature of Metatron in this layer of the *Zohar* and its later repercussions, see Asulin, 'Another Glance', p. 456. For an interesting parallel which highlights the theurgical aspect of sonship see the Hebrew text of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, in Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings*, pp. 6–7, 10 and the numerous parallels adduced by Gottlieb in the footnotes. For different interpretations of the Mezuzah in R. Joseph of Hamadan, see Iris Felix, *Theurgy, Magic and Mysticism in the Kabbalah of R. Joseph of Shushan* (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 180–303 (Hebrew). The couple Metatron and Sammael is

- implicit in the writings of Abraham Abulafia. Though his approach is different from the author of the later layer of the Zoharic literature, the impact of his views cannot be excluded. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 76–8 and the corresponding footnotes.
- 235 *RM, Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 111b. See Huss, 'A Sage', p. 127, and Liebes, 'Zohar and Eros', p. 74. See also below, R. Moses Cordovero's passage.
- 236 *RM, Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 187b.
- 237 *Tiqqunei Zohar*, fol. 66b. Though the dominant view identifies the son with the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, in one instance in this kabbalistic literature the son is described as *Yesod*, which can be seen as part of the sexualization process of the son. See the text printed in Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings*, p. 44.
- 238 *Tiqqunei Zohar*, fol. 127a.
- 239 *Ibid.*, fol. 110a.
- 240 See above, Chapter 2.
- 241 See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Kabbalah', pp. 389–408. On the various renaissances in Jewish mysticism including the late thirteenth-century Castilian Renaissance see Idel, 'On European Cultural Renaissances'.
- 242 *Ibid.*, pp. 387, 402–3, and Metatron, cf. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 167 and above, Chapter 1, Section 4.
- 243 It should be mentioned that both *Tiferet* and Torah are feminine nouns, but this does not mean that there is any feminization of R. Hanina ben Dosa'.
- 244 Gen. 1.26.
- 245 'Adam in the verse amounts to gematria 45 like *Yod He' Waw He'*. See also above, Chapter 3 note 80.
- 246 Namely two times the Tetragrammaton, which amounts to 52. This view is found also in the context of the description of Seth as son in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 2, fol. 63a.
- 247 *Sefer ha-Qanah*, fol. 43b. On these two influential kabbalistic books see Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer Ha-Peli'ah and Sefer Ha-Kanah*. The passage has also been copied in the late fifteenth-century compilation of kabbalistic secrets entitled *Sefer Shushan Sodot*, by R. Moshe of Kiev, fol. 6b. That the symbolism of son here differs from that used elsewhere in the same book, where the son is described as *sefirah* of *Yesod* – see note 32 above – is normal given the size of this huge collection of various traditions from tens of different kabbalistic and non-kabbalistic sources.
- 248 See Idel, *Golem*, pp. 144–5.
- 249 BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 74ab.
- 250 *Sefer ha-Qanah*, fol. 43b.
- 251 See BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12a. On the avatars of this legend in Jewish mysticism see Moshe Idel, 'From the "Hidden Light" to the "Light within the Torah": A Chapter in the Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism', *On Light, Migvvan De'ot be-Yisrael* 11 (2002), pp. 23–62 (Hebrew).
- 252 BT *Babba' Batra'*, fol. 74b. On this legend and its kabbalistic interpretations see Idel, 'Leviathan and Its Consort'.
- 253 Idel, *ibid.*, pp. 174–80.

- 254 On this issue see Stroumsa, 'The Early Christian Fish Symbol'.
- 255 *Binyan*, namely the seven lower *sefirot*. See also below, note 368.
- 256 *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, vol. 1, fol. 40ab. From the context I assume that the anonymous Kabbalist copied or formulated a Nahmanidean view. See also *ibid.*, vol. 1, fols 31d, 32bc, where the ascent of *Knesset Israel* to *Tiferet* must occur to allow the supernal influx. Of paramount importance is the statement found elsewhere in this book to the effect that the male power, *Tiferet*, receives the influx only for the sake of the '*Atarah*: *ibid.*, vol. 2, fol. 6a. On the attitude of the anonymous Kabbalist to women in his other book, *Sefer ha-Qanah*, from which we have quoted above, see Tayla Fishman, 'A Kabbalistic Perspective on Gender-Specific Commandments: On the Interplay of Symbols and Society', *AJS Review* 17 (2) (1992), pp. 199–245. On the various ascents of the last *sefirah* and her transformations see R. Jacob Kopel of Medzirech, *Sha'arei Gan 'Eden* (S. Monson, Jerusalem, 1967), fol. 69bc. See also Cordovero's view adduced in Azulai, '*Or ha-Hammah*, vol. 2, fol. 268a.
- 257 On the books that constitute this extensive kabbalistic literature see Scholem, 'The Maggid'; Scholem, 'On the Story of R. Joseph della Reina', in eds, Siegfried Stein & Raphael Loewe, *Hokhma Bina veDaat, Studies in Jewish Religious Intellectual History Presented to A. Altmann on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Alabama University Press, Alabama, 1979), pp. 100–8 (Hebrew); Idel, 'Inquiries'; Idel, 'Neglected Writings by the Author of *Sefer Kaf ha-Qetoret*', *Pe'amim* 53 (1993), pp. 75–89 (Hebrew); Idel, 'Magic and Kabbalah in the Book of the Responding Entity', in ed., M.I. Gruber, *The Solomon Goldman Lectures* (The Spertus College of Judaica Press, Chicago, 1993), pp. 125–38; Idel, 'The Origin of Alchemy According to Zosimos and a Hebrew Parallel', *REJ* 144 (1986), pp. 117–24; Idel, 'The Lost Books of Solomon', *Daat* 32/33 (1994), pp. 235–46 (Hebrew).
- 258 Georges Vajda, 'Passages anti-chrétiens dans *Kaf Ha-Qetoret*', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 117 (1980), pp. 45–58; Idel, 'The Attitude to Christianity'.
- 259 See Idel, *ibid.* For a more recent application of the same pattern of understanding Ashkenazi material, as well as other earlier Jewish topics, see Yuval, '*Two Nations in Your Womb*'.
- 260 Jud. 21.12.
- 261 Amos 5.2.
- 262 Gen. 24.12.
- 263 See MS. Jerusalem-Mussaihoff 24, fol. 34b; MS. Jerusalem-Mussayoff 5, fol. 120.
- 264 See the various versions of this dictum in Idel, 'The Attitude to Christianity', p. 94.
- 265 Isa. 62.5.
- 266 *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, MS. Jerusalem, National and University Library 8° 147, fol. 102b. For more on the whole issue see Idel, 'The Attitude to Christianity', pp. 91–4.
- 267 On this model see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 95–102, 111–45. On the affinity between sonship and magic in the *Magical Greek Papyri* see above, Introduction note 28 and see also Chapter 1 note 80.

- 268 The image of ladder and chain recurs in Cordovero's writings. See Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, Chapter 1, as well as the passage from the Great Maggid of Medziretch in Chapter 6.
- 269 Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 32.1; vol. 2, fol. 78c. Implicitly, we have here a nexus between sonship and righteousness connected to the *sefirah* of *Yesod*. See the passage from *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, mentioned above in note 32.
- 270 4.2 (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, 1965), p. 34. Cordovero refers in this context to his writings in *Pardes Rimmonim*. This vision of the Kabbalist as son may be related to the concept of *Benei Meheimanuta'*, the sons of the kabbalistic doctrine, which is recurrent in the Zoharic literature. Thus, the son is certainly a Jew. See e.g. *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 18b; Liebes, *On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah*, pp. 78, 144; and Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah*, pp. 576–7. On the particularistic approach to sonship in Cordovero's school see the texts adduced by Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, p. 111. For the view that the people of Israel are collectively the Sons of God, as well as his relatives, see Cordovero's *Sefer Tomer Devorah*, ch. 1 (Schmuel Zukerman, Jerusalem, 1910), p. 4.
- 271 On the connection between the presence of the righteous in the world and blessing, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy, par. 38.
- 272 *Derishot be-'Inianei Mal'akhim*, p. 76. See also *Pardes Rimmonim*, 24.10–11; vol. 2, fols 50d–51b; 30.3; vol. 2, fol. 69b.
- 273 I assume that this description, as well as the mentioning of the son and the servant, is reminiscent of the passage from the *RM*, *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 111b, discussed above.
- 274 This term is absent in Cordovero's version adduced above and in Nathan Shapira's passage though it occurs elsewhere in Cordovero's writings. It should nevertheless be pointed out that in Cordovero himself, the assumption is that it is possible to become the chariot, or seat, of a supernal power and receive its qualities. This is the explanation for Enoch's becoming Metatron: the human being becomes the chariot of Metatron because of his righteousness. See *Pardes Rimmonim*, 22.4, vol. 1, fol. 108b.
- 275 R. Abraham Azulai, *Commentary on Massekhet 'Avot* (S. M. Nadel, Arad, 1986), fol. 3a. On the distinction between the worship of the son and the servant in an important commentary on the *Zohar* influenced by Cordovero, see R. Abraham Azulai, *'Or ha-Hammah*, vol. 3, fol. 68b. Sonship is explicitly related in this commentary to the source of the soul in the world of emanation, what I call static sonship. This text reflects the profound impact of the theory of two different types of contact with the divine, found in Nahmanides: that of the soul ascending on high, and that of the body upon which the divine presence dwells. This issue requires a separate analysis. For a collection of a series of texts by Cordovero where sonship is explicitly related to the source of the soul in the world of emanation and the study of Kabbalah, see Shmuel Yudaikin, *Da' 'Et 'Elohei 'Avikha* (Benei Beraq, 1995), pp. 246–53, especially 252 (Hebrew).
- 276 For more on this issue see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 198–203 and *Ascensions on High*, pp. 47–8.
- 277 *Merkkavah la-Shekhinah*. See *Genesis Rabbah* 47.6, p. 475; 82.6, p. 983. In fact, Cordovero speaks elsewhere in the commentary on the *Zohar* about the human righteous becoming the chariot for the *sefirah* of *Yesod*. See *'Or Yaqar*, vol. 4, pp. 1–2, 4–5.
- 278 *'Or Yaqar*, vol. 12, pp. 192–3, quoted and discussed in Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 53, 218–19. The phrase *'Bar mursham'*, perhaps to be translated as the inscribed son, occurs previously in the ninth-century Italian poet R. 'Amittay, in a poem printed as an Appendix in *Megillat 'Aḥima'atz*, ed. Benjamin Klar (Tarshish, Jerusalem, 1974), p. 81.
- 279 This view is clear already in several instances in the *Zohar* and in R. Moses de Leon's Hebrew writings, where the expression 'Jacob Joseph' was understood as Joseph serving as the phallus of *Tiferet*, which is represented by Jacob. See e.g. *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 44a and de Leon's *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, ed. Charles Mopsik (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 1996), p. 10. See also the last quote from *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* above, end of Section 11. In other cases, especially in the *Zohar*, Joseph is described as being on the same level as Moses, again an implication that the *sefirah* of *Yesod* and *Tiferet* are imagined together. See e.g. *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 68a.
- 280 See Bracha Sack, *Shomer ha-Pardes, The Kabbalist Rabbi Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz of Prague* (Ben Gurion University of Negev Press, Beer Sheva, 2002), pp. 41, 44–6, 62, 75 (Hebrew). Since these discussions look quite accurately at Cordovero's theories as analyzed above, I do not deal with them again here.
- 281 *Ha-Shelah*, vol. 3, fol. 59b and compare also *ibid.*, fol. 59a. See also Sack, *The Kabbalah of R. Moshe Cordovero*, p. 53 note 108.
- 282 See above, Chapter 1 note 296.
- 283 For a comprehensive, balanced and updated analysis of Luria's kabbalistic system and its background see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos, Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003). Throughout his monograph Fine paid due attention to the centrality of the Lesser Face in Luria's system. See also Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 270. For other comprehensive analyses of the main topics in Lurianism relevant to our discussions see Yehuda Liebes, 'Myth vs. Symbol in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah', in ed., Lawrence Fine, *Essential Papers on Kabbalah* (New York University Press, New York, London, 1995), pp. 212–42; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 110–21; and Pachter, *Roots of Faith and Devekut*, pp. 131–234. For his connection in the framework of the concept of sonship see above, note 133. A straightforward identification of the son with the *Za'yir* is found in several sources related to Luria's system, in the context of a relation to the female configuration. See e.g. Vital's *Sefer 'Etz Hayyim*, Part 44, ch. 2, par. 9, vol. 2, fol. 46a, and the kabbalistic sources found in notes 286–7 below. For a poem stemming from Lurianic circles related to Jesus, see Samuel Krauss, 'Un texte cabbalistique sur Jesus', *REJ* 62 (1911), pp. 242–3. For issues related to the constitution of the feminine configuration see the important contribution of Yoram Jacobson, 'The Aspect of the 'Feminine' in the Lurianic Kabbalah', in eds, P. Schaefer & J. Dan, *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1993), pp. 239–55.
- 284 *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, no. 38 (Research Center of Kabbalah, Jerusalem, 1971), p.

160. The face-to-face exchange is a leitmotif in revelations literature since the *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, and in R. Joseph Qaro's revelations, in passages dealing with Elijah. For the attribution of a revelation of Elijah to Vital, see Krauss, *ibid*. For the divine name *Ben* in Lurianic Kabbalah – a certain plene spelling of the Tetragrammaton – as a theurgical name, intended to trigger the feminine waters, see Liebes, 'The Attitude of the Vilna Gaon', pp. 276–7. In a linguistic sense we have here another example of a theurgical son. See also the *Testament of the Besht*, printed in *Liqqutim Yeqarim*, fol. 48ab, par. 142.
- 285 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 192 note 67. It seems that since Lurianic Kabbalah, Elijah's rank is conceived of as higher than Enoch's. R. Menahem Azariah of Fano put it simply: in comparison to Enoch/Metatron, the 'rank of Elijah is very high'. See 'Asarah Ma'amarot, quoted in *Midrash Talpiyyot*, fol. 220b.
- 286 See especially the formulation found in Luria's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, ed. Yehudah Ashlag, vol. 2, *Derushei Pesah*, Sermon 1 (Eshel, Tel Aviv, ND), p. 147; *Liqqutei Torah*, fol. 28b: 'Behold the secret of the name of *Ben* is *Z[e'yir]* 'A [*nuppim*] that is called *Ben* ... and is the secret of the two Tetragrammata [*havvayyot*]; and *Peri 'Etz Hayyim*, Sha'ar Hag ha-Matzot, Chapters 5 and 7 (Dobrawona, 1803), fol. 118b, 121c, and above, note 283. See also R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, 'Adir ba-Marom (Beit ha-Sofer, Benei Beraq, 1968), vol. 1, fol. 61b, where the human son especially the firstborn, corresponds to *Ze'yir 'Anppin* in the sefirotic world. Let me point out that the importance of the son/mother axis is evident in Luria's contemporary R. Joseph Qaro, an eminent halakhic figure and a Kabbalist active in Safed, though much less in the sense of the affinity between two divine powers. See the recurring revelations of the 'admonishing mother' to Qaro, who is described as a son (Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*). For the return of the son to the mother's womb see Eliade, *Rites and Symbolism of Initiation*, pp. 51–3. For concrete imagery of the return of the son to the mother, understood as Godhead, see Carolyne Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984), pp. 150–1. For the impact of Lurianic discussions on Christian Kabbalah see Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, pp. 127–8, where the *Za'yir* is identified with the divine son. It should be pointed out that in some Lurianic discussions the ascent of the *Za'yir* to the womb of his mother is triggered by the performance of the ritual, namely it is part of a theurgical event. See R. Naftali Bakhrakh, 'Emeq ha-Melekh, fol. 87b and the passage from his book to be translated immediately below.
- 287 Fol. 97a. This text is based upon the theosophical interpretation of Deut. 14.1, where the Tetragrammaton is understood as the *Za'yir*, while the second divine name, 'Eloheikhem, stands for *Nuqbba'*, the female aspect. This is a standard interpretation of the verse, found already in the earliest Lurianic texts, like Luria's. See e.g. *Sefer ha-Liqqutim* ('Or ha-Ganuz, Jerusalem, 1981), fol. 7a. Here the phenomenon of double sonship can be discerned, though in a less explicit manner, as the theurgical understanding of the ritual activity of the son. See also an important passage on double sonship in Luria's 'Etz Hayyim, Palace II, Gate 11, ch. 6, vol. 1, fol. 52cd: 'You should know that just as the entire world is governed by *ZUN* [*Za'yir ve-Nuqbbeih*] and just as they are called sons of 'Abba' and 'Imma' we too are called sons of *ZUN*, according to the [secret interpretation of the verse] "You are sons of God, you Lord." This seminal statement recurs also in other Lurianic treatises, like – for example – R. Hayyim della Rosa, *Torat Hakham*, fols 70b, and 98b. On the views found in these texts see Pachter, *Roots of Faith and Devequt*, pp. 186–7. For another formulation of the theurgical role of an entity designated as son see the theory that each lower entity in the divine world is a son of the higher, and elevates the female waters to trigger for the hierogamos on high, as articulated in *ibid.*, fol. 101b. For the possible source of such an interpretation see the discussion found in *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 34a and in the later Zoharic layer known as *Ra'ya' Meheimna*, *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 94b. For an impact of the theory of the sonship of the Jews to the *ZUN* see R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *Sefer Taqtu Tefilot*, no. 53. The view that *Za'yir* and *Nuqbbeih* rule over the world is found already in Cordovero, and has earlier sources in Kabbalah, where the role of the *du-partzufin* – the *sefirot* of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* – is envisioned in similar terms. See also another interesting passage found in Luria's 'Etz Hayyim, Palace VI, Gate 34, ch. 2, vol. 2, fol. 46a, where the *Za'yir* is explicitly described as the firstborn son.
- 288 BT *Qiddushin*, fol. 17b.
- 289 *Liqqutei ha-Shas*, on *Qiddushin* (Krakau, 1895), fol. 12a. This text had a huge impact on the writings of R. Menahem Azariah of Fano, especially in *Yonat 'Elem* (Lemberg, 1859), ch. 15, fol. 12b–13a, and through him also on other Kabbalists of the seventeenth century. See, e.g. R. Nathan Neta 'Shapira of Crakau, *Megalleh 'Amuqqot* (Alpha, Jerusalem, 1981), 'Ofan 250, fol. 90cd. For another interesting discussion of sonship in R. Menahem Azariah see his *Ma'amar ha-Nefesh* (Pietrkov, 1893), fol. 27b discussed in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, p. 202. For the origin of the different human faculties from various parts of the theosophical system see also Bakharakh's 'Emeq ha-Melekh, fol. 97a.
- 290 *Midrash Talpiyyot*, fol. 92c. See also *ibid.*, fol. 220b. 'Eved 'Avraham, 'the servant of Abraham' amounts to 316, like Metatron. Abraham is the symbol of the *sefirah* of *Hesed*, a term that I translate here as Grace, and Metatron is conceived of as a servant of this *sefirah*.
- 291 See the nineteenth-century Kabbalist R. Jacob Sha'alti'el Nigno, 'Emmet le-Ya'aqov, Part I, under the rubric *Ben*, item no. 18 (Leghorn, 1843), fol. 12b. This Kabbalist capitalized on much earlier sources, since parallels to his views are found in the mid-seventeenth-century R. Nathan Shapira of Jerusalem, *Torat Nathan* (1885), fol. 4ab.
- 292 On Jesus and Abulafia see above, Chapter 3 and Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 45–62; On Jesus and Tzevi see Scholem, *Sabbatai Şevi*, p. 399.
- 293 See Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer Ha-Peli'ah and Sefer Ha-Kanah*, pp. 75–80. On the recurrence of the *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* manuscripts in Sabbatean circles see the important remarks of Meir Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement in Greece* (Makhon Ben Tzevi, Jerusalem, 1971–7), pp. 350–4 (Hebrew).
- 294 See the reprint edition of John Evelyn, *The History of Sabatai Şevi, The Suppos'd Messiah of the Jews* (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of

- California, Los Angeles, 1968) (originally printed in 1669), p. 60, and the Italian original, p. 28. Scholem was well aware of this source and used it several times in *Sabbatai Sevi*, see Index, p. 969, *sub voce* Evelyn. See also the interesting warning from God about the attitude of the Jews of Gaza (expressed through the lips of Nathan of Gaza, described as in a trance-like state), toward Sabbatai Tzevi, who is designated by the power that revealed himself, probably God, by the titles 'my son, my friend, my Messiah'. Cf. *Injane Sabbatai Zewi*, ed. Aharon Freimann (Mekize Nirdamim, Berlin, 1912), p. 47 (Hebrew). Though the expression 'my friend' may reflect a Muslim influence, the vicinity of the two other phrases, namely 'My son' and 'My Messiah' points in the direction of a Christian influence.
- 295 See *ibid.*, pp. 615–16 note 35, and Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, pp. 213–14. On p. 213, Elqayam offers an interesting Adlerian psychoanalytical interpretation of Sabbatai's view of himself as a firstborn, as being a reaction to his not having been the firstborn son of his human father. More recently, however, Elqayam has ignored this important piece of evidence, which I believe he previously analyzed quite correctly, and which was so clearly related to the formulation of sonship in Christianity, by revising his view to suggest that Sufism was the main historical source for the Sabbatean movement, arguing that scholarship in the field is Eurocentric and allegedly emphasizes too much non-Sufi material. See his 'The Horizon of Reason: The Divine Madness of Sabbatai Sevi', *Kabbalah* 9 (2003), pp. 7–61, especially pp. 41–3, 50 (Hebrew). Neither does this Sufi-oriented picture take into consideration another piece of evidence stemming again from Tzevi himself, regarding the circumstances of the beginning of his messianic mission, which has been cast in terms characteristic of ecstatic Kabbalah. See Moshe Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism', *Kabbalah* 8 (2003), pp. 15–20. See also again Avraham Elqayam, 'Eretz ha-Tzvi: Portrayal of the Land of Israel in the Thought of Nathan of Gaza', in ed., Aviezer Ravitzky, *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought* (Yad Izhak ben Tzvi, Jerusalem, 1998), p. 161 note 118 (Hebrew), where he proposes a turn of a kabbalistic expression to its Christian source, which deals with *corpus domini*, in the context of a discussion about Sabbatai Tzevi. For more on Christian forms of impact on early Sabbateanism see Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, vol. 3, pp. 954–60, and Elqayam himself in *Mystery of the Faith*, pp. 102–4. Thus, I propose to see a diversity of pertinent conceptual sources, all relevant for understanding both Tzevi's thought and the kabbalistic lines of thought that nourished the messianic movement he initiated. Needless to say that while those direct testimonies stemming from the mouth of Tzevi are ignored by scholars, nothing parallel regarding an acquaintance with Sufism can be derived from Tzevi's explicit statements, or those of his entourage, but only from his possible social or historical 'context'. Contexts are deemed to be more powerful factors that the content of the texts scholars try to understand. Thus, a strong assumption of the nature and importance of one of the available contexts becomes much more important than specific and explicit texts. My claim in this case, as in many others, is that when the context is formulated in the singular, it may just conceal
- a strong scholarly ideology, which can be described as either historicism or proximism. For an interesting proposal on the impact of Ismailiyyah on Sabbateanism see Bezalel Naor, mentioned below in note 312.
- 296 See Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, pp. 210–20.
- 297 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–20.
- 298 *Ibid.*, pp. 218–19. On the issue of Cain as the Son of God see the study of Israel Knohl, 'Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan' in eds, Nathalie Dohrmann & David Stern, *Jewish Biblical Interpretation in a Comparative Context* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2007) (forthcoming) and his *The Divine Symphony*, pp. 43–5. The connection between the firstborn son and evil in theosophical Kabbalah is deserving of a separate study. See, meanwhile, Moshe Idel, 'The Evil Thought of the Deity', *Tarbiz* 49 (1980), pp. 356–64 (Hebrew). I suggested in this article that it is possible to discern in some kabbalistic discussions in the second half of the thirteenth century, and to a certain extent also in some earlier legendary Ashkenazi traditions, the impact of the Zurvanic theory that God has a firstborn son who is evil, alongside a younger one who is better. See also the various traditions circulating in popular books and beliefs in Europe, mentioned in Chapter 2 note 52.
- 299 See Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 65. On this page a series of other gematrias related to words found in the first chapter of Genesis and the name Sabbatai Tzevi have been adduced. This is, no doubt, part of the strong linguistic orientation of the Jewish Kabbalists.
- 300 See *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 7–8; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 270, 275; Liebes, 'Early Lurianic Treatises', p. 340. See also another Sabbatean text where 'Attiqa' *Qaddisha*' is described explicitly as the father of Tzevi, who is suckling from the latter. Cf. Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 317.
- 301 See the translation of the passage in *Genesis Rabba*' where different comments on this term are found, in Schaefer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, pp. 80–1. I wonder to what extent we may find a reverberation of the bosom image discussed in Chapter 1, especially in the context of Abraham as described in *Sefer Yetzirah*. See especially the study referred to in note 196.
- 302 See Tishby's remark in his edition of *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 7 note 8. The return of Tzevi, the son, to the Mother or the *sefirah* of *Binah*, represented here by the term *Yovel*, namely Jubilee, is a pattern well known in the book of the *Zohar*, in R. Joseph Qaro, in Lurianic Kabbalah, and later in R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto. On the latter see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Tiqqun ha-Shekhinah: Redemption and the Overcoming of Gender Dimorphism in the Messianic Kabbalah of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto', *History of Religions* 36 (4) (1997), pp. 319–20.
- 303 *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 7–8; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 270 and his footnotes there. For Frankist interpretations of this theory see Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, p. 194. For the theory of the ascent of Tzevi from one degree to another in the sefirotic realm see the apocalypse *Gey Hizzon*, printed by Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 214–15, 217. For the affinities between Jubilee and redemption in Jewish mysticism see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 187–97.

- 304 *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 136b. See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 44–6, 60–2.
- 305 This quotation is part of the Epistle of Nathan of Gaza to R. Raphael Joseph as printed in *Tzitzat Novel Tzvi*, p. 11; Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi*, pp. 273–4; and Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, p. 80. On Sarah, the third wife of Tzevi, as Rebecca and as a queen and *Maṭrona*, and as an Eve-figure, see e.g. *ibid.*, p. 90. On Sabbatai's anticipated visit to Samabatiyon see *Tzitzat Novel Tzvi*, p. 10. For the importance of the hierogamos as reflecting the state of redemption, according to the Sabbatean document quoted here, see *ibid.*, p. 8. For Tzevi's propensity to perform unusual forms of marriages see Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi*, pp. 159–60, 400–1.
- 306 Namely the acronyms of the Hebrew names of the seven planets. However, the *gematria* of these consonants amounts to 538, not 541, whereas the two other terms mentioned here do add up to 538. See also below, note 158.
- 307 Dan. 12.3.
- 308 See Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 232 and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 201. On Enoch and righteousness see above in Chapter 1 and especially below in the Appendix.
- 309 See Moshe Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism', *Kabbalah* 8 (2003), pp. 7–50, and Asulin, 'Another Glance', pp. 455–6. On Tzevi and Metatron see David J. Halperin, 'Sabbatai Zevi, Metatron and Mehmed: Myth and History in Seventeenth-Century Judaism', in ed., Daniel Breslauer, *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth: Challenge and Response* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1997), pp. 288, 303 note 83. See also the later Sabbatean text printed in Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 301, where it is said that 'the name is within him' in the context of Sabbatai Tzevi.
- 310 See Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi*, pp. 910–13.
- 311 Robert P. Carroll, 'Toward a Grammar of Creation: On Steiner the Theologian', in eds, Nathan A. Scott Jr & Ronald A. Sharp, *Reading George Steiner* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1994), p. 267. On the marginal status of theology in Judaism in general see Menachem Kellner, *Must a Jew believe Anything?* (Littmann Library, London, 1999), *passim*; as for the theology of the Hebrew Bible see e.g. Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, 'Tanakh Theology: the Religion of the Old Testament and the Place of Jewish Biblical Theology', in eds, Patrick D. Miller, Jr et al., *Ancient Israelite Religion; Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 617–44; or Shimon Gesundheit, 'Gibt es eine juedische Theologie der Hebraeischen Bible?' in ed., Bernd Janowski, *Theologie und Exegese des Alten Testaments/der Hebraeischen Bible* (Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, Stuttgart, 2005), pp. 73–86, as well as other contributions in this volume, like those of Benjamin D. Sommer.
- 312 On this figure see the updated survey of David Halperin and his Introduction to his translation of selected texts in Abraham Miquel Cardozo, *Selected Writings*. On his thought see also Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, especially pp. 17–18, 35–48; Wolfson, 'Constructions of the *Shekhinah*'; Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, pp. 97–101; Devorah Gamlieli, 'Stages of "Becoming" in the Creation: Parallelism with Philosophical and Psychological Terminology', *Kabbalah* 12 (2004), pp. 316–20 (Hebrew); and Nissim Yosha, 'Lurianic Kabbalah as a Metaphor in the Homilies of Abraham Miquel Cardozo', *Kabbalah* 8 (2003), pp. 121–43 (Hebrew). See also the claim of Bezalel Naor that Ismailiyyah has an impact on Cardozo's thought. Cf. *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism: Study of an Underground Movement* (Orot, New York, 1999), pp. 14–20.
- 313 See Liebes, *ibid.*, p. 16; Liebes, 'Sabbatianism and the Bounds of Religion', ed., Rachel Elior, *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism* (The Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 13–21 (Hebrew).
- 314 See the text printed in Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 406–7. On the term primordial wisdom see Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, p. 41 note 18.
- 315 See, Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 408.
- 316 Scholem, *ibid.* On this issue see Arthur Hyman, 'From One and Simple Only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be', in ed., Lenn E. Goodman, *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), pp. 111–35.
- 317 Scholem, *ibid.*, pp. 406–8, especially p. 409 and note 41. For the texts dealing with those three supernal lights see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 347–54. See also below in the Concluding Remarks, the Trinitarian view that the fourteenth-century author Profiat Duran attributes to an unidentified Ashkenazi master (or perhaps this is a view of his own).
- 318 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 406–7. See the epistle printed by Isaac Raphael Molkho & Abraham Amarillio, 'Cardozo's Autobiographical Epistles', *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), p. 223 (Hebrew).
- 319 *Ibid.*
- 320 *Ibid.*, p. 408.
- 321 *Ibid.*, p. 409; See also Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, pp. 348–9. See also Halperin's translation of Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, pp. 204–5. If we take this testimony seriously, it corroborates the claim of Isaiah Sonne concerning the Church's resort to Kabbalah as part of its missionary activity. See his 'The Place of the Kabbalah as a Means of Incitement of the Church in the 17th Century', *Bitzaron* 36 (1957), pp. 61–80 (Hebrew). More on Christian Kabbalah and interest in the concept of *Prisca theologia* in the next chapter.
- 322 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 408.
- 323 Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, pp. 39–40. It should be mentioned that Cardozo seems to be the first Kabbalist – R. Yehudah Arie'el of Modena considered this before him in his critique of Kabbalah in his '*Ari Nohem*' but he was not a Kabbalist – who admits that there is an affinity between the kabbalistic *partzufim* and the Christian *personas*. See Halperin, in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, p. 31.
- 324 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 409. On this issue see Cardozo's lengthy discussion in another theological treatise, printed by Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, pp. 342–7. For the kabbalistic and Sabbatean sources of this view see the important and comprehensive survey of Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith*, pp. 50–66.
- 325 *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 408, 409, 416.

- 326 Ibid., pp. 415–16. For the connection between theosis and sonship see Nicholas de Cusa, as discussed by McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 479–80.
- 327 Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, p. 286. A question that demands special investigation is whether the mentioning of the intellectual soul as the realm of man represents a Platonic theory, along the lines of R. Moses de Leon mentioned earlier in this chapter, or along the lines of Abulafia's sonship, which is more Aristotelian, as discussed in the previous chapter. Also, the distinction between the intellectual and the speaking soul may point to an earlier theory of the soul, presumably stemming from Pythagoreanism, found in Abraham Abulafia's school – though not in Abulafia himself – and in an early layer of the book of the *Zohar*, namely in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, see Idel, R. *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 74. The nexus between *Da'at* and *Ze'yir 'Anppin* reflects the impact of the theosophy characteristic of the literature of the 'Iddrot and of Lurianic Kabbalah where this *sefirah* is conceived to be a hidden power that preponderates over 'Abba' and 'Imma'.
- 328 This view is expressed elsewhere, Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 291.
- 329 Ibid. On p. 287, he points out the similarity to the Christian view of *unio hypostatica*, but he nevertheless distinguishes the Christian Trinity from the kabbalistic triunity, by emphasizing that Christians do not accept the theory of the ten *sefirot*.
- 330 On this figure, insofar as the issue discussed here is concerned, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 910–13.
- 331 Isa. 52.13.
- 332 Cf. *Tanhuma'*, ed. Buber, vol. 1, 139 and the sources mentioned by the editor, as well as the passage authored by Nahmanides and printed in eds, Adolf Neubauer & Samuel F. Driver, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters* (Ktav Publishing House, New York, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 76, 82.
- 333 See Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 246–79, and Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 50.
- 334 Namely a high soul stemming from the world of emanation, one of the highest spiritual capacities. See above, the discussion of the *Zohar*, in Section 5. For the unique status of Adam in sixteenth-century Kabbalah see Jacobson, *Along the Paths of Exile and Redemption*, pp. 71–4. For Adam as the Son of God see above, Chapter 3, in the discussion of R. Yehudah ha-Levi.
- 335 See also Halperin, *Selected Writings*, pp. 223–4.
- 336 8.5. On the various interpretations of this verse in ancient Judaism see Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 114, and Anderson, 'The Exaltation of Adam'. For the gematria of the word 'ha-'Adam' as 50 see the text attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, compare pp. 120–1 to 117.
- 337 Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, p. 288.
- 338 See *ibid.*, p. 295. Elsewhere, on p. 289, Cardozo describes the two Messiahs from the aspect of holiness, as stemming from the *Ze'yir 'Anppin* and his female, just as he describes there two Messiahs that stem from the realm of demonic powers.
- 339 Ibid., p. 407. Scholem remarks that the use of the term *mahut*, essence, may correspond to the Christian concept of *homoousios*. This term recurs again on pp. 410–11. For a comparison of the identity of son and father and the animal situation see *ibid.*, p. 413.
- 340 Ibid., p. 410. See also Cardozo, printed in Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, p. 39. A similar theory attributing the morphic and corporeal aspects of the child to the human progenitors, with God as the source of the spiritual dimension, can be found in the fourteenth- to fifteenth-century commentary on the Torah by R. Anselm Astrug, *Midrahei Torah*, ed. Shimeon Epstein (Berlin, 1899), pp. 8, 126.
- 341 See Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, pp. 365–9. It should be mentioned that the term 'Holy Son' *Bera' Qaddisha'*, occurs also in a Christian-kabbalistic pseudepigraphical text, as part of the description of the Trinity. See Liebes's important analysis, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 142–5 and Scholem, 'The Beginning of Christian Kabbalah', pp. 37, 50 note 77. This view has been well known by Jewish thinkers such as Azariah de Rossi and R. Yehudah Ariele da Modena, via the book of the Christian convert, Galatinus. See above, note 161 and below, Chapter 5.
- 342 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 411.
- 343 Ibid., pp. 411–12.
- 344 Ibid., pp. 420–1.
- 345 Ibid., p. 421.
- 346 Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, p. 296. There is no reason to assume that R. 'Azariah de Rossi's theory of *prisca theologia*, which will be discussed in the following chapter, serves as the source of inspiration for the Sabbatean thinker.
- 347 *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 421.
- 348 See Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, p. 292. It should be mentioned that in his most theological sermon, Cardozo argues that the Son of God, who is also the Messiah, will reveal the true understanding of the Godhead. See Halperin in Cardozo, *Selected Writings*, pp. 173, 184.
- 349 See Wolfson, 'Constructions of the *Shekhinah*', pp. 41–2.
- 350 Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, pp. 367–8. See also *ibid.*, pp. 365–6. See also Cardozo's letter dealing with the secret of the divinity, printed by Weiss, *Beit ha-Midrash* (1865), pp. 64–71, 100–3 (Hebrew).
- 351 See Wolfson, 'Constructions of the *Shekhinah*', pp. 39–40.
- 352 Compare to Halperin's view, *Selected Writings*, p. 32. See also Wolfson, 'Constructions of the *Shekhinah*', pp. 132, 141. It should be pointed out that in many cases in kabbalistic symbolism the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* is described as a body, and it may well be that we have here a theory reminiscent of incarnation, as the presence of the soul within a body, as found in early Christianity. See Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 366–7.
- 353 See Wolfson, *ibid.*, pp. 124–5.
- 354 See Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ* and Pelikan, *Jesus*. For Cardozo's critiques of deism see Scholem, *Studies and Sources*, pp. 290–1 note 46.
- 355 Cf. Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 409, and Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, pp. 17, 39.
- 356 See 'Avodat ha-Qodesh' I.16, fol. 17b.

- 357 See above, Chapter 3 notes 50 and 123.
- 358 See Idel, 'On the Meanings of the Term "Kabbalah"'.  
 359 See, e.g. *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, vol. 2, fols 86d, 87cd and note 255 above.
- 360 See Abraham Elqayam, 'On the Architectural Structure of *Ma'arekhet ha'Elohut*', QS 64 (1993), pp. 289–304 (Hebrew); Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 101–42 and 'Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism', in eds, M. Idel & B. McGinn, *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith, An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Continuum, New York, 1989), pp. 27–58.
- 361 See, especially, R. Isaac Luria's important text, referred to above in note 287.
- 362 See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, p. 259 note 50. See also my 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 72–80.
- 363 See, however, Chapter 3 note 228.
- 364 See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 50–1, 220, 225, 230–1.
- 365 See above, Chapter 3 note 83.
- 366 On the concept of extension of the divinity in the instance of the reproduction of the image of God in man see Loberboim, *The Image of God*.
- 367 See Gershom Scholem, 'Mafteah le-Perushim 'al 'Eser Sefirot', QS 10 (1934), pp. 498–515 (Hebrew).
- 368 See, especially, the discussions found in the anonymous early fourteenth-century *Ma'arekhet ha'Elohut*, probably written in Catalonia (Mantua, 1558), fols 112b–134a, as well as my remarks above on de Leon's passage from *Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah*. Let me point out that such a term also occurs in ecstatic Kabbalah, as it stems from rabbinic and Heikhalot literature, but its meaning seems to be different. An analysis of the particular meanings of this concept in ecstatic Kabbalah is a desideratum.
- 369 See Rachel Elijor, 'Jacob Frank and His Book *The Sayings of the Lord: Religious Anarchism as a Restoration of Myth and Metaphor*', in ed., Rachel Elijor, *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism* (The Institute for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 532–6 (Hebrew).

## CHAPTER 5 Christological and Non-Christological Sons of God in the Italian Renaissance and their Reverberations

### 1. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and sonship

In the Introduction we have mentioned the creative vortex that emerged out of the numerous encounters of Judaism, Christianity and Islam with earlier material, part of which was written in late antiquity. However, it seems that the main forms of medieval thought, which produced many of the leading theologies, were influenced mostly by Greek philosophical systems, Platonic and Aristotelian, which had been systematically articulated before late antiquity. This is also the case of the Hebrew Bible. In the Middle Ages, the most influential theories capitalized on these literatures, while others, like Ismailiyyah in Islam, or Kabbalah in Judaism, drew from many other speculative sources, including some stemming from late antiquity. Thus, Averroes in Islam, Maimonides in Judaism or Thomas of Aquinas in Christianity, three giants that shaped many medieval developments, preferred the Aristotelian mode of thought, as articulated by the Stagyrte and his commentators, but were rather reluctant to incorporate late antiquity texts like the Hermetic or Gnostic ones into their monumental works. Neither did the works of Philo of Alexandria play a major role in these writings.

However, during the three last decades of the fifteenth century, a number of Christian thinkers in Florence opened the gate to a variety of modes of thinking that were previously unknown in European thought. Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola introduced major literary corpora into their writings and thought, Greek and Hellenistic sources, and Jewish Kabbalah respectively. In a way, the small town of Florence was the scene of the encounter of ancient and late antiquity material arriving from the East after the fall of Constantinopol in 1453, and medieval material, mainly Kabbalah and some forms of Jewish philosophy and magic, arriving from the West, namely Spain. The details of the arrival of the 'Eastern' material in Greek are well known. These translations and the original texts have been printed and studied by numerous scholars. Not so the Western material, a part of each being still in manuscript form, and only recently starting to attract more attention. These two vectors interacted in the writings of these two intellectuals, in different doses to be sure, and

contributed to a new effervescence in European thought. We have another case of the encounter of Jews with a significant amount of Greek and Hellenistic material, and also in this case, the concept of sonship was enriched by the absorption of previously unknown forms of thought. From the point of view of the history of sonship in Judaism, this is the third main encounter, after the first in Alexandria in late antiquity, and the second of medieval interpretation of the son as the Agent Intellect. However, what is characteristic of this third encounter is that elements belonging to the second one are present and impact Christian treatments of the topic.

Guided by the view that Christianity had been adumbrated by those diverging literatures in cryptic manners, they attempted to bring together, compare and at times identify between the Christian tenets and the allegedly parallel concepts they discovered, though rarely correctly, in those newly introduced writings. They worked with the assumption that an ancient theology, *prisca theologia*, or a series of revelations informed both pagan thinkers and ancient Kabbalists, and that their views could be used to strengthen Christian claims.<sup>1</sup> Ficino, unlike Pico, was not very interested in Kabbalah. However, even Pico was not the first author to adopt Kabbalah in order to elucidate Christian tenets. This had already been done in the writings of some earlier converts from Judaism to Christianity, for example, the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Maestro Alfonso da Valladolid, the Christian name of a Rabbi previously known as Abner of Burgos, whose views have been discussed in Chapter 3, and the fifteenth-century Paulus de Heredia. However, their writings, in which Kabbalah appears from time to time, were neither quoted nor printed and it is important to question whether they influenced the first major synthesis of Renaissance thought and Kabbalah, as expressed in the writings of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

Against the background of the *prisca theologia* theory, and the huge amount of new speculative material that was absorbed, let me examine the manner in which Pico della Mirandola addressed the possible concordance between various views of the first emanation. In his Italian commentary upon one of the poems of his friend Girolamo Benivieni, he wrote:

This first created mind, is called by Plato and so by the ancient philosophers Mercurio Trismegisto and Zoroaster, sometimes the son of God, sometimes mind, sometimes Wisdom, sometimes divine reason. And I have warned diligently not to believe that this would be that which our theologians called the son of God, because we intend by the son of God, an essence which is the same with that of the Father which is equal to Him in all, ultimately a creator but not a creature. But it is incumbent to

compare that which the Platonic thinkers call the Son of God to the first and most noble angel produced by God.

[Questa prima mente creata, da Platone e così dalli antichi philosophi Mercurio Trimegista e Zoroastre e chiamato hora figliuolo de Dio, hora mente, hora Sapientia, hora ragione Divina. Et habbi ciascuno diligente advertentia di non credere che questo sia quello che de nostri Theologie e ditto figliuolo di Dio, imperoche noi intendiamo per il figliuolo di Dio una medesima essentia col padre, a lui in ogni cosa eguale, creatore finalmente e non creatura, ma debbessi comparare quello che Platonicci chiamano figliuolo di Dio al primo et piu nobile angelo da Dio prodotto.]<sup>2</sup>

Let me start with Pico's sharp distinction between the entity he discusses as found in the writings of several non-Christian authors, which is the first creature as a son, and his understanding of the divinity of the Christ as a different theological category. These two concepts represent different theological views and Pico attempts to back the orthodox Christian view by distinguishing it from the assumption of a son as a created angel, sublime as this being may be, in the tradition began by Philo of Alexandria. Pico combats, so I assume, two different 'erroneous' positions. One is apparently a view found in ancient Christianity according to which Christ was a high angel, a view that Christian theologians silenced.<sup>3</sup> However, it is plausible that he directed his warning against a much more immediate religious error: I surmise that it is Marsilio Ficino, Pico's close friend and the translator of the Hermetical Corpus, who explicitly associated Jesus-Christ with the concept of Son in Hermeticism and Zoroastrianism.<sup>4</sup> Here however, Pico opposes the theory of *prisca theologia*, which he otherwise accepted and developed. It should be mentioned that the question of the origin of Pico's view of the 'first creature' is rather complex. The concept that the first created entity is an intelligible creature which includes in itself all forms of existence is reminiscent of R. Isaac ben Abraham ibn Latif's view of *nivra' rishon*. As I have proposed elsewhere, Pico was acquainted with the major work of ibn Latif, *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, in which the above phrase appears several times.<sup>5</sup>

There is in fact a very interesting parallel to the passage in the *Commento* found in one of Pico's *Theses*, where the locution *filius Dei* of Mercurio, namely Hermes Trismegistus, is mentioned together with Zoroaster's *materna mens*, with Parmenides' *sphera intelligibilis* and with Pythagoras's *sapientia* and finally, according to Wirszubski's very plausible reconstruction, with the kabbalistic understanding of Metatron, without

ever mentioning the Christian theological view of Jesus as son.<sup>6</sup> Here we have quite an explicit identification of Metatron as a Son of God, a rather rare occurrence in comparison to the earlier kabbalistic sources.

This double refusal to admit the affinity between the pagan theories of the first created and Pico's eagerness to adopt kabbalistic views fostered Christianity in another of Pico's *Conclusiones*. In his fifteenth-century kabbalistic thesis confirming Christianity he writes:

By the name *Yod he vav he*, which is the ineffable name that the Cabalists say will be the name of the Messiah, it is clearly known that he will be God, the son of God made man through the Holy Spirit, and that after him the Paraclete will descend over men for the perfection of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars assume that Pico alludes to combinations of letters of the divine name that will prove the content of the *Conclusiones*.<sup>8</sup> However, I am not sure that this thesis should be read in the context of the one immediately preceding it, as suggested by Farmer. It seems that such assumptions are not necessary. The assumption that the Messiah will be called by the divine name is not new, nor is it especially kabbalistic. It appears previously in rabbinic literature. As Wirszubski pointed out, according to a Talmudic passage analyzed in detail in Chapter 1 above, 'R. Samuel ben Nahman said in the name of R. Yohanan: "three are [entities] designated by the Name of the Holy One Blessed be He: the righteous, the Messiah, and Jerusalem."<sup>9</sup> I do not know the precise kabbalistic source used by Pico for his claim, but presumably there was such a source. His understanding was that given the fact that the Tetragrammaton refers to both God and the Messiah, the latter is of a divine nature like God the Father. I wonder whether Abulafia's text from *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, translated and analyzed in Chapter 3, contributed to Pico's view. Abulafia's book had been translated into Latin for Pico by Flavius Mithridates,<sup>10</sup> and this treatise indeed influenced Pico's perception of Kabbalah.<sup>11</sup> However, Abulafia's *Sitrei Torah* was not the single source from ecstatic Kabbalah to which Pico could resort to find confirmation of the Christian theological centrality of the son. As pointed out at the end of Chapter 3, Pico also had access to the anonymous ecstatic treatise *Sefer ha-Tzeruf* and, as Wirszubski has shown, was influenced by it in his discussion at the end of his *Heptaplus*, where he interprets the letters *B* and *Ṛ* from the first word of the Hebrew Bible *Bereshit* – in the beginning – as *Bar*, son in Aramaic.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we may assert that in the case of this major Christian intellectual, kabbalistic visions of sonship were known, and even adopted to a certain extent.

However, it seems that Abulafia's views as analyzed in Chapter 3 also had an impact on the most influential of Pico della Mirandola's writings, his

*Oratio de Dignitate Hominis*, where he wrote on man that: 'if intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God'.<sup>13</sup> The intellectual dimension of man is understood as part of his angelification and the process of becoming a Son of God, and reflects in my opinion the theory found in Abulafia's *Sitrei Torah*, a book translated into Latin and used by Pico in other instances. What is important here is that this is a transformative understanding of the intellectual activity, which brings about the new state of man as both angelic and as a son. The juxtaposition between the two terms is hardly a common theme in Christianity, and I would therefore opt for a kabbalistic source, as is the case of the Chaldean thesis mentioned in the footnote.

In addition to Abulafia's type of Kabbalah, Pico used theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah in order to validate the relationship between the son and the Tetragrammaton, and the son's status as a divine being. In another thesis he composed according to kabbalistic views, he says:

Whoever is profound in the science of the Cabala can understand that the three four-letter names of God, which exist in the secrets of the Cabalists, through miraculous appropriation should be attributed to the three persons of the Trinity like this: so that the name אֱלֹהִים is that of the Father, the name יְהוָה of the Son, the name אֲדֹנָי of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

As has already been pointed out, the equation between the three divine names and the three *sefirot*, *Keter*, *Tiferet*, and *Malkhut*, had become commonplace in late thirteenth-century Kabbalah in Castile.<sup>15</sup> Another commonplace element that should nevertheless be pointed out is the identification of the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* with the son, while the last, *Malkhut*, is identified with the daughter, as seen in Chapter 4. Thus, the Tetragrammaton is indeed identified by Kabbalists with the persona of the son according to the kabbalistic type of theosophic symbolism. It is not surprising that Pico saw in this morphonominal view a Christological approach. Last but not least, in an Abulafian treatise translated into Latin for Pico and written by R. Reuben Tzarfati, a fourteenth-century Italian Kabbalist, Pico could have read both Abraham Abulafia's passage on *Yahō'el* as Son and the interpretation of the term *Binah*, divine understanding, divided into *Ben* and *Yah*.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Pico found both in ecstatic and in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah as translated into Latin, though not in the Greek and Hellenistic speculative corpora, a passage that confirmed Christian claims of the divinity of the Messiah as the Son of God.

Pico was called by Marsilio Ficino *princeps concordie*, an epithet that reflects not only his property in Tuscany but also summarizes his special approach in matters of philosophy and religion. In the *Commento* passage the search for concordance is obvious: Platonics, Hermes Trismegistos

Zoroaster conspired in designating the first creature by the term 'son'. The hidden and sometimes open similarity between all the ancient theories underlies Pico's philosophical project, and as such he innovated a new direction within the more comprehensive framework of *prisca theologia*.<sup>18</sup> The assumption in the *Commento* is not that the above-mentioned philosophers were historically related but, on the contrary, that they expressed, and apparently independently, a similar view.

It is worth noting that a contemporary of Pico's, an ecstatic figure known as Giovanni Mercurio da Corregio, viewed himself as both the Son of God and as Enoch, among other appellatives. There can be no doubt that he combined an interest in Kabbalah, perhaps prophetic Kabbalah, with Hermeticism. His activity left a great impression on his contemporary R. Abraham Farissol, who described his various claims.<sup>19</sup>

Let me turn to the views of Marsilio Ficino, a seminal thinker associated with Pico, who was not in fact a Kabbalist. In a quotation from the Commentary on Benivieni's *Canzone*, Pico speaks of Platonists who called the Son of God the most noble of the angels. It seems that he had in mind Marsilio Ficino's *Platonic Theology*, where Ficino wrote as follows:

This child [*proles*], whom Orpheus calls the Pallas born from the head of Jupiter<sup>20</sup> is more internal to God, if one may say so, than is the angel's conception to the angelic mind. For in the angel, since being is other than understanding, the conception that is generated by understanding is other than the actual essence of the angel. But in God, since being and understanding are the same, the conception that God creates by understanding Himself, as the most faithful copy of Himself, is the same as God Himself. Since delight attends generation, God, as Plato's *Timaeus*<sup>21</sup> tells us, wonderfully rejoices in His work. But within the innermost child of God, which is the universal seed of the world, are the specific seeds of all the parts produced in this world by its external offspring.<sup>22</sup>

This passage blends the Neo-Platonic theory of ideas found within the supernal mind and the Aristotelian theory of cognition that identifies the intelligible with the intellect and the act of intellection. In his *Commentary to Timaeus*, Ficino resorts expressly to the term *filius* in order to describe the divine intellect that emerges from the supernal good, namely God.<sup>23</sup> Thus, while Pico introduces kabbalistic views of sonship, Ficino imports the philosophical pagan views; the former had access to both theories, proposing some form of hierarchical distinction between Christological and non-Christological types of sonship.

Pico's warning against the identification of the Christological son with

the 'sapiential' one was ignored by one of the most important followers of his project: the notorious Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. In his influential *De Occulta Philosophia*, he recombines all the various theories about the first created entity with Christ, though he ignores in this context the kabbalistic contribution to the subject:

*Austine* [Augustine] and *Porphyry* testify, that the *Platonists* held three persons in God, the first of which, they call the father of the world; the second they call the Son and the first mind, and so he is named by *Macrobius* . . . *Plotinus* and *Philo* deliver, that the Son of God, *viz.* the first mind or Divine intellect floweth from God the Father, even as a word from the speaker or as light from light; from hence it is that he is called both the word and speech, and splendour of God the Father; for the Divine mind by itself, with one only and uninterrupted act understandeth the chiefest good without any vicissitude, or mediate knowledge; he generateth in himself an Issue and Son, who is the full Intelligence, compleat image of himself, and the perfect pattern of the world, whom our *John* and *Mercurius* name the word or speech; *Plato* the Son of God the Father; *Orpheus*, *Pallas* born from *Jupiter's* brain, that is, wisdom: This is the most absolute image of God the Father, yet by a certain relation, or some intrinsecal absolute thing, as it were begot and distinguished from the Father, who saith in *Ecclesiasticus*, I have proceeded from the mouth of the most high, I am the first begot before all creatures: *Iamblichus* testifieth this Son to be One and the same God with the Father in Essence, namely calling God, both the Father and Son of himself. Also *Mercurius Trismegistus* in *Asclepius* mentioneth the Son of God in diverse places; for he saith my God and Father begat a Mind a work diverss from himself; And elsewhere, unity begets unity, and reflecteth his flagrant love on himself; and in *Pimander* (where he seemeth to prophesie of the Covenant of grace to come, and of the mystery of regeneration) saith, the author of Regeneration is the Son of God, the man by the will of the one only God, and also that God is most replenished with the fruitfulness of both sexes . . . And Augustine himself in his fourth Book *De Civit Dei* doth testify that *Porphyry* the Platonist placed three Persons in God; the first he calls the father of the universe, the second, the first mind, and *Macrobius* the Son, the third the soul of the world, which *Virgil* according to *Plato's* opinion, calleth a spirit, saying, *the spirit within maintains*. Therefore it is God, as *Paul* saith, from whom, in whom, by whom are all things: for from the Father as from a

fountain flow all things, but in the Son as in a pool all things are placed in their *Ideas*, and by the Holy Ghost are all things manifested, and every thing distributed to his proper degrees.<sup>24</sup>

Cornelius Agrippa brought together views attributed to Orpheus<sup>25</sup> and Plato, with the Hermetic views of the cosmic Father and Son, and with Jamblicus's and John's views, without distinguishing the possible differences inherent in such sources or the uniqueness of the Christian vision of sonship. Pico's more disciplined statement adduced above does not reverberate in Agrippa's presentation. Nevertheless, in a separate chapter he discusses the Christian treatments of sonship alone, without comparing them to other sources.<sup>26</sup> Immediately afterwards he discusses in some detail the ten *sefirot*, but in this context he does not address the issue of sonship.<sup>27</sup> Let me draw attention to the occurrence of Philo of Alexandria's theory of the Logos as son for the first time in the context of a comparison between the diverse sources that deal with the *prisca theologia* of the hypostatic son.

More interesting and original is the view of sonship found in the writings of the mid-sixteenth-century prolific author William Postel. One of the most accomplished Christian Kabbalists ever, he understood himself to be the spiritual son of the Mother or sister Johanna, the virgin whom he conceived of as a form of embodiment of the *Shekhinah* and the spiritual spouse of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> He claimed that this Mother told him that God dwells upon him and that he is the Pope, the firstborn of the new world, and its reformer.<sup>29</sup> In this version of kabbalistic Christianity it is the Mother who ascends on high long before the son. The strong spiritual affinity between Postel and the 'Mother', Johanna, may have something to do with a symbolic interpretation found in his treatise on the *Secrets of the Platonic Numbers*, where Moses, who stands for the sixth *sefirah*, is connected to the Written Torah, the Wisdom of God and the son, and most exceptional, with the Mother.<sup>30</sup> This bringing together of the son with the Mother as part of the symbol of the same, quite masculine *sefirah*, *Tiferet*, is unique to the best of my knowledge. More standard is his *Interpretation of Moses' Candelabre*, where the sixth *sefirah*, *Tiferet*, is understood as related to Moses, to the Son of God, to Jesus, and to the Tetragrammaton.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Non-Christological sons in Renaissance Jewish thinkers

As pointed out in several instances above, some Jewish authors operated with a variety of concepts of sonship. Due to the emergence of a more cosmic approach to theology in the Italian Renaissance inspired by Neo-Platonic and Hermetic sources, sonship is also understood in such a manner, and echoes of these more cosmic understandings can be discerned in Jewish

Renaissance authors. During the sixteenth century, the topic of a metaphysical sonship appears in the writings of three Jewish thinkers. The earliest is R. Yehudah Abrabanel, better known as Leone Ebreo. He was the son of one of the most influential leaders of Iberian Jewry in the generation of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Don Isaac Abravanel, an outstanding thinker in himself. However, his son was much more inclined to Neo-Platonism. In his *Dialoghi d'Amore*, he introduces the idea that the created world in its entirety can be described as the son born from the marriage of two supernal entities:

Solomon and the sages of the Bible were of the opinion that the world has been created as the son of the supernal beautiful the father, and the supernal wisdom the mother, or the supernal beauty. And they say that the supernal wisdom fell in love with the supernal beautiful like a woman does with man who is more perfect than her. And the supernal beautiful returns her love and she conceived from him and gave birth to a son, which is the entire universe in all its parts . . . By his love to her she becomes more perfect . . . and she conceives and gives birth to the perfection of the reality . . . the supernal beauty is not only the wife of the supernal beautiful but also its first child . . . the mother is the first intellect.<sup>32</sup>

Let me address a special feature of Ebreo's description of the process of emanation: while the Beauty is emanated from the Beautiful, these elements are also described as sexually related and as giving birth to the world. Thus, Ebreo combines a Neo-Platonic emanational view of the emergence of reality with a view that resorts to sexual imagery even when discussing the highest entities, an approach that may reflect some form of kabbalistic theosophy. Though Ebreo was not a Kabbalist, at times he nevertheless used kabbalistic views in his book. Hence, he was conceived of as a Kabbalist, his book was printed in a collection of kabbalistic books entitled *Ars Cabalistica* and he is quoted as a Kabbalist.<sup>33</sup>

From our more specific point of view, Ebreo's cosmic understanding of the son has been adopted by an accomplished Kabbalist, R. Abraham Kohen Herrera, an early seventeenth-century influential writer, who wrote in Spanish, and was subsequently translated into Latin. He was an influence on some of the later seventeenth-century Christian Kabbalists:

And it is important to know that this most perfect effect which issued directly from the surpassing God is called mind, wisdom, the world of ideas or intelligible world, the son of God [*hijo de Dios*], and divine reason or word by Plato and the ancient

theologians Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, and the others.<sup>34</sup>

As part of a much longer discussion that begins with an explicit reference to Ebreo, but betrays the impact of the Florentine Renaissance, we read:

The First Cause is the mind or *mahashavah* of all the worlds, what the Platonic philosophers called the mental world, Son of God, and the first mind, and Zoroaster called fatherly and deep, in which they locate the causative representational unities and ideas to which the supreme unity and unmoving mind correspond in man. Because 'Adam Qadmon and his lights are the first mind.'<sup>35</sup> ¶

As pointed out by scholars, it is plausible that both Pico's and Ficino's views about the son might have impacted Herrera.<sup>36</sup> Nissim Yosha has shown that in another case Herrera paraphrased Ficino's view about the first created being as the good son, yet the Kabbalist removed the term son.<sup>37</sup> In any case, we have here an interesting interpretation of the Lurianic concept of 'Adam Qadmon. In Luria it stands for the first emanation that mediates between the 'Ein Sof and the system of ten *sefirot* that constitute the world of emanation. In some cases this theosophical concept has been conceived of as ten supernal *sefirot*, or *Tzahtzahot*, stemming from the writings of R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid. However, I am not acquainted with any identification of this term with Son of God. The passage discussed in the previous chapter dealing with the Son of Man seems to be closest to Herrera. Therefore, we may assume that Herrera may be the first to juxtapose the Lurianic term with the renaissance theories of the Son of God.

Pico's distinction between the different visions of the first created being and Christ require discussion here, not only because of the possible Jewish material that was involved in such discussions, but also because of the appearance of Pico's passage in a late sixteenth-century Hebrew book. R. Yehudah Moscato, a famous Mantuan preacher in the second half of the sixteenth century, writes about the first emanation as follows:

By the emanation of the abovementioned *causatum*, God, blessed be He, created not only all the things but He also created them in the most perfect possible manner. And it<sup>38</sup> is called, in the words of the Platonics and others of the ancient sages [by the name] 'His son, Blessed be He', as the wise Yoan Pico Mirandolana<sup>39</sup> testified in his small tract on the celestial and divine love. And I have been arised to think from this that perhaps the wise of all men has intended this when he said 'Who has ascended up into heaven, and come down again? etc. Who has established all the ends of the

earth? What is his name and what is his son's name if thou canst tell?'<sup>40, 41</sup>

Moscato, subsequent to Pico's text quoted above, attributes the appellation of the first emanation as son to the ancient, implicitly pagan philosophers. Since the name Jesus or Christ is not mentioned explicitly and there is no reason to assume that it is named implicitly, there is nothing compelling us to see in this view an ostensibly Christological conception; the above discussion is rather part of a well-known enterprise on the part of Pico to find the correspondences between the Christian and the pagan theological views, without assuming that the ancient pagans were Christian, even hidden ones. In fact, Pico and Moscato work with the assumption that sonship is a category wider than its specific Christological interpretation, and this evidence demonstrates that not only Jews but also Christians could operate with this fundamental distinction.

These ancient pagan figures, as seen above in Pico's *Commento*, are known by the names: 'Mercurio Trimegisto e Zoroastre'. I wonder whether Moscato considered them ancient Christians; we would certainly not think so after attentively reading the opening of the entire discussion where the assumption that Plato agrees with the ancient Jewish sages is explicated. Thus, I would say that it would be a very forced understanding of the text to introduce an explicit Christological reading. Even the Hebrew form, *Beno Itbarakh*, should not be understood as referring to a blessing of the son, but rather should be read as 'His son, Blessed be He', where 'He' stands for God. In any case, this phrase translates Pico's *figliuolo di Dio*, namely the Son of God. Interestingly enough, Pico takes pains to prevent a Christological understanding of the Hermetic and Zoroastrian 'son' as the Christ: he explicitly wrote in this context that people should not understand this son as that designated by 'our theologians' as the Son of God, because according to them the essence of the son is the same as the essence of the father and equal to Him, in contrast to the created nature of the son in the ancient pagan philosophers. Thus, Moscato had no religious inhibitions as far as using the term 'son' went, as the ancient pagan thinkers used it, and in the context Moscato found this term, Pico himself openly denied its Christological significance. Rather, we would do better to read the above text as background on the history of religious philosophy, on the one hand, and as background on Moscato's entourage, on the other. The term 'son' in the context used by Moscato has, as seen above, nothing Christological in it.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, I translate the Hebrew term '*alul* as *causatum*. Moscato uses the Hebrew term '*alul*, which parallels Pico's '*prima . . . create*'. The very use of this term shows that it is a created, non-divine being that is referred to by Moscato. The fact that Moscato uses the term '*alul* and not *nivra*' suggests

that initially he was better acquainted with Pico's views than with ibn Latif, and that only later did the writings of the thirteenth-century Kabbalist come to his attention. Yet, Moscato does use the term *'alul rishon*, which, while conceptually identical to *nivra' rishon*, differs from the latter terminologically. However, in his later work *Qol Yehudah*, he quotes ibn Latif extensively, including texts in which the term *nivra' rishon* is mentioned.<sup>43</sup>

This is for sure the case in an interesting passage of Rabbi 'Azariah de Rossi's, who composed and printed his *Me'or 'Einayim* in Mantua a few years before the peak of Moscato's activity in this town. It should be emphasized that the two Mantuan sages were acquainted with each other and that Moscato even quotes de Rossi in his *Qol Yehudah*.

De Rossi seems to be the first Jewish author who was well acquainted with both Philo and Hermetic literature, and he points to the similarity between their views of the son, asserting that 'It is merely a matter of terminology whether it is called son or emanation or light or *sefirah* or idea as Plato cleverly puts it.'<sup>44</sup> Thus 'son' is not conceived as being fraught with peculiarly Christological meaning, but understood rather as one of those terms that conveys the view of the first created entity. I am not sure if H.A. Wolfson's implicit assumption that Philo was the origin of de Rossi's view is acceptable. Despite the fact that de Rossi was indeed well acquainted with Philo and quotes him in this context,<sup>45</sup> the mentioning of Plato and of the term *ideii* renders the assumption that Pico della Mirandola was the direct source more reasonable. I assume that it would be unnecessary to attribute to de Rossi a contemptuous attitude to Christianity, as in the case of Moscato and, in principle, there is nothing essentially new in Moscato's sermon in comparison with the brief observation of de Rossi. Granting that the Christological understanding of the 'son' attributed to Moscato is more than dubious, there is no support, based solely on this piece of 'evidence', for Joseph Dan's conjecture about disentangling Moscato from Renaissance Christian culture by surmising a contemptuous rejection of the Christological interpretation of the son from his side. I assume that Moscato's sermon, far from displaying a conflict with Christianity, is consistent with a Neo-Platonically interpreted Hermeticism. At least in this case, it was essentially not a religious controversy, even a silent one, but more of a disclosure of a similar scheme in the Midrash, the Hermetical and the Neo-Platonic concepts; it is a positive rather than a negative enterprise that characterizes Moscato's discussion.

What is the thrust of Pico's and subsequently Moscato's use of the concept of son? The two authors are interested in bringing together, as we shall see immediately below, different types of terms in order to point to the first created entity, which includes, at the same time, all the ideas, *ideii*, within itself in their most perfect form. As such, the two authors contribute

to the history of the idea of son philosophically interpreted not so much as influenced by Philo, but rather by the Hermetical view of the Son of God.<sup>46</sup> I have already pointed out that Hermetic influences on Jewish literature are found in a long series of texts in the Middle Ages, most or perhaps all through the intermediary of Arabic sources.<sup>47</sup> However, Jewish authors living in Italy during the Renaissance, like Isaac Abravanel, Moscato, De Rossi and Abraham Yagel, were influenced by the Hermetic literature translated by Marsilio Ficino. Characteristically enough, de Rossi intended to translate some portions of the Hermetic corpus into Hebrew. I assume that the Jewish interest in Hermetic writings has something to do not only with the Renaissance passion for this literature, but also with the feeling, corroborated by some modern studies, according to which there is a certain similarity between Jewish and Hermetic ideas.<sup>48</sup> Pico attempted to bring together a variety of pagan sources without, at least in this case, bridging the gap between Christianity and the pagan sources; on the contrary, he expressly avoided such identification. It is the Jewish author who undertook the identification between the son and one of the most crucial Jewish values: the Torah.<sup>49</sup> The same search for correspondence is characteristic of Moscato: in the sermon he indicates: 'the views of Plato are commonly coming close to the view of our sages' and not, as he does in other instances, that Plato was influenced by the Jewish priests and prophets. Moscato, like Pico, looks here not for an historical affiliation, but for a phenomenological affinity between historically disparate religious and philosophical literary corpora. As such, Moscato differs here from the classical view in medieval Jewish thought, which attributed such a similarity to the theory concerning Plato's adoption of Jewish concepts.<sup>50</sup> In other words, at least in this instance, Moscato implicitly recognizes the independence of Plato and that of the other ancient philosophers in respect to Jewish views, and proceeds in comparing them. Otherwise what would be the meaning of comparing the source and the offspring? From this point of view, he comes closer to Pico than to any of his Jewish medieval and Renaissance predecessors.<sup>51</sup> As he had done before, when he rejected Aristotle's alleged Jewishness, he does not insist on the view that what is good must also be Jewish.

Interestingly, Moscato refrains from adducing kabbalistic views in this context. In some discussions found in Pico's *Theses*, the prince of concord speaks of the *Hokhmah*, the second *sefirah* of the Kabbalists, as identical to the Christological son, as seen above. It seems that Moscato was either unaware of these texts or that he was afraid (notwithstanding Dan's understanding of Moscato) of mentioning a Christological reading of Kabbalah as far as sonship is concerned. At the same time, it seems that his knowledge of Jewish Kabbalah does not provide him with a kabbalistic parallel.<sup>52</sup> I wonder whether such a homiletic exposition of the correspondence between the

Jewish views of the primordial light, the 'light of the Torah', and the Platonic and pagan views of the created son ever took place in a synagogue. In order to avoid misunderstandings as to the nature of the 'son', and we have seen above that such misunderstanding can occur even among scholars who are supposed to approach the texts in a philological manner, I assume that it was considered better to avoid oral discussion. As Moscato himself acknowledged in a partially apologetic passage:

Let it not vex you because I draw so much upon extraneous sources. For to me, these foreign streams flow from our own Jewish wells. The nations of the earth derived their wisdom from our sages. If I often make use of information gathered from secular books, it is only because I know the true origin of that information. Besides, I know what to reject as well as what to accept.<sup>53</sup>

This statement should be compared with De Rossi's plan to compose an introduction to a proposed translation of two of the most important portions of the Hermetic corpus, distinguishing between the holy and the profane. If the term 'secular' stands for the 'magical' part of Hermeticism, as Weinberg proposed, then De Rossi concurs with Moscato's reticence in elaborating upon magic and theurgy.<sup>54</sup> In the case of the discussion of the son, there was no reason to exercise his censorship and it did not require a great act of courage to quote Pico's view on the non-Christological Son of God in a traditional Jewish sermon.

At least from the phenomenological point of view, it is important to emphasize that there is no need to assume that the term 'Son of God' necessarily expresses any specific attitude to Christianity. There are several Hebrew texts dealing with hypostatic Sons of or within God, as seen in some of the preceding chapters, which do not adopt Christological types of sonship.

### 3. *The impact of Christian Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata*

Earlier discussions in this chapter reflect theories of sonship in early Kabbalah, as formulated in the second part of the thirteenth century. However, a major development in the history of Kabbalah took place in the second part of the sixteenth century in Safed, and we have discussed in the previous chapter the pertinent views of the two main representatives of the new forms of Kabbalah that emerged there: those of Cordovero and Luria. Those views found their way into Christian Kabbalah, especially from the late seventeenth century onwards, with the printing of Latin translations of

kabbalistic works written mainly in Safed or under Safedian influence, in the three volumes of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*. The first two volumes were printed in Sulzbach in 1677, the third in Frankfurt in 1684. This collection includes the translation of the Zoharic literatures known as *Sifra de-Tzeniy'uta* and the two 'Idrot, or the assemblies, where the most elaborate and influential Zoharic discussions of the concepts of sonship and *Ze'yir 'Anppin* are found.<sup>55</sup> In one case the term son appears in *Kabbala Denudata*, in a succinct adaptation of R. Moses Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim* and in the context of 'Adam Qadmon'.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, there the identification of the central Lurianic concept 'Adam Qadmon with Jesus Christ as Son is also found.<sup>57</sup> Under the impact of von Rosenroth's book, the theory of 'Adam Qadmon as Son of God, Christ and Medium, namely a median figure, a cosmic intermediary, is discernible in Anne Conway's theories, as well as in the more renowned Leibniz.<sup>58</sup> So, for example, we read in her book that

the Ancient cabbalists acknowledged such a First begotten Son of God, whom they called the Heavenly Adam, the First Adam, and the Great Priest. That Christ is a medium between God and all creatures . . . By the Son of God the First begotten of all Creatures, whom we Christians do call by the name of Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures . . . Of whom the Ancient Cabbalists have delivered many things, viz concerning the Son of God, how he was created, and of his Existence in the Order of Nature, before all Creatures; also that all receive Benediction and sanctification in him, and by him, whom also in their Writings they call the heavenly Adam, Adam Qadmon, or First Man, the Great priest, Husband, or Spouse of the Church, as Philo Judaeus calls the First begotten Son of God.<sup>59</sup>

Elsewhere she mentions explicitly the important kabbalistic concept of 'Adam Qadmon in similar contexts, by giving precise references to her sources in *Kabbala Denudata*.<sup>60</sup> Sir Isaac Newton also identifies 'Adam Qadmon as such:

Each of the Sephiroth they called Adam a man & the first of them they called Adam Kadmon, the first man & make him the son of God as Adam is called in Scripture.<sup>61, 62</sup>

Thus, we can see how significantly Lurianic reflections on the cosmic concept of 'Adam Qadmon penetrated European thought from the end of the seventeenth century. Furthermore the potential filial imagery of *Ze'yir 'Anppin* attracted the attention of a reader of *Kabbala Denudata*, the Quaker thinker Ragley Keith, who, in a letter addressed to Knorr von Rosenroth,

compared it to Jesus Christ.<sup>63</sup> It should be mentioned that some of the late seventeenth-century figures mentioned above refer to Philo of Alexandria in the context of the theory of Logos as Son of God.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, the two main stages of Christian Kabbalah, the nascent one as represented by Pico della Mirandola, and the more mature one as found in the second half of the seventeenth century, resorted to kabbalistic terms that indeed reflected some filial symbolism, though the interpretation of this sonship as a closed one, namely as related solely to one figure, Jesus Christ, runs against the Jewish kabbalistic understanding of these concepts. In a way, the seventeenth-century Christian Kabbalists were closer in their interpretation to R. Abraham Kohen Herrera's Neo-Platonic interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah, by whom they were influenced, and to a certain extent they returned to some Patristic cosmic visions of Christ. Interestingly enough, in those circles there was a book, now probably lost, entitled *Messia Puer*, which may refer to the vision of the Messiah as a young boy, in the tradition of Metatron the youth, as we find in the Heikhalot literature, in Abulafia's writings and in Pico della Mirandola.<sup>65</sup> It seems that the Florentine tradition of *prisca theologia*, which found its way to the books of Abraham Herrera, created a predisposition for seeing Kabbalah in Christian terms, and the late seventeenth-century figures adopted it as such, as if Lurianic Kabbalah was a hidden Christian theory of cosmic sonship.

#### 4. Moses ben Aharon of Krakow, alias Johan Kemper of Uppsala

If there is an author whose writings embrace most of the tendencies analyzed in this chapter and in the previous one, it is a convert to Christianity known by the Christian name Johan Kemper, and by his former Jewish name R. Moses son of Aharon. An eighteenth-century Kabbalist who was deeply interested in the book of the *Zohar*, he became a Sabbatean prior to converting to Christianity, and wrote a commentary on the *Zohar* in which he strove to demonstrate the affinities of Zoharic theology to Christianity. He was active in Uppsala, where he was close to Benzelius, a reader of *Kabbala Denudata*, a follower of Leibniz and a librarian at the university there. It is likely he taught Kabbalah to none other than Emanuel Swedenborg, and probably influenced his thought.<sup>66</sup> His manuscript commentary, *Ma'teh Moshe*, is found in a manuscript that has drawn the attention of scholars in recent studies.<sup>67</sup> There he repeatedly interprets the Zoharic views of Metatron, especially those found in *Tiqqunei Zohar*, in a Christological manner, resorting to the dynamic mode of thinking characteristic of this layer of the *Zohar*. For example, he claims that while Jesus sits at the right side of God he is called Son of God, but while he is humiliated he is described as the Son of Man.<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere, he describes

Metatron as the gate to God, just as the Son is the only way to reach the Father, according to the New Testament.<sup>69</sup> Though not an inhabitant of Italy and probably not aware of the views of his predecessor Pico della Mirandola, his understanding of Metatron is reminiscent of that of the Florentine thinker, though he interprets Zoharic texts unknown to Pico.

#### 5. Coda: The return of Christian interpretations of Kabbalah in modern scholarship

Though guided by strong Christian convictions, the authors enumerated above were often widely read, and their comparative remarks reflect an acute understanding of diverse sources. The broad perspective they took allowed them to formulate valuable insights, both historically and phenomenologically. They may have overemphasized or exaggerated some of the elements they dealt with, as Pico della Mirandola did when he conceived Kabbalah as the best way of proving Christianity, but scholars should nevertheless look into their proposals without preconceptions before discarding them. Let me emphasize that their views are sometimes shared by Jewish opponents of Kabbalah, like Leone da Modena or by ecumenical approaches like that of another Italian figure, Elijah Benamozeg.

Even more interesting is the fact that modern scholarship of Jewish mysticism seems to adopt openly and forcefully the claims of this 'Christian' structure for Kabbalah, in more than one way. Gershom Scholem, for example, adopted Johann Reuchlin's vision of Kabbalah as a whole as symbolic, and this approach has become what one expert on his work considers one of the two underlying principles of his thought.<sup>70</sup> More recently has seen the adoption of the theory of the Marian impact on the alleged shift in the feminine genre of the *Shekhinah* in the *Book of Bahir*, according to A. Green/P. Schaefer's theory, or the view that Kabbalah has strongly incarnational propensities, as in Elliot R. Wolfson's adoption of the theory of Alfonso da Valladolid,<sup>71</sup> or in Yehuda Liebes' pioneering claims about the impact of Christian thought on the *Book of the Zohar*<sup>72</sup> and the impact of Judeo-Christian themes on Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.<sup>73</sup> More recently still, Ra'anan Boustan has described some aspects of Heikhalot literature as disclosing a hidden dialogue with Christian martyrology.<sup>74</sup> Thus we may summarize by saying that some of the new developments in the last generation validate, consciously or otherwise, the claims of the Christian Kabbalists as to the similarity of Kabbalah and Christianity in most of the stages of Jewish mysticism.

Is the present discussion, or its antecedents some decades ago,<sup>75</sup> ignored by most of the scholars mentioned above, part of a new trend in the scholarship of Jewish mysticism? This is an interesting question, whose

answer the attentive reader can guess from some of the discussions above; a more elaborated one can be found at the very end of the book. Before approaching this discussion let me address the last phase in the history of Jewish mysticism: Ḥasidism.

### Notes

- 1 See D.P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* (The Warburg Institute, London, 1972); Charles Schmitt, 'Perennial Philosophy from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966), pp. 505–32; Schmitt, 'Prisca Theologia e Filosofia Perennis: Due temi del rinascimento italiano e a loro fortuna', *Il pensiero Italiano del rinascimento e il tempo nostro* (Olschki, Firenze, 1970), pp. 211–36; Paul O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (Columbia University Press, New York, 1979), pp. 196–210; Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness, Humanity and Dignity in Italian Humanistic Thought* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1995), pp. 726–42, 754–6; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Brill, Leiden, 1990), pp. 459–63; Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 198 note 41; Michael J.B. Allen, *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino and the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Leo S. Olschki, Firenze, 1998), pp. 1–49; Ilana Klutstein, *Marsilio Ficino et la theologie ancienne: Oracles Chaldaïques, Hymnes orphiques, Hymnes de Proclus* (Olschki, Firenze, 1978); Brigitte Tambrun, 'Marsile Ficino et le Commentaire de Plethon sur les Oracles Chaldaïques', *Accademia* 1 (1999), pp. 9–48; Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggeman, *Philosophia Perennis, Historische Umriss abendlaendischer Spiritualitaet in Antike, Mittelalter und Frueher Neuzeit* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1998); Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, pp. 43–54; Goldish, *Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton*, pp. 88, 146–55, and on topics related to the Jewish views of the antiquity of the true theology, as related to Kabbalah, my articles mentioned in notes 13, 33, 50 below. For Erasmus's association of Jesus with the Platonics, and its rejection by Luther see Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp. 155–6.
- 2 *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore di Girolamo Benivieni*, vol. 1, ch. 4; cf. *Opera Omnia* (Basle, 1557), vol. 1, p. 899. There are some significant *varia lectionis* between this edition and that printed by Eugenio Garin, *De Hominis Dignitate* (Vallecchi, Florence, 1942), pp. 466–7. In many respects Garin's version seems to be closer to the view that will be discussed below found in R. Yehudah Moscato's account of Pico's passage. The most important of these changes is that in lieu of the phrase *prima mente creata* Garin's version has *prima creatura*. On this passage see Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 198, Eugene F. Rice, Jr, *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 62–3, and Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor*, p. 223.
- 3 See Danielou, *Théologie du Judeo-Christianisme*, pp. 204–5; Fossum, 'The Magharians', pp. 325–6.
- 4 See Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 25–8.
- 5 See Moshe Idel, 'The Throne and the Seven-Branched Candlestick: Pico della Mirandola's Hebrew Source', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977), pp. 290–2. On the prehistory of ibn Latif's concept in Ismailiyah thought see Sarah O. Heller Willensky, 'The "First Created Being" in Early Kabbalah and Its Philosophical Sources', in eds, S.O. Heller Willensky & M. Idel, *Studies in Jewish Thought* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 261–75 (Hebrew). Pico's *prima creatura* is a perfect translation of ibn Latif's term.
- 6 On this text see Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, pp. 198–200.
- 7 See Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 526–7. On divine names in Pico, and in early Christian Kabbalah in general, see Stephane Toussaint, 'Ficin, Pic de Mirandole, Reuchlin et le pouvoir des noms', in ed., Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Christliche Kabbala* (Thorbecke, Ostfildern, 2003), pp. 67–76.
- 8 See Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 105–6; Farmer, *ibid.*, p. 526.
- 9 BT *Babba' Batra*, fol. 75b. See Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 166 note 10, 218, 239.
- 10 Wirszubski, *ibid.*, pp. 231–2.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 100–5, 214, 223–5, 258–61. Also another important book of Abulafia's has been translated into a sort of Italian and Latin: it is *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* as I pointed out in my 'Egidio da Viterbo and the Writings of Abraham Abulafia', *Italia* 2 (1981), pp. 48–50 (Hebrew). As has been pointed out recently, the translation was made early on in the circle of Pico della Mirandola. See Franco Bacchelli, *Giovanni Pico e Pier Leone da Spoleto, Tra filosofia dell'amore e tradizione cabalistica* (Leo Olschki editore, Firenze, 2001).
- 12 *Heptaplus*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Vallecchi, Florence, 1942), p. 374. On this issue see also Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, pp. 233–4; Francois Secret, 'Bereshitias: ou la interpretation dela premier mot de la Genèse chez les Kabbalistes Chretiens', *In Principio: Interprétations des premieres versets de la Genèse* (Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1973), pp. 235–6, especially note 4 where he refers to Pico's other discussions on this topic. Secret also mentions some other Christological interpretations by Christian Kabbalists like Johann Reuchlin, Francesco Giorgio Veneto and William Pöstel.
- 13 See Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, tr. Robert Caponigri (Henry Regnery Comoany, Chicago, 1967), pp. 8–9. This seems also to be the case in Pico's Thirteenth Chaldaean Thesis, where it is written that 'Per puerum apud interpretes, nihil aliud inteligibiler quam intellectum'. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, p. 491, translates this as 'By the boy the interpreters understand nothing but the intellect.' Farmer, *ibid.*, claims that it was commonplace in 'the esoteric traditions of late antiquity' to refer to the intellectual nature by the term son or boy. Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 193, suggests interpreting the term *puer* as referring to Metatron. Though this suggestion has its logic, I would nevertheless read this thesis in the context of the *Oratio*, which means that the *puer* stands for the son that is indeed the intellect (again see the impact of Abraham Abulafia). See also below, note 60.
- 14 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 522–3. The emphasis on the fact that the names of God possess four letters is reminiscent of the more general statement of Ficino about this characteristic featuring in several religions. See Moshe Idel,

- '*Prisca Theologia* in Marsilio Ficino and in Some Jewish Treatments', in eds, Michael J.P. Allen & Valery Rees, *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Brill, Leiden, 2002), pp. 137–57. This is an issue that deserves further investigation as it occurs in the early fifteenth century in a Jewish source from North Africa. See also Conclusion 7 of the set of kabbalistic theses that prove Christianity, where Pico proposes to understand the name of Jesus according to the kabbalistic method, as pointing to his sonship, Godhead and wisdom. Cf. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 522–3. It is interesting that Pico offers a Trinitarian understanding of the name of Jesus, which may point to the Hebrew – derogatory – name YShW, spelled by three consonants. It is quite emblematic that in another thesis Pico argues that the name of Jesus is 'highly kabbalistic' and can be understood by someone who is acquainted with Kabbalah. See Thesis 8, *ibid.* Altogether, Pico acknowledges the superiority of the Hebrew language as replete with secrets that can be decoded only by someone who knows Kabbalah.
- 15 Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 166.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- 17 See Brian P. Copenhaver, 'Hermes Theologus, The Sieneese Mercury and Ficino's Hermetic Demons', *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation, Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, eds, J.W. O'Maley, T.M. Izbicki & G. Christianson (Brill, Leiden, 1993), pp. 157–8, 173–5.
- 18 I propose to see in Pico and Ficino the Renaissance founders of a multilinear conception of religious and philosophical truth, an issue I elaborated in '*Prisca Theologia* in Marsilio Ficino'. See also Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 198 note 41.
- 19 See David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1981), pp. 35–40; Ruderman, 'Giovanni Mercurio da Corregio's Appearance in Italy as Seen Through the Eyes of an Italian Jew', *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975), pp. 309–22. For the view of Enoch as the firstborn of God, in a text by a follower of this figure, who was acquainted with some aspects of Jewish mysticism, Lodovico Lazzarelli, see eds, Wouter J. Hanegraaf & Roud M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447–1500), The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona, 2005), pp. 108–9.
- 20 See the *Hymn to Athena*, in *The Orphic Hymns*, 32.1–2, ed. A.N. Athanassakis (Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1988), p. 45. See also Cornelius Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia*, vol. 3, ch. 8, in the passage cited from this below.
- 21 *Timaeus* 37c.
- 22 Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, tr. Michael J.B. Allen with John Warden (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2003), vol. 3, Book 11, ch. 4, pp. 263–5.
- 23 Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, p. 1442, Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor*, pp. 222–3. This view is widespread in Christian thought. See Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 63–4.
- 24 *De Occulta Philosophia*, vol. 3, ch. 8. For the various sources of this passage, that

- are not relevant to our discussion see the footnotes in Henri Corneille Agrippa, *La magie cérémonielle*, tr. Jean Servier (L'île verte, Berg International, Paris, 1982), pp. 35–7.
- 25 See above, note 20.
- 26 See *De Occulta Philosophia*, vol. 2, ch. 9.
- 27 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, ch. 10.
- 28 See Francois Secret, *Le Zohar chez les Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (Mouton & Co, Paris, 1964), p. 51; Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel: The Prophet of the Restitution of All Things, His Life and Thought* (Mouton, The Hague, 1981), pp. 69–142; Kuntz, 'Lodovico Domenichi, Guillaume Postel and the Biography of Giovanna Veronese', *Studi Veneziani* (NS) 16 (1988), pp. 33–44; Kuntz, 'Guglielmo Postello e la 'Virgine Veneziana''. *Appunti storici sulla vita spirituale dell'Ospedale nel Cinquecento*, *Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani Quaderni* 21 (Venezia, 1981), pp. 3–24; Bernard McGinn, 'Cabalists and Christians: Reflections on Cabala in Medieval and Renaissance Thought', in eds, R.H. Popkin and G.M. Weiner, *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1994), pp. 23–4.
- 29 See Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 219–20.
- 30 See Guillaume Postel, *Des admirables secrets des Nombres Platoniciens*, ed. Jean-Pierre Brach (Vrin, Paris, 2001), pp. 144–5.
- 31 Francois Secret, *Guillaume Postel 1510–1581 et Son Interpretation du Candelabre de Moyse* (b. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop, 1966), pp. 367–8.
- 32 *Dialoghi d'Amore*, ed. Santino Caramella (Gius–Latyerza, Bari, 1929), pp. 355–6; N. Ivanoff, 'La beauté dans la philosophie de Marsile Ficin et de Leon Hebreux', *Humanisme et Renaissance* 3 (1936), pp. 12–21.
- 33 See Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah, Platonism and *Prisca Theologia*: The Case of Menasseh ben Israel', in eds, Yosef Kaplan, Henri Meshoulam & Richard Popkin, *Menasseh ben Israel and his World* (Brill, Leiden, 1989), pp. 207–19.
- 34 Abraham Cohen de Herrera, *Gate of Heaven*, tr. Kenneth Krabbenhoft (Brill, Leiden, 2002), Book 4, ch. 2, p. 117. For his source see *ibid.*, p. 116.
- 35 *Ibid.*, Book 8, ch. 14, p. 371. It seems that this formulation represents the theory of Zoroaster of the father described as 'deep', some form of interpretation of the Chaldean oracles. See the pertinent literature above in Introduction note 149. There is good reason to assume that this juxtaposition of '*Adam Qadmon* and the Son of God had an impact through its Latin translation printed in *Kabbala Denudata*, as we shall see immediately below.
- 36 See Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor*, pp. 222–4; Krabbenhoft, p. 117 note 14.
- 37 *Gate of Heaven*, Book 4, ch. 3, p. 119; Yosha, *ibid.*, p. 223. See also Krabbenhoft's footnote in his *Gate of Heaven*, p. 482 note 29. It should be mentioned that Herrera mentioned Philo of Alexandria several times in his books.
- 38 The *causatum*.
- 39 This spelling of Pico's name is found also in Moscato's *Qol Yehudah*, Book 4, ch. 3, p. 11b. Here we find another reference to Pico's *Commento*, which is worthy of a detailed discussion in its own right.

- 40 Prov. 30.4.
- 41 (Warsau, 1880), fols. 21c–21d.
- 42 See, however, Joseph Dan, *Hebrew Ethical and Homiletical Literature* (Keter, Jerusalem, 1973), p. 192 (Hebrew) who used a late and unreliable edition (Lemberg, 1859) where there is, what I assume to be, a simple printing error, and in lieu of *Yoan* it is printed *Yoel*, a shift easily understandable to readers of Hebrew. On the basis of this change, Dan decided that Moscato wanted to judaize Pico. Though this might have been the intention of the unknown Polish galleys-reader, unlikely as this is, it was not Moscato's. As we shall see immediately below, at least in this context, Moscato refrains from judaizing pagan authors.
- 43 See e.g. Book 4, ch. 25, fol. 49a, without referring, however, to the topic of our sermon.
- 44 *Sefer Me'or 'Einayyim, 'Imrei Binah*, ch. 4; cf., Azariah de Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, tr. Joanna Weinberg (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 2001), p. 117. See also additional discussions in Weinberg, pp. 115–17, where the issue of sonship is treated. See also above, Introduction, beside note 146. For Philo and sonship see the discussion produced some decades later in Italy, by R. Yehudah Arie da Modena, *Magen va-Herev*, p. 26.
- 45 On this issue see Joanna Weinberg, 'The Quest for Philo in Sixteenth-century Jewish historiography', *Jewish History, Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*, eds Ada Rapoport-Albert & Steven Ziperstein (P. Halban, London, 1988), pp. 171–2.
- 46 See *Poimandres*, vol. 1, 12–13, and treatise 13, 7–10; and Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, cf. son, index, p. 313. Azariah de Rossi has adduced these texts. See above, note 44. Interestingly enough, another Italian thinker, R. Yehudah Arie da Modena, was open not only to accepting some form of Neo-Aristotelian noetic Trinity as a valid religious stand, though similar to Christianity, but also the Hermetic discussion of the son in *Poimandres*. See *Magen va-Herev*, p. 26, where he cites the discussions of De Rossi.
- 47 See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism', in eds, Ingrid Merkel & Allen G. Debus, *Hermeticism and the Renaissance, Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (London and Toronto, 1988), pp. 59–76.
- 48 See Idel, *ibid.*, pp. 59–76. Likewise both of them subscribed to the extradeical version of Platonic ideas. For the history of this concept see Harry A. Wolfson, 'Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretations of Platonic Ideas' in *Religious Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1965), pp. 27–68; and Samuel Sambursky, 'The Theory of Forms: A Problem and Four Neoplatonic Solutions', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6 (4) (1968), pp. 327–39. See also Moshe Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of Kabbalah in the Renaissance', in ed., B. D. Cooperman, *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 223–7; and Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor*, pp. 211–51.
- 49 On the view that the *Torah* constitutes the intellectual universe see Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 29–38.
- 50 The great majority of Renaissance Jews adhered to the medieval, unilinear conception of *prisca theologia*. See Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah and Philosophy in Isaac and Yehudah Abravanel', in eds, M. Dorman & Z. Levi, *The Philosophy of Leone Ebreo* (ha-Kibbutz ha-Meu had, Tel Aviv, 1985), pp. 73–112, especially pp. 84–6 (Hebrew) and my article mentioned in note 33 above.
- 51 This conclusion holds also in the case of R. Abraham Yagel, Moscato's younger contemporary; see David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science, The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., London, 1988), pp. 139–60; Ruderman, *A Valley of Vision, The Heavenly Journey of Abraham ben Hananiah Yagel* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 23–68. Nevertheless see the quite different approach of Moscato himself, to be cited immediately below.
- 52 See Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, p. 199; Wirszubski, *Three Studies in Christian Kabbala*, p. 5. For the identification of Jesus and Wisdom see above, Introduction, the passages adduced from Origen's *De principiis*, and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 79, 214 note 113.
- 53 Sermon 5. Cf. Israel Bettan's translation, *Studies in Jewish Preaching* (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1939), pp. 201–2.
- 54 See Weinberg, 'The Quest for Philo'. The awareness of the need for selectivity insofar as the pagan material is concerned shows that we are dealing with a moderate reception of Renaissance culture in both cases. On the moderate adoption of the Renaissance among Jews see Moses A. Shulvass, 'The Knowledge of Antiquity among the Italian Jews of the Renaissance', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948/9), p. 299.
- 55 For an English translation of the Latin translation by von Rosenroth of these Zoharic treatises see McGreggor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*.
- 56 See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 23.2, vol. 2, fol. 10a. For *Kabbala Denudata* see vol. 1, part 1, pp. 28, 30, part 2, pp. 33, 37, part 3, pp. 31, 37–8; vol. 2, part 2, p. 244, Tract Ultim, pp. 6–26.
- 57 See Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, pp. 127–8.
- 58 See Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, pp. 46–7, 168–9 note 180.
- 59 *The Principles*, p. 167. For the Latin original see p. 81. On this thinker see Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, pp. 177–8, and Sarah Hutton, 'Henry More, Anne Conway, and the Kabbalah: A Cure for the Kabbalistic Nightmare', in eds, A.P. Coudert, Sarah Hutton, R.H. Popkin & G.M. Weiner, *Judaeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1999), pp. 27–42; and her 'From Christian Kabbalism to Kabbalistic Quakerism: The Kabbalistic Dialogues of Ann Conway, Henry More and George Keith', in ed., Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Christliche Kabbala* (Thorbecke, Ostfildern, 2003), pp. 199–209, where additional discussions of the *Ze'yir 'Anppin* in the context of Jesus have been adduced.
- 50 *The Principles*, pp. 37–8, 168.
- 51 On Adam as the son of God in Yehudah ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, see above in Chapter 3. On Adam as Son of God, together with Satan, as the other son, see the text of William Blake that accompanies his 1820 engraving of the Laocoon group: 'YH

and his two sons Satan & Adam.’ Interestingly enough, Laocoon is described by the Hebrew phrase ‘*Mal’akh YHWH*’ written in Hebrew letters, accompanied by the explanation ‘The Angel of the Presence’. In his other visual treatments of the Laocoon theme, words are not found. There can be therefore no doubt that the presence of the Hebrew words reflects the impact of some Jewish sources.

- 62 This is a manuscript passage printed by Goldish, *Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton*, p. 147, and compare to *ibid.*, pp. 157–8.
- 63 Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, p. 187.
- 64 See e.g. *ibid.*, p. 203, and *The Principles*, pp. 38, 167.
- 65 Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, p. 48. See also above, note 13.
- 66 See Marcia Keith Scuchard, ‘Leibniz, Benzelius and Swedenbrog, The Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism’, in eds, A.P. Coudert, R.H. Popkin & G.M. Weiner, *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1998), pp. 84–106.
- 67 See Asulin, ‘Another Glance’; Abrams, ‘The Boundaries of Godhead’; and Elliot R. Wolfson, ‘Messianism in the Christian Kabbalah of Johann Kemper’, in eds, Matt D. Goldish & Richard H. Popkin, *Millenarism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2001), pp. 139–87.
- 68 *Math Moshe*, Sha’ar Metatron, p. 1; Asulin, ‘Another Glance’, p. 452.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 3, cf. Jn 1.7. See also below, Chapter 6 note 26.
- 70 On this issue see Nathan Rotenstreich, ‘Symbolism and Transcendence: On Some Philosophical Aspects of Gershom Scholem’s Opus’, *Revue of Metaphysics* 31 (1977/8), p. 605.
- 71 See especially his *Along the Path*, p. 117 note 36 and above, Introduction note 180.
- 72 See *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 139–61.
- 73 See his ‘The Angels of the Shofar’.
- 74 See *From Martyr to Mystic*.
- 75 See, especially, my ‘The Attitude to Christianity’ or *Messianic Mystics*, in the case of Abulafia, Isaac of Acre and Shlomo Molkho.

## CHAPTER 6 The Son of God as a Righteous in Hasidism

### 1. *Hasidism and charisma*

Much of our earlier discussions have been related to concepts of theophoric mediators: be they angels, *sefirot*, theosophical configurations or cosmic intellects. As such, these discussions are concerned with hypostatic understandings of sonship, which are part of broader metaphysical systems which constitute the higher components of the phenomenon I designated as double sonship. Though many of the texts discussed above circulated within Jewish culture for centuries, even reaching some form of canonization by the beginning of the eighteenth century, there can be no doubt that in the major transformation Kabbalah underwent from the mid-eighteenth century, the general importance of the structures discussed so far diminished dramatically in Hasidic literature. In a way, the sacrosanct theosophical schemes were put on a pedestal.<sup>1</sup> This is why the concepts of the son that will be dealt with in this chapter have little to do with treatments of the sonship themes seen in previous chapters.

This does not mean that Hasidic literature is not aware of the concepts of the intellectual son, or of the theurgical son. They occur there but they are extraordinarily rare. In lieu, we may discern a return to a religious phenomenon similar to what Geza Vermes describes as an ancient ‘charismatic Judaism’ in his studies on the emergence of Jesus as a wonder-maker and inspired religious figure. The focus here is on the importance of a particular way of life rather than the doctrines of a great religious teacher. This new focus is quite obvious in the enthusiastic manner in which R. Israel ben Eliezer, Ba’al Shem Tov (1699–1760) – the master of the good name – known by his acronym, the Besht, and his followers treated Enoch the Cobbler, as an accomplished mystic, able to reach the highest religious attainment while practicing his modest profession in a devoted manner.<sup>2</sup>

The rabbinic establishment inspired most kabbalistic development for the 17 centuries following late antiquity’s famous R. Yohanan ben Zakkai, one of the main formulators of Rabbinism. In the second half of the eighteenth century, in Eastern Europe, the image of R. Hanina ben Dosa’ as articulated by R. Moses Cordovero moves to the center of the religious life of many Jewish groups. The confrontation between the two figures, quite

evident already in the late antiquity source that was discussed in the first chapter, between the power of the son/servant who knows how to pray in an ecstatic/miraculous manner, and that of the noble master of the oral Torah ben Zakkai, contained the seed of a revival in which the two positions confronted, *mutatis mutandis*, each other again in Jewish culture in Eastern Europe. However, in saying that, I would like to qualify what may be misconceived of as a simplistic polarity. The charismatic and the learned are not necessarily two different and sociologically separate categories represented by different elites, which prefer either the charismatic or Torah-study, but rather possibilities inherent within the same cultural system, ideal types rather than categories totally separated. The Rabbi too prays but he is predominantly creative in the field of legalistic learning, while R. Hanina too provided various scholastic sayings that were preserved by Rabbis, but excelled more in another religious domain. Hasidism, unlike its opponents, the Lithuanian Mitnaggdim, is much more on the side of the ancient charismatic prayer figures, without negating the value of learning. The two religious modalities, the ancient charismatics and the eighteenth-century Hasidic masters, see ecstatic prayer as a high religious attainment.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike Vermes's overly sharp distinction between the charismatics (Hanina, Honi or Jesus) as a group on the one hand, and the elite Rabbis on the other, or Martin Buber's differentiation between Hasidic teachings as reflected in more theoretical writings and the experiential religious life portrayed in their legends, I prefer a more integrative model. In my opinion the directness of the approach to God, as represented by Hanina, was preserved and even highly appreciated not only in the late antiquity paragons of Rabbinism, as seen in the statement of ben Zakkai and of R. Zeira, but also in the subsequent Jewish literatures. Cordovero, no doubt a major representative of the Jewish establishment, immersed in the study of Kabbalah and Halakhah and a vital participant in the circle of R. Joseph Qaro, had no problem praising R. Hanina, as seen above. In the Hasidic camp the situation is not so different: the Besht may be seen as being much closer to the image of R. Hanina, though his statements have been preserved, as we shall see below, largely by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoie, a Rabbi who seriously studied rabbinic matters before becoming close to the Besht. In any case, almost all the examples adduced below stem from the so-called theoretical books of the Hasidic movement, rather than from the hagiographical ones. However, before looking more closely at the affinities that the Hasidic masters had for the Son of God, named Hanina, I would like to reflect somewhat on the history of scholarship in this area.

As Bruce Chilton has pointed out, Vermes's understanding of the ancient R. Hanina is indebted to the Buberian emphasis on charisma (and to Buber's persistent resistance to religious establishment), which stems

indubitably from Max Weber's theory.<sup>4</sup> By pointing out the sources of Vermes's phenomenology of religion, we may become aware that he did not just categorize ancient figures and religious styles, but applied an already existing distinction in the study of religion, formulated on the basis of other religious structures, to figures of late antiquity Judaism. However, Gershom Scholem shares Buber's emphasis on charisma in Hasidism and I see no reason to question this suggestion, vague as it is as an explanatory category.<sup>5</sup> If someone does not reify phenomenological distinctions by creating overly sharp antagonistic social structures, or overly simplify the spiritual aspects of one group or another, there is no reason to ignore the possible social impact of a theory that sees in charisma or sonship a meaningful religious category. In fact, Christianity in most of its forms represents a fine example of the religious potential inherent in a central religious belief in sonship as related to charisma. Buber, and for different reasons Scholem, assessed the importance of this category for understanding Hasidism. In my opinion, the ascent of the importance of sonship in Hasidism contributed to the special spiritual configuration of Hasidism, including its charismatic elements. After all, both Buber and Scholem were not only readers of Max Weber, but also distinguished phenomenologists of religion who studied Hasidic texts carefully. Their agreement concerning the role of charisma should alert us to the potential efficacy of this category in interpreting the complex Hasidic phenomenon.

I would like to argue that R. Hanina ben Dosa', the ancient charismatic, and to a lesser extent also Honi, were at the forefront as exemplary figures in Hasidism, and Buber's characterization of Hasidism as charismatic, which in turn has influenced Vermes's own view of Hanina and Honi, was shaped, at least in part, by the prominent role Hanina's and Honi's images as 'righteous' played in Hasidism. Interestingly enough, Buber is not so interested in these figures, seminal for many Hasidic masters, and offers a much less magical picture of Hasidism in general. He is more taken with a milder interpretation of the role of the righteous, as a quintessential helper rather than as a magician. For this purpose he quotes a Talmudic statement where it is written that 'the world was created for the purpose of one single righteous',<sup>6</sup> a view that appears on the same page as discussions of R. Hanina ben Dosa'. Neither was Buber concerned with the immediate continuation of this quotation, where it is said that the world stands for *one single* righteous, who sustains the world.<sup>7</sup>

We may witness here what could be described as a vicious circle. The image of the ancient R. Hanina is mediated by a strong kabbalistic interpretation, and impacts on Hasidism. The image found there impacts on the way in which Buber understands Hasidism, together with Weber's category. Buber's theory of charismatics impacts on the categories used by

Vermes, who applies them back onto the figure of R. Hanina in the rabbinic sources. And finally, in a booklet on Buber written by Pamela Vermes, Jesus is compared to the ancient *Tzaddiqim*, and her husband's study of Jesus the Jew is referred to explicitly.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Early Hasidism and R. Moses Cordovero's R. Hanina 'My Son'

More than any other Talmudic statement, it was the *Bat Qol's* declaration concerning Hanina's sonship and his special status that was most frequently quoted in Hasidism and that turned, in my opinion, into a formative dictum for Hasidic self-understanding.<sup>9</sup> Though R. Hanina is quoted innumerable times in this literature in relation to his views of efficacious prayer, it seems that the passage where he is described as sustaining the world, and is called 'My Son', is even more common. Recently, the need to compare pre-modern Hasidism, medieval Hasidism and ancient Hasidim was highlighted by Ithamar Gruenwald.<sup>10</sup>

According to Azriel Shohat it was R. Israel ben Eliezer who introduced the figure of R. Hanina as both a righteous person and a magician, which means that this is an original Hasidic development.<sup>11</sup> Closer to the mark, however, is Mendel Piekartz, who viewed R. Isaiah Horowitz's classic book, the *Shelah*, discussed above, as well as two other Cordoverian authors, as the sources of Hasidic interpretation.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the nexus between this passage and Hasidism is explicitly pointed out already at the end of the eighteenth century, when a Hasidic master drew attention to this affinity.<sup>13</sup> In any case, this proposal should be strongly qualified in favor of emphasizing the central contribution of R. Moses Cordovero's thought to the Hasidic version of this concept, as seen above. An inspection of the special affinity the early Hasidic masters had for this figure, as he was described in Chapter 4, reveals that there were some earlier kabbalistic stages which put in relief R. Hanina's image as a righteous person, and also inspired the Hasidic perception of the charismatic Galilean figure. I would like to point out that the manner in which the components of R. Hanina's activity are understood by Hasidic masters is indebted to the major conceptual additions to the ancient description of this figure, that stem from Cordoverian-talismanic perceptions. To my best knowledge, no main Lurianic source has adopted the Cordoverian interpretation of the Talmudic description of R. Hanina. Thus we have an interesting example of the impact of this specific type of Safedian Kabbalah on Hasidism, and particularly on a pervasive interpretation of a statement related to a figure described as the Son of God.

Let me adduce a few of the early Hasidic formulations dealing with R. Hanina as the Son of God, in order to exemplify this fascination with the

specifically Cordoverian interpretation of the Talmudic portrait of this figure. These are tributes to the Safedian master for having added to the discussion of the Talmudic passage both the idea of righteousness and that of the mediator, the pipeline and pathway. To be sure, the selection of quotes adduced below in this chapter is quite a small part of the tens of discussions found in early Hasidic literature, and the entire topic requires a separate and more detailed investigation. However, even before such an investigation is carried out, there can be no doubt that the kabbalistic discussions of R. Hanina and their reception in early Hasidic literature contributed dramatically to the shaping of the righteous person, the central figure in Hasidic religious life.

First and foremost, the Besht himself has been quoted as referring to the Talmudic statement dealing with Hanina as a pathway and pipe, and as mentioning the description of this master as a Son of God. For example, he is attributed the following description:

The righteous, just like a pathway and pipeline, draws liquids and good influxes to the world by his holy deeds. And just as the pipeline does not take pleasure from what passes through it, also the righteous does not want and desire but to cause the flow to all the people. This is the meaning of the divine voice saying that the entire world is nourished *bi-shevil*, namely by the pipeline that Hanina My son does, and he is like a pathway and a pipeline, that does not desire his own good, and suffices with a little thing.<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, the liquids mentioned here reflect Cordoverian sources according to which the pipeline draws liquids in order to fertilize the earth.<sup>15</sup> As seen in another Cordoverian passage adduced in Chapter 4, the same prayers *Refa'einu* and *Barekh 'Aleinu*, dealing with the descent of the liquids rain and dew, are related to the image of the righteous as a pipeline, and implicitly to R. Hanina ben Dosa'. Indeed, it seems that this view is found in another tradition adduced in the name of the Besht:

The issue that we pray the prayer for rains like *Refa'einu*, and *Barekh 'Aleinu*, and the similar ones, is like in the case of a father that longs for his son, even for the amusing things of the son, so that the son will not lack [anything]. This is the issue of this longing, because the nature of the good is to cause good. And the entire tendency of the Holy One, blessed be He, is to do good to Israel who are called his sons, by various good things, even the goodness of the rains. Therefore this prayer [intends] to draw down influx and nourishment for all the worlds, even the influx of materiality, so that good will not have the longing.<sup>16</sup>

I see in this passage one more decisive proof of the Besht's adoption of the Cordoverian position regarding the righteous. Another formulation adduced by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye also represents an elaboration on Cordovero, by resorting to another Cordoverian topos: the special power of language:

the letters are 'a ladder fixed on earth',<sup>17</sup> namely the bodies of the letters, 'and its head', namely the spirituality and innerness, ascends to heaven, and by them the angels of the Lord, that are the righteous, ascend, in order to adhere to the Holy One, blessed be He, and descend in order to cause the descent of the influx onto the world, in accordance to the secret of 'the world is nourished by the pathway and pipeline [that is] R. Hanina My son' as I heard from my master.<sup>18</sup>

The introduction of letters as the medium for the phases of ascent and descent is part of the mystical-magic model seen in Cordovero. Though the Safedian master mentioned only prayer in the context of this model, the Besht elaborates a little more and proposes the linguistic ritual as the main form of religious activity, as we shall see immediately below in the case of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl.

Though he did not mention his name, unlike R. Joseph Jacob of Polonoye, who often did so, the Besht's other student, R. Dov Baer of Medziretch, reiterates his master's views when he writes that:

'The *Tzaddiq* is the foundation of the world.' Now it is known that *Yesod* has the power to ascend and draw abundance from above, because it includes everything [within it]. The same is true of the earthly *Tzaddiq*: he is the pipeline who allows the abundance to flow down for his entire generation. Thus the rabbis said: 'The whole world is sustained for the sake of Hanina, My son.' This means that Hanina brought the divine flow forth for all of them, like a pathway through which all can pass; R. Hanina himself became the pipeline for that flow. In the same way was he [the *Tzaddiq*] the ladder of which it is said: 'They go up and down on it.'<sup>19</sup> Just as he has the power to cause the downward flow of divine bounty, so can his entire generation rise upward through him.<sup>20</sup>

As seen above, Cordovero has already used the image of the ladder in the context of the righteous as a pipeline.<sup>21</sup> However in the case of his kabbalistic view, it is not a person who is a ladder, but the theosophic chain of causes, the *sefirot*. Yet the view that the ladder of Jacob is Jacob himself is found in *Genesis Rabba*.<sup>22</sup> However, in the passage above what we see is a

righteous person described by resorting to a quotation in which mention of the Son of God is made. In any case, I assume that it is not the Great Maggid who transformed the meaning to identify the righteous with the pipeline and ladder. R. Jacob Joseph elaborated upon his master's interpretation adduced above, saying that 'it seems to me that in addition to making the pathway and pipeline etc., but he himself is called pathway and pipeline, through whom the flow passes'.<sup>23</sup> I assume that students of both Cordovero and the Great Maggid either draw on Cordovero or share the view of their master, who reiterated Cordovero's position. In any case, both are close to the view attributed to the Besht and adduced above from R. Israel of Kuznitz's book.

Let me draw attention to a parallel between the early Hasidic vision of the son and a Christian text. The themes outlined above are reminiscent of the famous line in the *Gospel of John*, where Jesus says to Nathanael:

You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.<sup>24</sup>

To be sure, in the *Gospel* the title Son of Man is mentioned, while in the Hasidic text it is the title Son of God that appears. Nevertheless, the similarity between the two passages is quite astonishing, as both treat the holy man as a ladder related to ascending and descending angels. The Hasidic text may betray some form of acquaintance with the New Testament, but it may also be explained as an accidental similarity emerging from consulting similar sources. In both cases, however, it is the redemptive power of the righteous person understood as a ladder, who is capable of elevating others, which is at the stake. In this context it should be mentioned that the Besht interpreted a verse from Ps. 118.20, 'This is the gate to the Lord, the righteous will enter it' as follows: 'This is the gate to the Lord, namely the righteous, by whom others will enter.'<sup>25</sup> The righteous, like the supernal Jesus, is an important pontific figure.<sup>26</sup>

R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, a major Hasidic master who flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century, wrote that it is desirable to live in a place where the Torah is studied in order not to cut himself off

from the letters of the Torah so that the general [ambiance is] perfect, because the righteous have the entire space of the world, as we have said on what is written 'the entire world is nourished because of Hanina, My son, and for Hanina My son, it is sufficient etc.,' the meaning is that the world is nourished by his merit indeed, because he is on the degree that it suffices a kab of cabot from the eve of Sabbath to another, since he possesses the attribute

of sufficiency, which is the aspect of 'the righteous is the foundation of the world' because the transition of the influx is through him and he unifies heaven and earth.<sup>27</sup>

What is interesting here is that this view is not merely a matter of exegesis, understanding the 'meaning' of the way in which the world is sustained, but that it becomes a paradigm not only for the righteous in the past but for Ḥasidic mystics in general in the present. The opening of the channel is attributed to Ḥanina in a passage in which his activity is shown to be parallel to that of Moses:

Our master Moses, peace on him, opened the pipeline of awe in the world. And Aharon opened the pipeline of love, like R. Ḥanina who opened the pathway and pipeline of sustenance.<sup>28, 29</sup>

R. Ḥanina is situated here in esteemed company. In fact, his actions are projected back upon the two major leaders of the Israelites, as well as forward onto the nature of the Ḥasidic righteous in the future. The manner in which the relationship between the three figures is articulated is quite fascinating: Moses and Aharon do something similar to Ḥanina; he is the paradigm, imitated even by Moses and his brother – and we shall return to this ahistorical approach below. This pattern has remained influential since the beginning of Ḥasidism. For example, in a Yiddish sermon R. Menahem Mendel Shneorsohn speaks about Abraham as opening the pipeline of devotion, while quoting the dictum relating to R. Ḥanina.<sup>30</sup>

Other Ḥasidic masters broadened the field of Ḥanina's impact. For example, in a Ḥasidic text from the end of the eighteenth century by R. Aharon Kohen of Apta, the author recommends that the mystic transforms himself into 'a pipeline to the supernal well, and draws down the good influx upon himself and upon the entire world'.<sup>31</sup> His older contemporary, R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, applies the model of opening the pathway not only to the righteous alone but in fact to all Israel.<sup>32</sup> What is interesting is that in the context of a mode of religion that is so personal – the *Tzaddiq* is a concrete figure who directly addresses his followers – the main contribution of R. Ḥanina, another idiosyncratic figure, is a depersonalization suggested by technical terms like pipeline and pathway.

Indebted as the Ḥasidic masters are to Cordovero's thought, they were much less interested in the details of the theosophical scheme that informed his thought. The *sefirot* are scarcely hinted at in the quotations above. It is the centrality of language rather than the theosophical structures that characterizes early Ḥasidic discourse. The son is no more a reification of a metaphysical hypostasis found in a transcendental world, but the structure that brings the flow down from on high and distributes it. It is not only

divine but human and divine at the same time. The righteous floats between heaven and earth, rather than existing as a fixed heavenly being. Moreover, Ḥanina's focus on prayer returned to the center of religious activity in Ḥasidism. In a way, the early Ḥasidic masters resurrected an aspect of Ḥanina's image, by attenuating the kabbalistic theosophy, but still retaining both his righteousness and the emphasis on the theme of the pathway and pipeline from the literature. Though a more direct form of worship emerged that is less determined by complex theosophical structures, the magical element that Ḥasidim found in the Safedian Kabbalah nevertheless remained active in the Ḥasidic religious worldview. As part of this attenuation, the strong sexual portrait of the righteous/son is also attenuated.

The magical element at times creates a strong picture of the righteous being as cosmokrator, and in this sense it differs from the form found above in which the righteous being conceives himself – to resort to a Christian formulation – as one who comes to serve rather than be served. The humble, self-sufficient being that does not take pleasure in the flow whose transition he mediates is now described in a much more elaborate way in R. Ḥanina's figure.

### 3. The Ḥasidic righteous as a Son of God

The modest collection of passages compiled in the previous section dealing with the early Ḥasidic portrait of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa' can be easily multiplied if we move beyond the eighteenth-century Ḥasidic literature. Quantity may sometimes imply quality. However, it may be claimed that the apotheosis of R. Ḥanina is more a theoretical or exegetical elaboration upon a venerated figure, somehow marginalized in Jewish medieval culture, than a paradigm for sonship *par excellence*. The fact that the ancient *Bat Qol*, that propagated his sonship daily, is quoted time and again in a certain literature does not automatically, so some may claim, mean that sonship was an important ingredient in the Ḥasidic leader's view of himself. Its occurrence does not automatically imply that the charismatic leader has a significant role in the structure of the Ḥasidic vision. Indeed, one looks in vain in the huge number of scholarly surveys of Ḥasidic concepts of leadership for a meaningful discussion of such a self-understanding, just as the magical aspects of the *Tzaddiq* have been suppressed by some scholars. What is more surprising in the last case is that while the dominance of the Buberian picture of Ḥasidism in many of the modern expositions of this literature can explain the tendency to ignore magic as a major component of Ḥasidic thought, Buber's open sympathy for the picture of the 'original' Jesus could have invited a much more adequate assessment of the importance of the relationship between sonship and Ḥasidism. However,

even Buber's, the modern initiator of the interest in Ḥasidism, propensity toward the figure of Jesus was not helpful in advancing a more adequate picture of the righteous.<sup>33</sup>

Were the discussions of the figure of Ḥanina ben Dosa' the sole instances of mentions of sonship, scholarly marginalization of this issue would be somehow understandable. However, this is not the case. As we shall see further on in this chapter in greater detail, the Besht and his family cultivated the perception of a 'son of the king' as part of a vital parable for their self-understanding. But even such an attempt to restrict the importance of this seminal parable to the founder's family alone is inadequate. A view held widely in Ḥasidism describes the righteous person who worships God with great dedication as a Son of God. This view is found even among Ḥasidic masters who were not part of the founder's family and who resorted to this characterization independently of their treatment of Ḥanina's figure. The affinity between sonship and righteousness in the context of worship is not born with Ḥasidism, as we learn from an interesting discussion by R. Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto, a kabbalistic author who had a considerable impact on Ḥasidism.<sup>34</sup>

Let me turn to some examples from the branch of Ḥasidism that was not particularly connected to the Besht family, namely to some passages written by R. Dov Baer of Medziretch and his followers.<sup>35</sup> This master describes how Joshua's halting of the sun as the prerogative of a figure called 'the son of the Holy One, Blessed be He, who can do the will of his Creator. And who is he? The guardian of the circumcision that is called righteous.'<sup>36</sup> What is the meaning of 'doing the will of God'? Schatz-Uffenheimer, the editor of the text from which this quotation comes, claims that it refers to a form of miracle in line with accepting the divine word.<sup>37</sup> However, in my opinion, this reading is part of the dominant scholarly misinterpretation of Ḥasidism as a movement that minimizes the strong magical aspects inherent in the structure of its teachings, and not only in the extra-Ḥasidic practices of some of its most important exponents. A much more plausible interpretation is that the son, as a righteous being, does what he does, and his deed becomes the will of God. No doubt this is an artificial reading of the rabbinic concept of the will of God, but it is a faithful understanding of the Ḥasidic insistence upon the rabbinic stand that the righteous rules over the divine will.<sup>38</sup> In this particular context we learn about the case of a father teaching his son about a halakhic figure, or about innovations concerning the Torah. The son contradicts (in Hebrew the verb is *soter*) his father's words and interprets the words differently. Despite the fact that the son opposes his father's words – the Great Maggid says – the father is very much delighted, much more than if his son had been silent and agreed with his views. Moreover, the Ḥasidic master claims in this context

that God conditioned the creatures – *Ma'aseh Bereshit* – to do the will of the righteous.<sup>39</sup> Sonship is therefore related to the extraordinary powers of a righteous being, capable of imposing his will upon both creation and God. In fact, this author says explicitly that God's will is unknown.<sup>40</sup> According to this discussion, the son is not just a submissive extension of the father, but a personality capable of confronting him and even changing His will.

There is yet another parable about a son that is even more pertinent for a description of sonship in this Ḥasidic school. It is part of a wider understanding of Judaism as a culture of *nahes*, namely a culture that values the pride and delight that a person takes in his descendants. In this parable, the assumption is that the beloved son is in fact an extension of the father, who takes pleasure in the son's ability to display his expertise in issues related to Halakhah, even if the son does no more than repeat his father's teaching. The meaning of this parable is related to the view that Satan, an allegory for the evil instinct, creates the father's delight, serving as *advocatus diaboli* and triggering the son to display his knowledge. This is the reason why God – the father – takes pleasure:

when he sees that the righteous overcomes it [the instinct] every day, and this is the meaning of what the sages, blessed be their memory, said<sup>41</sup>: 'The Holy One, blessed be He said to Jacob: 'You are God [*'El*]' and *'El* means force and strength<sup>42</sup> . . . and this is the reason why the righteous is called *'El* . . . and in the future it is possible that all will be called the name of the righteous, the name *'El* . . . since it is known that Israel is a name of a righteous.'<sup>43</sup>

The beloved son is therefore the righteous being, called by the name *'El*, God. It seems that we have here an interpretation of the rabbinic description of the righteous called by the name of God, who we discussed in Chapter 1, but transferred from the Tetragrammaton to *'El*. It should be emphasized that the son's accomplishment is depicted as that of God. However, what is more interesting in this context is the example of the theophorism: Israel. I have no doubt that it is not just a collective term that is intended here, but rather a specific person, namely Israel, namely the proper name of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Ḥasidism. This assumption is ever more plausible if we remember that the collection of traditions from which we quoted was called the *Testament of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov*. Thus, in a tradition that arises relatively early in Ḥasidism, a connection is seen between the righteous being, the son and a theophoric use the suffix *'El*.

Let us turn now to some views about sonship expressed in the circle of the Great Maggid. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, a strongly mystically oriented Ḥasidic master active in Podolia and in the Land of Israel, describes the 'universal righteous' as a vessel prepared for the reception of the supernal

light, worshipping God with all his power. He then portrays the righteous being as follows: 'He is called the aspect of the very favorite and precious Son before God. But whoever's worship is under time is called the aspect of servant.'<sup>44</sup> A son is therefore someone who is capable of transcending the vicissitudes of time and entering a special relationship with the divine by receiving the supernal influx after preparing his person to become a receptacle.<sup>45</sup> In the same generation, we read in a famous Hasidic book, R. Elimelekh of Lysansk's *No'am 'Elimelekh*:

When the righteous is found on a great rank in matters of Torah, of commandments and of strong union, he is called 'son of Place'.<sup>46</sup> But when he thinks about matters of his household, matters of this world, like commerce, and the like, despite that fact that it is a great commandment, he is only on the rank of servant.<sup>47</sup>

Elsewhere, the same Hasidic master describes one of the levels of righteousness as follows:

He is son of the Place, blessed be He, namely he is a righteous that worships God out of love and he delights the Place blessed be He, in gladness and joy, he is called by the name son. And this is the reason why the sages said: 'As long as they are doing the will of the Place, they are called sons to the Place.'<sup>48</sup> The meaning of doing His will is that they are gladdening the Place by their good deeds, are called sons. And provided that the righteous is like this, he is called Son.<sup>49</sup>

The righteous being is described as a worshipper who adds more restrictions than others. This is related to the special relationship to God, described by the term *Ben*.<sup>50</sup> In this context the pontifical role of the righteous being as son is also mentioned.

Much later, in the mid-nineteenth century, R. Simḥah Bunim of Psziska, an original Hasidic thinker originating, but latterly disagreeing, with the Lysank's school active in Poland, wrote as follows:

Behold awe is 'the gate to the Lord, the righteous will enter by it.'<sup>51</sup> Despite the fact that the essence of worship is love, awe is the gate to love, and from awe one comes to love. And when he sees and understands the grandeur of the Creator, and [His grandeur] in all the worlds and creatures, he reaches to the awe of majesty. Afterwards, when he understands that the creation of the world, and all the existence and what generates them, are all for the sake of Israel, His close people, so that He can receive delight and

amusement from them, and sees himself as a son before his father who is in heaven, then he comes [to worship] out of love, and this is called Occult Wisdom. As it is written in the sages 'if there is no awe there is no wisdom'<sup>52</sup> as in the parable of the small son, who acts petulantly before the Omnipresent as he likes it, and He grants his desire, 'as a son who acts petulantly before his father and he grants his desires.'<sup>53</sup> And whatever he speaks he does so in gladness and it is counted as wisdom. And when he grows older he fears his father in heaven and he distances himself from Him. However, if that son is wise and knowledgeable and he does know well that he is loved by his father, and his father has delight in him, then love arouses also in him, and he is glad and has a good heart before his father, and he speaks before him in gladness, and this is the amusement of the father.<sup>54</sup>

The righteous person must advance in his worship of God from awe to love, and thus become a son of God who gladdens his father, while he himself is happy. What should be emphasized in this passage, though quite common in Hasidism in general, is the emotional aspect of religion, coupled with a direct approach to God. The righteous person has a special relationship to the divine, depicted in strong, personal terms. Interestingly enough, in the last passage, the language of the ancient charismatic Honi the circle-drawer, as found in the Mishnah and in the Talmud *Ta'anit* sources, is quite evident. However, here happiness and joy are presented as major attributes of the personality that reaches the status of son. It should be mentioned that unlike the shift we have seen from the father/son pair to the mother/son pair in the book of the *Zohar*, Hasidism largely preserves the first approach. In the last quotation, as in many parables in Hasidism, the son is depicted as young. This youth creates an intimacy that is, according to one Hasidic source, greater than the familiarity existing in the case of a more mature son.<sup>55</sup>

The importance of the disparate references to the Hasidic righteous as a Son of God can be understood better when compared to an important parable which has been analyzed recurrently as reflecting the theological strand of Hasidism, stemming from the Besht himself.

#### 4. The Besht's parable of the son of the king

Let me turn now to one of the seminal stories related to the Besht, which deals with sonship in quite an original manner. One of the most widespread theories describing worship in eighteenth-century Hasidism deals with the fall of the worshipper from a higher to a lower level, as part of an ascent to a more sublime form of worship. Capitalizing on a Lurianic distinction

between states of Greatness, *Gadelut*, and Smallness, *Qatenut*, mainly concerning the various configurations within the divine realm but also having psychological and ritualistic overtones,<sup>56</sup> the Besht formalized the relationship between the two states of consciousness in a much more explicit manner, and even explained some of his own religious experiences accordingly.<sup>57</sup> The specific nature of the contribution of Ḥasidic interpretation to the kabbalistic views is quite evident in the accentuated dialectic dimension it introduced into the understanding of the nature of worship. While in the Lurianic system the 'Smallness' is part of the organic growth of a divine configuration, which attains a more full-fledged structure as part of a cyclical rhythm recurring daily, for the Besht the descent, spiritual decline or degradation involved in the fall into 'Smallness' is not just a negative event, but a moment which holds the potential for an ascent to an even higher level than that reached before the fall. In a way, the fall is a descent for the sake of an ascent to a higher level, as articulated by the widespread formula: *Yeridah Tzorekh 'Aliyah*, the descent for the sake of ascent.<sup>58</sup> This form of dialectic is famous and fundamental to an understanding of an important aspect of the religious outlook of Ḥasidism, though it cannot be treated here in detail and is a relatively neglected problem in scholarship of Ḥasidic mysticism.

One of its earliest formulations, attributed – correctly in my opinion – to the founder of Ḥasidism, is pertinent for the theme of our discussion in the present context. The Ḥasidic author who preserved many of the teachings of the Besht, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, and the grandson of the Besht, R. Moshe Ḥayyim Efrayim of Sudylkov,<sup>59</sup> described one of the reasons for a fall into the state of Smallness as follows:

Sometimes he falls from his rank in order to reach a higher, more sublime rank, either for himself or for others, as it is known in the name of my master, the grandfather, blessed be his memory, and quoted in the books of the great priest, our teacher and Rabbi Jacob Joseph, blessed be his memory. And when he is in the lower ranks he does not know what this<sup>60</sup> means neither what is the reason for it, and he is sorry in his soul and asks from Him – blessed be He – because of it and he checks his deeds and says: 'My God My God, why did you abandon me?'<sup>61</sup> Until the Lord, blessed be He, helps him to arrive to a sublime rank.<sup>62</sup>

It is quite obvious that in this passage there is a discrepancy between the understanding of the worshipper, who regrets his fall, and the divine intention which planned it, to compel the worshipper to pray and improve, so that a higher achievement can thus become possible. The fall is ultimately only apparent, as it serves the greater goal of advancing toward a higher

spiritual state. While widespread in its various formulations in numerous Ḥasidic writings, the above principle is articulated here in a unique manner in its use of the famous verse from Ps. 22, used by Jesus in the moment of the crucifixion. We shall return to this issue below.

Interestingly enough, this fall is related to the subsequent attainment of the state of Adam that is precluded prior to the fall by a variety of factors.<sup>63</sup> This state is described by the same term translated above as the sublime rank, *madregah 'elyonah*, and it is a technical term for a spiritual attainment in the nomenclature of early Ḥasidism.<sup>64</sup>

The recommendations mentioned above are addressed to everyone, and there is no reason to assume that a unique individual either in the past or the present is the special addressee of the Besht's teaching. However, the religious structure discussed above reappears in the context of a longer passage, where the founder of Ḥasidism resorts to a parable whose main protagonist is a son of a king who addresses his father – in one of the variants of the parable – by resorting to the same verse from Ps. 22. This is the most famous parable in the history of early Ḥasidism, and is referred to as 'the parable of the walls of the palace'. According to what seem to me to be reliable testimonies, this parable stems from the Besht himself. It has been the subject of several scholarly analyses, which nevertheless neglected the possibility of an affinity with the story of Jesus as the suffering Son of God.<sup>65</sup>

The earliest instance of a testimony to the Besht's telling of this parable is found in R. Joseph Jacob of Polonoy, who writes:

'And I shall hide my face from them'<sup>66</sup> etc. In order to understand this it seems to me that is written in the *Zohar* that there are palaces of prayer, one higher than another, and angels receive the prayer. And there is an angel whose height is 500 years etc.<sup>67</sup> And behold, the Holy One, Blessed be He, fills the entire world, and there is no place that is vacuous of His glory, and wherever someone prays His glory, Blessed be He, is found there.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, why is there need for the angels to go from a palace to another, in order that his prayer will be accepted? And it seems to me that I wrote elsewhere what I heard from my teacher, blessed be his memory, in a parable that he told before the blowing of the Shofar: There was a great wise king, and he made walls and towers and gates by means of illusion.<sup>69</sup> And he commanded that persons will come to him through these gates and towers, and he commanded to spread the treasures of the king at each of the gates. And there was one person who went until the first gate and took the mammon, and returned. And there was another etc., until his son, his beloved one<sup>70</sup> made a great effort to

go to his father the king. Then he saw that there is no screen that separates between him and his father because everything was an illusion. And the meaning of the parable is understandable. And the words of the wise are attractive.<sup>71</sup> And I had written elsewhere what I heard from my teacher, may his memory be blessed, that it is known that God, Blessed be His name, who fills the entire world with His glory, and each and every movement and thought are from Him, blessed be He, and by this knowledge and by its means 'all the wrongdoers will fall apart etc.,'<sup>72</sup> and all the angels and palaces, all were created and done as if from His substance, blessed be He . . . and there is no screen separating between man and Him, Blessed be He.<sup>73</sup>

Let me start with the framework in which the parable is told, before the blowing of the Shofar. This might have taken place either on New Year's Day or the end of the Day of Atonement. The blowing was, presumably, imagined to pave the way for the ascent of prayer by destroying the powers that prevented such ascent, perhaps allegorized by the wrongdoers who are mentioned at the end of the quote. What is crucial for understanding the parable is the fact that it serves as an explanation for a ritual performed during a most important moment of Jewish liturgy. It describes not only a certain type of theology, but the manner in which the blowing of the Shofar and the words of prayer operate. The emphasis on the parable as part of an attempt to describe the importance of prayer also fits the first quote adduced above in this section, which deals with *Gadelut* and *Qatenu*. It is not a new theology that stands at the basis of this or of many other discussions in Hasidism, but rather a fresh form of intense worship that looks for immediate results. Such a position is not born with Hasidism but is found in the Cordoverian vision of prayer as the moment of attraction between the divine spirituality and the letters and the sounds of prayer.<sup>74</sup>

This approach to understanding the relationship between worship and theology is fostered also by another passage of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, where he writes:

After someone knows this great principle, that there is no separating screen<sup>75</sup> between him and his God in the moment of Torah[-reading]<sup>76</sup> and prayer, even if some alien thoughts will come to him, that are garments and covers in which the Holy One, blessed be He, in any case, after he knows that the Holy One, blessed be He, hides Himself within them, there is no [more] hiding.<sup>77</sup>

Mentioning the study of Torah and prayer together is of paramount importance in developing a proper understanding of the place played by a certain type of theology. According to this seminal passage, theology is subordinated to a ritual activity, which is basically vocal in a manner reminiscent of the Shofar blowing. Therefore, the emphasis found in Joseph Weiss's position on the importance of alien thoughts seems to be an exaggeration.<sup>78</sup> Awareness of the immediate presence of God can be achieved by the nomian activities, which are not supposed to prevent this awareness even if alien thoughts occur during the vocal activities mentioned above. At least in this case, the alien thoughts are not necessary as a technique but, if they occur, the assumption is that God can be found nonetheless.

##### 5. R. Moshe Hayyim Efrayim of Sudylkov's version of the parable

However, the longest version of the parable and the most important one for our discussion in this study is found in a lengthy quote from the Besht's grandson. It seems that only in this version does the brief reference to the son of the king receive a special elaboration. First let me translate the version found in the writings of R. Moses Hayyim Efrayim of Sudylkov along with his interpretation, and then proceed with my analysis. The grandson of the Besht opens the citation of the parable with two verses from Isa. 60.1-2, which serve as the general topic of the commentary, and their interpretation by the two Hasidic masters will concern us later on:

I heard a parable from my master, my grandfather, blessed be his memory. [a] A king made many screens by means of an illusion, one within another. And between each wall [he put] rivers and also many terrifying armies, and also bears and lions and other terrifying beasts, so that [people] would fear to go to him. 'And not everyone who wants to take the name may do so.'<sup>79</sup> And the king is awesome and his kingship is prevailing everywhere, and the light of the face of the king illumines all the worlds, and His glory fills the earth.<sup>80</sup> But the walls and the encompassing [things] are hiding the face of the king and this is [realized] by [the dint of] the illusion. And the announcers go out [saying]: 'Whoever will come to the king he will give him richness and honor and he will become an official at him, standing in his palace'. And who does not want it? But when he comes to the first wall<sup>81</sup> and sees its length and height and the other things that terrify the hearts of men, his heart is retreating. And there are some [people] who walk through several walls, one within another, and there are

there honored officials appointed upon the king who spread much money for whomever comes within the walls. Sometimes, after he sees that he has found all the expensive and heavy riches, and the treasures of wealth, he retreats despite the fact that he has seen that he has already walked several walls and rivers and there are no pernicious beings and there is no water or wall. In any case, because each wall is higher and broader than the first, and terrifying in order to induce fear more so that not everyone who wants to approach the king will do so. But the son of the king who was longing for<sup>82</sup> his father, and the love of the father for the son, who wanted to bring the son closer to the light of his face, because always there is an eternal life in the light of the face of the king. And whoever gains to see it then the splendor of his face is lightening and illumining the entire world and all the inhabitants of the world and the dwellers of the earth will fear him, like the face of the king himself. And he has the authority to put to death and to revive,<sup>83</sup> to put their kings in chains and to open [them], and to take out prisoners to freedom,<sup>84</sup> by the dint of the light of the face of the king. And certainly in the son of the king, the power of the father is found in wisdom.<sup>85</sup> And when he comes to the walls and the rivers and the armies and the bears and all the terrifying [beings] and those who hide the face of the king he wonders very much how is it possible that you, a merciful king, father of sons, hide yourself in all those hidings, and I where do I come, and implores: 'My God, My God, why did you abandon me?' And by the power of his burning and broken heart to come to his father, he renders himself<sup>86</sup> and compels himself forcefully to skip over the walls and the rivers, to spread all his riches to the armies that are encompassing there. When his father sees the longing and his devotion, and his imploration reach the ears of the father, who is the king, he removes all the illusions and he sees that there is no wall neither a separating screen but a plain land and gardens and orchard and palaces for pleasure, and the servants of the king stand in splendid garments and various singers stand [too] and the king is sitting on the seat of his kingship and the earth is illumining from his glory. And he sees<sup>87</sup> and falls on his face and says: 'My master, the king, my father and my king, why did you hide your face from me? [as in the verse] 'Thou hide thy face, I was afraid'<sup>88</sup> of your armies and your walls, and all the other things that terrified me and I almost was lost. And the king said: 'Stand up my son, the beloved one.' And he presents to him with the golden scepter that is in his hand<sup>89</sup> and he strengthens him and

clothes him from his splendor and his light and his garment, and put his crown on his head and he told him: 'Did not I do all this for your sake, in order to try you and know what is in your heart, your fear and love for me? Now, my beloved son pass in the entire world and behold I gave my splendor onto you and my light onto your face and you clothes my garment and a crown is put onto your head so that the nations of the earth will know that you are my son.<sup>90</sup> And all the hidings and the fears you have seen were done in order to prevent your enemies to come close to me, because they do not want your well-being and they are aggrandize on you<sup>91</sup> and slander on you and do not want that you will rule as a king but they want to inherit your kingdom. They know that as long as you are alive their kingdom will not subsist in their hand. This is the reason why if they will come before me and slander on the ugly things you have done when you walked with them and their advice in the house of drunkenness, you were almost in the worst situation. Would I listen to their evil advice to remove you and they will rule over my kingdom. But now my son do not fear and do not tremble because your light is my light and my kingdom, which rules over all, is yours and all will bow to you after your return to me. And after I have seen your longings for me<sup>92</sup> they will not come more before me to see the light of my face because they will not be able to do so because of the greatness of the screens and the encompassing [things] and the terrifying fears, and you can do with them, all the nation and kingdom, as you like, since if they will not worship you, you shall encompass them until they will decline. [b] And the meaning of the parable is clear. This is [the meaning of the verse] 'Stand up, Illumine, because our light has been removed'.<sup>93</sup> Its meaning is that the language of removal of light, like in the verse 'and the sun sets'<sup>94</sup> so that 'the glory of God will shine onto you.'<sup>95</sup> 'Because the darkness will cover the earth, and mist – the nations'<sup>96</sup> [means that] the darkness and the separating screens will fall upon those who will come to fight with you. But he who knows that all the things that hide the face of the king are not a hiding since the earth is full of his glory, and he shouts with a broken heart to his father, who is the Holy One, blessed be He, because he knows that He is a merciful king and He created the entire world by his mercy and He wants that His divinity will be known. And he knows that his [higher] soul has been hewed from Him indeed as it is said 'He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life'<sup>97</sup> and does a man etc.?'<sup>98</sup> If this is so why does He hide himself? And he breaks

his noble heart and confesses his sins and shouts and cries and because of that the walls of lies that separate between him and Our Lord are broken. And behold, the light of the face of the king is onto us, and He will remove the transgression and will clothe us with garments and will put on our head the pure turban, which are the supernal *mohin*<sup>99</sup> of the eternal life and from his splendor and light it will be drawn upon us<sup>100</sup> and this is the 'light of the holy Torah'<sup>101</sup> as it is said<sup>102</sup> 'Because by the light of your face you gave us the Torah of life.' And it is in our power and capability to do and rule and put to death and to revive, as it is said in the Talmud<sup>103</sup> that the righteous are similar to God, God revives death etc., God heals ill. This is [the meaning of] 'Happy is the nation that knows the *Teru 'ah*'<sup>104</sup> which means brokenness that they understand that all the separating screens are from God and they are indeed only illusion, 'They will walk in the light of thy face'<sup>105</sup> in the light of the face of the king and the separating screens will be thrown upon the enemies<sup>106</sup> as in Esther<sup>107</sup> 'And the face of Haman was covered.' And I have seen that it was written in a scroll of a book<sup>108</sup> that [it has been done] so that he will not look at the face of the king the servants of the king have covered the face of Haman. Because in the light of the face [of the king] there is life and him the king did not want to revive but [desired] his death, after the king demanded the shame of the queen as it is written there 'you wanted to conquer the queen etc.'<sup>109</sup> And there are more profound things there and when the will of God will permit I shall interpret more.<sup>110</sup>

The parable of the grandfather and its interpretation by the grandson are framed as an explanation of the Isaiah verses. I assume that both authors share the same rather daring understanding of the first verse. The biblical style is based upon the assumption of possible *parallelismus membrorum* in the same verse, and the light in the first part of the verse is synonymous with the Glory of God, while the verb 'Ori and Ba' 'Orekh – illumine – is parallel to *Yizrah*, 'will shine', despite the feminine forms of the first verb.<sup>111</sup> Thus, a homogenous understanding of the plain sense of the verse is quite plausible from the philological point of view. The Hasidic masters however, following some form of earlier Zoharic and even rabbinic exegetical practices, envisaged the two parts of the verse as dealing with significantly different moments.<sup>112</sup> While the first part is understood as describing a setback, or fall, represented by the rather surprising understanding of the verb *Ba*', and then a return to 'illumine', the second part of the verse speaks about some form of apotheosis, an issue to which we shall refer below.

Thus, this rather homogenous verse recounts, in the Hasidic version, the story of the setback, which is a sort of fall in the state of *Qatenu*, which is then followed by a process of royal investment that corresponds to the state of Grandeur. In terms more close to the parable and to the first quote brought in the name of the Besht, the experience of suffering is necessary for the attainment of the higher spiritual rank, which is understood as the son's achievement of the full royal status, a clear parallel to the *Gadelut*. The sequence that consists in initial suffering and subsequent glory is therefore quintessential for understanding not only the general spiritual theory of the Besht, but also the important parable translated above. This sequel is reminiscent of the manner in which Jesus's ascent has been envisaged, for example, in Lk. 24.26 or Rom. 8.17, where suffering is described as coming before his entrance to glory. In both cases suffering is quintessential for the later and higher attainment. In a way, such suffering is an integral part of a move that is ultimately positive, thereby an experience that can be mistaken for negative only by momentary and superficial understandings of passion.<sup>113</sup>

As well as its interpretation, a main point that permeates the parable is the Hasidic view that God is found everywhere. This is the reason why the term 'illusion' is used so often, since the assumption of a distance between God and the worshipper is understood as a sign of misunderstanding. Such an approach is quite important in Hasidism, which combines pantheistic elements with strongly personalistic imagery as amply shown in the above parable. It should be emphasized that in the material we have just addressed, no full-fledged pantheism is assumed, despite the resort to the concept of illusion. Rather, there is a center from which the light radiates and this center is described in strongly anthropomorphic terms, as the face of the king. Moreover, the main structure of the parable in which the king, the son and his enemies are the main protagonists problematizes a pantheistic approach.<sup>114</sup>

Let me turn to the interpretation offered by the grandson, who preserved the present version of the parable. His view is that the king is God, while the son is the superior human soul – *neshamah* – infused by God within man,<sup>115</sup> and the enemies are the lower human activities. This is an allegorical interpretation, which may stem from an acquaintance with the inner sense of the parable disclosed to the interpreter by his grandfather who taught him in his childhood, or from an original reading innovated by the grandson himself. If the former is the case, then we may speak about a parable that refers to an inherent meaning that does not rely on a process of allegorization. Thus, while the plain sense of the parable speaks about the world, its inner sense speaks about spiritual struggle within man. It is the difference between the macrocosm and the microcosm that marks the difference between the plain and the inner sense, rather than the secret types

of understanding, such as those in the various streams of Kabbalah. Though the Ḥasidic masters believed that a new form of relationship between the created world and God is attained by the mystic, it is the claim of an omnipresent God combined with an assumption of the possibility of personal revelation that attracted the attention of the Ḥasidic masters, rather than the details of the inner structure of the various attributes of divinity and their correspondence to the commandments, as reflected in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah.

The clear emphasis on the divine presence in the world according to the plain sense of the parable fits well with the direction of the interpretation according to which it is the divine presence in man, the *neshamah*, that stands at the core of the grandson's spiritual exegesis. By adopting such an exegesis, the historical and religious uniqueness of the sonship of Jesus is obliterated, as every Jew has the potential to attain the special status of Son of God by dint of his soul. The historical sense that emphasizes the singularity of the advent of Jesus in the past and his future return for eternity is not consonant with a spiritual way of thought that operates with philosophical types of Greek allegoresis, interested as the latter were in atemporal aspects of reality. However, it should be pointed out that the spirit of the parable dealing with the kings' pressing presence is reminiscent of Jesus's parables dealing with a king, who is God, found in the Greek Bible and in the *Gospel of Thomas*, where the imminence of the kingdom of God is manifest.<sup>116</sup>

The light of the divine face and the importance of its reflection upon the son play a major role in the parable. Though the immediate sources of the Ḥasidic masters definitely stem from verses found in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>117</sup> the prominence this theme received in their discussions is reminiscent of Greek sources.<sup>118</sup> Though in several Jewish pseudepigraphic writings the ascent on high is accompanied by a reception of some features of light, as part of a process of angelization, enthronement or theosis,<sup>119</sup> and as is also the case in some passages in early Jewish mysticism, these discussions are part of transcendental forms of theologies which see the sign of distinction in separation from the world. However in the discussions above, the attainment of a higher status is linked to understanding the presence of the divine within the world rather than understanding his remoteness from it. Light functions as a metaphor for the immanence of the divine rather than as part of the numinous, dangerous or elevated mode of existence, as is so often the case in ancient theologies. However, the assumption that even within darkness God is hiding is part of a strong type of immanentism, which may be understood as part of the development I described in the Introduction, where I traced the process of fragmentation from rabbinic sources to Lurianic Kabbalah. In Ḥasidism, we find not only

the Lurianic theory of divine sparks immersed within the coarse layers of reality, but also a more widespread presence and even omnipresence of God. Also the Ḥasidic emphasis on human leadership, as performed by the righteous, marginalized some of the earlier discussions dealing with angels, and thus relegates the importance of the verses from Exod. 23.20-23 to the margins.

Let me turn to another aspect of the interpretation. The grandson sees walking in the light of the face of God as an attainment related to the conquering of enemies, a view that is consistent with the plain sense of the parable. However, elsewhere in his book this Ḥasidic master again resorts to the same verse from Ps. 89.16 in order to offer a more detailed interpretation. According to this interpretation, the real conquest has to do with nature, *teva'*, which may point both to objective nature and to an individual's own unique nature.<sup>120</sup> However, following an older tradition this term is interpreted as pointing to the '*Elohim*,<sup>121</sup> and when this external garment of reality is broken, the seeker can arrive at the core, represented by the Tetragrammaton, which is related to the light of the face of God.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, this immanence is understood as related to the most revered divine name, the Tetragrammaton, while the external aspects of reality, which may be related to the screens and walls of the parable, are designated by the name '*Elohim*. In another passage found in the same book, the Tetragrammaton is related to the state of *Gadelut*, while '*Elohim* is related to that of *Qatenuṭ*, all this in the context of the hiding and the shining of the face of God.<sup>123</sup> It is interesting to highlight some form of affinity between the hiding, withdrawal or retraction of God, and some form of divine *Qatenuṭ*, understood as the condition of man's attaining *Gadelut*. It seems to me that we may discern a shift from the manner in which the two terms are used in Lurianic material and Ḥasidism. This shift is not so much a matter of a conceptual change as Scholem claims,<sup>124</sup> nor a simple continuation of Lurianism in Ḥasidism as claimed by Tishby and Pachter,<sup>125</sup> since only in the latter type of thought do these two terms become part of a more comprehensive hermeneutical grid related to ritual performance. In simplifying the more complex theosophy of Luria by disregarding, for example, the importance of the theosophical concept of '*Ibbur*, the process of impregnation taking place within the divine structure, as preceding *Qatenuṭ*, Ḥasidic masters turned the two terms into a scheme that organizes the understanding of two main modes of worship in a manner that has no parallel in Lurianism. It becomes an interpretive grid.<sup>126</sup> Our understanding of the manner in which Ḥasidism develops can be enriched by reference to the way in which Ioan P. Couliano described the novelty of the Renaissance:

The originality of an era is not measured by the content of its ideological systems but rather by its 'selective will', that is, according to the *interpretive grille* it imposes between preexisting contents and their 'modern' treatment. The passing of a message through the hermeneutical filter of an era produces two results of a semantic kind: the first, aiming at the very organization of the cultural structure of the time and hence located outside it, is set forth as a complex and subtle mechanism of emphasis or, on the contrary of suppression of certain ideological contents; the second, which operates in the very interior of the cultural structure, is set forth as a systematic distortion or even a semantic inversion of ideas which pass through the interpretive grille of the era.<sup>127</sup>

Formulated in the context of written cultures, this methodological statement is even more pertinent for a primarily oral culture such as the Ḥasidic culture, especially in its first decades.<sup>128</sup> With regard to traditions that circulated orally, it is hard to distinguish between the variants of a single parable by the criterion of what is 'more original' and offer a precise line of development, as is possible, in contrast, in many cases in the history of ideas in Kabbalah. Following Couliano, we may say that the question of whether the Ḥasidic masters innovated the psychological interpretation of the *Gadelut/Qaṭenut* is less important, while what is more important is the decisive place it is accorded in an important branch of the Ḥasidic movement. I assume that a certain distortion is evident in the cultic aspects related to these two terms. The interpretive grill, namely the manner in which many theosophical concepts are interpreted in Ḥasidism, not only derives from the existence of such nuances in earlier material, but also involves setting in relief this aspect and its conjugation with ritualistic deeds. Or to put it differently, while for the Lurianic Kabbalah, the *Gadelut/Qaṭenut* couple stands for both the theosophical and anthropological, in Ḥasidism it is the sort of worship that is dramatically central to the transition from one state to another. This restructuring is true also in the case of the role played by the righteous in this movement, as seen above and as shall be seen further below.

To repeat myself: understanding the nature of a system depends less on determining the precise extent of innovations of ideas or of the continuation of earlier views in a new context, and more on identifying that which is central and that which is peripheral in a certain system, or how major concepts organize minor concepts within a wider web.<sup>129</sup> Restructuring, marginalization and adding new emphases are the strategies of reorganiza-

tion of older material that continue to be more influential than the innovative drive.

#### 6. R. Moshe Ḥayyim of Sudytkov's version of the parable

Ḥasidic masters and their followers considered the Besht to be the founder of the Ḥasidic movement. This founding role means, inter alia, establishing many of the major – though certainly not all – important ideas and practices adopted since the first generations of the movement. Though this is the general attitude in Ḥasidism toward the Besht, scholars do not universally accept it. Recently, views indicating a more limited contribution by the Besht have been circulating based either upon a more skeptical attitude toward the sources that claim to preserve his teachings,<sup>130</sup> or on distinguishing between models of thought and experience found in the writings of his disciples and those specific to their masters.<sup>131</sup> Such methodological proposals may in principle contribute to a more cautious and complex understanding of the history of Ḥasidism. In practice, however, they reflect only a small segment of a larger amount of pertinent material preserved in the name of the Besht. Thus, much more comprehensive analyses are necessary before this view can be adopted. My own perusal of the pertinent material after having formulated these cautionary thoughts reveals that much is exaggerated; indeed, I have previously attempted to illustrate through specific examples that there is a need to return to the view that the Besht is indeed the source of a majority of the material adduced in his name in books composed following his lifetime in the first generations of Ḥasidic authors.<sup>132</sup> I would like to address this issue by an analysis of a further version of the parable of the walls that is preserved in the same book, quoted above, namely R. Moshe Ḥayyim Efrayyim of Sudytkov's *Degel Maḥaneh 'Efrayyim*. When commenting upon the verse 'And I shall hide My face'<sup>133</sup> he wrote:

This is, *prima facie*, a great quandary: how is it possible that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will hide His face from Israel, God forbids, because the question is how shall they have vitality and standing, since this is all the vitality of Israel, the people which is close to Him,<sup>134</sup> which are called the sons of the Place?<sup>135</sup> But this is similar to the parable of the king who made several screens before his palace by means of illusion, so that they will not be able to enter to him and he hid himself there. And he made walls and fire and rivers by means of illusion, all this before his sons. And behold whoever is wise understood how it is possible that his merciful father would not like to let his face be seen by his sons,

who are his friends, that this is [no more than] an illusion and the father wants to try to see if the son will make efforts to come to him, but indeed there is no hiding there at all. And behold immediately after he had sacrificed his soul<sup>136</sup> to go in the river, the illusion disappeared and he passed there. This is so also insofar as all the screens are concerned until he arrives at the palace of the king. But there are stupid men, that are afraid of starting to pass through the screens and there are some who pass through water but return because of the walls and because of fire. And the meaning of the parable is known. Behold that whoever sacrifices his soul and passes through all the screens and makes efforts until he arrives at the king, he will reach a rank that is greater than beforehand. This is the meaning of the verse 'I shall descend with you'<sup>137</sup> namely when you will understand that even in descent there is 'Anokhiy, namely that the hiding that He hid Himself from you is also to your benefit. Then 'Anokhiy will elevate you, also He will ascend, namely that you shall merit the superior rank and this is the meaning that 'He also ascended'<sup>138</sup> and you shall understand it. And this is the meaning of 'The Tetragrammaton that walks with you always' either when descending or when ascending . . . even when He hides it is not in order to reject you, as [written] above. And this is hinted at here 'And 'Anokhiy will hide',<sup>139</sup> namely when you will understand that 'Anokhiy is found within the hiding that Esther<sup>140</sup> is in the aspect of Hadasah is Esther,<sup>141</sup> and Hadas amounts to *Ḥayyim*, when the word is included<sup>142</sup> which means that you shall be illumined by the light of the face of the king of life, and this is [the meaning of] 'I shall hide My face.' And this is the secret of the [festivals] New Year and the Sukkot. At the beginning it is *Keseh*,<sup>143</sup> namely there is [first] hiding and afterwards, during the Sukkot, by means of the 'Etrog and the Life, because the *Lulav* and *Hadas* both amount to *Ḥayyim*<sup>144</sup> as mentioned above, that he merits to be illumined by the light of the face of the king of life, etc., and the *illuminatus* will understand.<sup>145</sup>

First and foremost, it should be pointed out that the name of the Besht does not appear as the source of the parable. Yet this is not a case of plagiarism, but just a manifestation of the common attitude among Besht's followers according to which their views are not actual innovations, and that they should be understood as illustrating a basic set of teachings stemming from the Besht. Of course this does not mean that there are no differences

between their formulations and those of the Besht, just as there are differences between various formulations attributed to the Besht himself.

Interestingly, the emphasis on passion, so obvious in the previous version of the parable found in this book, is attenuated here. The intelligent person knows how to circumvent the illusion and does not have to shout and resort to the verse from Ps. 22. Nor is there particular emphasis on the unique son here, as there is in the Besht's verse. The son becomes here sons, and in fact, the entire people of Israel. These two developments change the nature of the parable as well as the interpretation offered of it by the same author. *Via passionis* is much less important. Wisdom, some form of *via perfectionis*, is preferred over passion. The importance attributed to life in the interpretation of this version of the parable may reflect this turn towards perfection. Unlike the centrality of the experience of death – even if imagined as temporary – in the drama of the Christological sonship, the Hasidic master emphasizes the existence of life even within what seems to be His state of hiding his face. Even in this moment the divinity is present. God does not abandon the sons in their apparent decline or descent, but rather disguises himself in order to be discovered by a devoted son.

The reference to ritualistic objects and to the various holidays is quite an interesting matter for our understanding of the passage under scrutiny in this section. These references are part of the approach I attributed to the Besht in the discussions in the preceding section. One of the major religious concerns that the parable is adduced in order to address is the relationship between God and the people of Israel. Since the Israelites' vitality stems from direct ocular contact with the light of the divine face, the hiding of the face means their annihilation. The use of the 'corporate personality', the sons of God, in lieu of the singular and historically speaking unique Son of God of Christianity – and of the earlier version of the parable – is also revealing, and we shall return to this topic in the Concluding Remarks.

### 7. R. Nahman of Bratzlav's version of the Besht's parable

Another prominent member of the Besht's family, his great-grandson and the nephew of R. Moshe Ḥayyim Efrayyim of Sudytkov, the famous R. Nahman of Bratzlav,<sup>146</sup> preserved another much shorter and somewhat different version of the parable, which he explicitly attributed to the Besht. R. Nahman is well known for his outstanding and original spiritual teachings and in one of these he addresses the need to shout to and implore God. There he writes:

And similar to this is the parable told in the name of ha-Ba'al Shem Tov, let the memory of the righteous and holy man be

blessed: A king put a great treasure in a place and encircled the treasure by means of an illusion by several encompassing walls. When men came to these walls, they imagined that the walls are real and hard to break. Some of them returned immediately, others broke a wall and when they came to the second one they could not break it. Others broke more walls but could not break the remaining walls. When the son of the king came, he said: 'I know that all the walls are illusions and indeed there is no wall at all.' And he went confidently until he passed all the walls. From this the *illuminatus* should understand that parable by itself, as concerning all the obstacles and incitements and the allures that are aspects of walls, which are around the treasure of awe, that in reality are nothing. What is essential is a strong and courageous heart and then there is no obstacle, especially in matters of corporeality, like for example because of wealth, or when his wife, his sons, his father-in-law or his mother and father and others, are preventing him. All these are negligible and meaningless<sup>147</sup> for someone whose heart is strong and courageous for God, Blessed be He.<sup>148</sup>

It seems that the dialectical moment that is so crucial for the Besht and his grandson loses its importance in this version of the parable. In R. Nahman's formulation the confident son does not have to suffer at all in order to overcome the fallen situation. His bravery suffices in order to reach the treasure, which is the awe of God.<sup>149</sup> No direct relationship between the son and the father is mentioned in R. Nahman's version, while a particular vision of reality that surpasses illusion is in the son's reach from the very beginning. The basic assumption of R. Nahman elsewhere in his writings is, like that of the Besht, that God hides himself, is present in a concealed manner, even in darkness, and this awareness is quintessential, as we have already seen in the previous section, for understanding the real dynamics of religious life.<sup>150</sup> It should be mentioned that such a non-dialectical attitude is hardly characteristic of R. Nahman, who can rightfully be called one of the most dialectical thinkers in Judaism.<sup>151</sup> It seems, however, that part of the material in the parable of his great-grandfather that completes some of the gaps in R. Nahman's version of the parable is found in the writing of his closest follower and scribe, R. Nathan Sternhartz.<sup>152</sup> In a collection of spiritual instructions which reflect the views of his master, R. Nathan wrote:

Even if a man fell to a lower place, God forbids, even if darkness is encompassing him from all the sides, nevertheless if he believes in God, blessed be He, in a simple manner, believing that God is one, and shouts to Him, blessed be He, in truth: 'My God, My

God, why did you abandon me?' And he implores him in truth, then truth illumines him to exit from darkness to light and he even merits to open an opening to others and take them out from darkness and cause them to repent.<sup>153</sup>

It seems that the discussion of the Besht in the parable, where the son both suffers and calls to God, following which he succeeds, is split between the somewhat elite son in R. Nahman's version of the parable, on the one hand, and the everyman in R. Nathan's passage, on the other. Now it is not the elite figure which shouts and implores God by resorting to the verse from Ps. 22 but perhaps a more simple man who falls. In any case, it is important to point out the significance of shouting as a religious activity within the context of R. Nahman's outlook, a significance which stems, as seen above, from the Besht's version. While the elite is described as following some sort of *via perfectionis*, the many and more common worshippers – note especially the emphasis on the simple faith – are recommended to follow something that is closer to a *via passionis*. Interestingly enough, it is the latter rather than the former that are described as capable of saving others. It may also be that R. Nahman has become aware of the nexus between the Psalm verse and the son and its Christian background, and wants to avoid it. Nevertheless, it seems that the fact that the figure who prays to God using the formula from the Psalms is also described as helping others, a position found already in his uncle's passage quoted above, reflects the status of Jesus as someone who saved others.

In any case, it is important to point out that the role of faith in its most simple manner, and that of devotion, are seen as the most transforming aspects of religion. In the specific discussion adduced above, no nomian type of activity is mentioned as part of this transformation, neither prayer, nor the reading of the Torah, nor any other commandment.

It should further be pointed out that R. Nahman emphasizes the motif of breaking, both the walls and the heart, much more than the Besht and his grandson. Though he indubitably drew from earlier Hasidic sources, the emphasis he places on this theme, like the theme of shouting, is much greater and they become part and parcel of his mystical outlook.

#### 8. *The small son as righteous: Sonship and intimacy*

As seen in one of the sections above, it is evident that the righteous man is seen as some form of Son of God in early Hasidism. Nevertheless, the Hasidic material pertinent to this point is much richer than the few examples I adduced here. One of the most widespread parables relates to the relationship between God as father and a 'small son'.<sup>154</sup> There are numerous

versions of this parable and I do not intend to survey them all,<sup>155</sup> but would like to turn to a few samples found in the most influential writings of the Great Maggid of Medziretch. As pointed out above, the parable of the palace did not fare very well in this author's writings, in contrast to its reign in the Besht family and in the writings of those connected to this circle. However, the Great Maggid and his followers were concerned with a more general and simple parable about the relationship between the father, a symbol for God, and his small child.

I will first quote the short parable and follow with my analysis:

'Let the Glory of God be for the world.'<sup>156</sup> All the worlds cannot bear the luminosity of the Holy One<sup>157</sup>, blessed be He, but He, blessed be He, does some contractions so that they can bear it. Prima facie it is difficult [to understand] that there is more Glory than the world can bear. 'But he will rejoice in His deeds'<sup>158</sup> because He wants to rejoice in His deeds. This is similar to a father who has a small son and the small son wants to take a stick in order to ride it like a horse, despite the fact that the horse is leading the man but he [the son] is leading it [the horse], he [the son] nevertheless delights in it, and his father helps him and gives him the stick in order to fulfill the desire of the son. Likewise are the righteous men that want to lead the world. And the Holy One blessed be He, created the world so that they can take delight by their leading them.<sup>159</sup> But we do not realize the Glory of His essence [*kevod 'atzmiyyuto*], but we realize [only] His Glory that is within the world, and this is the reason why He contracted himself within the worlds, so that He will be amused because of the delight of the righteous men, who take delight from the worlds. And this [is the meaning of] 'The will of those who fear Him, He fulfills,'<sup>160</sup> because there is no attribution of will in the Infinity, but only what those who fear Him, namely the righteous, do. As in the case that [God] took advice of the souls of the righteous.<sup>161, 162</sup>

Some parts of the parable are quite transparent. The father is God, the son is the righteous person, while the stick is the world. Creation is a gift for the pre-existing righteous – hinted at at the end of the passage – who enjoy being leaders of the world. Their joy is God's amusement. However, the righteous are not capable of enjoying the fullness of reality as it is, because they mistake the contracted Glory of God for the thing itself, namely the infinite essence of God which is beyond comprehension. In a way, God enjoys the limitation of the righteous and is instrumental in responding to this limitation. Such a strategy is also found elsewhere in the parables of the

Great Maggid, where God as a father or teacher limits his mind so that He can deal with the son's mental limitation.<sup>163</sup> According to this analysis, the world is certainly not an illusion, but rather the illusion is the limited and contracted presence of God. Similarly the righteous men are not living in an illusion like those in the Besht's parable, since though the stick is certainly not a horse, they play a game of whose nature they may be aware while nevertheless enjoying it. Nor will the righteous ever awake, according to this parable of the Great Maggid, from their limited understanding as in the parable of the son of the king. The world is the place in which the righteous men display their will, and God does not initiate anything, but rather creates the possibility for righteous people to enjoy, from which He derives amusement.<sup>164</sup> God has no will, but gives those who are righteous the opportunity to express their will. Unlike in the parable of the Besht and its variants, here no illusion, ordeal, awakening, real leadership or experience of apotheosis can be detected. I wonder, therefore, whether this parable does not constitute an implied critique directed at the son of the king parable, cultivated by the Besht and his family followers. Such a reading would account for the almost total absence of that parable in the Great Maggid's circle.

While the last parable reveals a certain distance between the father and the son, elsewhere in the same book the father contemplates the wise things his son does and, while doing so, 'is wholly within His son'.<sup>165</sup> This identity, even if momentary, between the son and the father is reminiscent of the fullness of the presence of the father within the son in Christianity. In the context of this passage, the Hasidic author also points out the assumption that the son is found within the very essence of his father.<sup>166</sup> Though the sonship is quite evident here and the possibility of a Christian influence is plausible, it should be kept in mind that the Neo-Platonic background was also instrumental in exposing or accepting such identification. For example, we read in the same book that the *causa* and the *causatum* are conceived of as identical: 'It is known that the actor and the *actum* are a simple oneness, and they are not separated since would the power of the actor not be in the *actum* it would be nil and nothing.'<sup>167</sup> Yet according to another passage from the same master, the image, the *dyoqan*, of the son is found engraved within his father and this image takes pleasure when the son does a good thing.<sup>168</sup>

Let me address now another interpretation of sonship concerning the small son, related to another *Bat Qol*, that also calls every day, but not in the context of R. Hanina. In a *Baraita'* adduced in the Talmudic tractate 'Avot, it is said:

The Besht asked about the dictum of the sages. Every day a *Bat Qol* goes forth from the Mount Horev and proclaims saying:

'Woe unto men on the account of [their] contempt toward the Torah.'<sup>169</sup> 'If the voice goeth forth every day in order to arouse the hearts of the sons of Israel to a real repentance, all must listen to the voice. And if it is impossible to anyone to listen to the voice, why one needs the voice?' R. Simḥah Bunim of Prszisḥa, may his memory be blessed, said on it a parable: 'A man traveled in a chariot from his town during the summer for his commerce, in order to go to another town, and he took his small son with him. When they passed there was a great wood in their way. The youth started to cry and ask his father saying: 'My father, my father, allow me to descend from the chariot for several hours in order to enter the middle of this nice wood, to collect sweet cranberries, to refresh my soul.' His father said: 'Woe, my dear son, if you will enter the mid of this great wood to collect the cranberries as you request, and I shall go on with my travel, you may easily err in your way and will not know where to look for me.' The youth answered him: 'Father, I shall go to collect in the wood and you will continue your travel slowly, and from time to time I shall call you and when you will answer me I shall hear your voice and know where you are and I shall come closer to you all the time, and I shall not err on my way. And after I shall fill my bucket with cranberries I shall come to you and we will proceed together, and everything will be as it is appropriate.' But what happened was different. The son went to collect cranberries and the father traveled slowly on his way. When he did not hear the voice of his son shouting for him, he started to shout with a great voice: 'My son, My son, where are you?' But the son did not hear and so the father is calling each and every day: 'My son, My son, where are you?' But the son does not hear. And R. Bunim said: 'When he sees that he erred on his way the son should listen and make an effort to hear the voice of his father shouting, because if he will be capable to follow the voice, it will be fine, but if, God forbid, he does not listen and does not go he is prone to err very much, God forbid. And whoever understands, he will understand.'<sup>170</sup>

The kind of sonship illustrated here is related not to an ancient charismatic figure that becomes a paradigm, but to an ongoing situation. God continues to have a son, and to worry about him when he is lost. The influential nineteenth-century Hasidic master R. Simḥah Bunim assumes that what is written in the treatise *Avot* about the divine voice does not reflect important information about the past, but rather it describes an ongoing

situation. While the ancient statement has to do with encouraging people to study Torah, this issue is not even mentioned in the Hasidic parable. Rather, the search for direct contact between God and his son is what is at stake. Listening to the father's voice re-establishes a personal, intimate scenario of traveling together on the same chariot. Unlike the famous Midrashic account about a king and a governor who traveled on the same chariot, where the king threw out the governor in order to avoid any confusion between the two,<sup>171</sup> Hasidism envisions the father and his son returning to the intimate situation of riding the same chariot.

The concept of the voice of the father that continues to resonate today is also interesting from another point of view, in that it may help increase our understanding of the attitude toward the structure related to R. Ḥanina, in whose writings the divine voice goes forth from Mount Horev. One may understand it as dealing solely with a historical figure, but I wonder if this is indeed the best understanding. As seen above, R. Ḥanina's opening of the channel has been attributed to Moses and Aharon, without any feeling that a historical problem may emerge from such a reading. If such a reading of R. Ḥanina is accepted, so too can we accept the assumption that even now sonship is an important category. In other words, the drama of sonship is not a past matter concerning one unique individual, but an ongoing experience in which the son and the father are supposed to look for each other. Last but not least, while the rabbinic statement has to do with the neglect of the study of the Torah, this issue does not play a role in the parable and its interpretation.

Let me turn now to a discussion of the last Rabbi of Ḥabad, R. Menahem Mendel Shneursohn, on the topic of a further small son. In an oral sermon delivered in 1983, he discusses the three forms of worship: the first of a servant, the second of a faithful servant and the third of a small child.<sup>172</sup> It is only the latter that enjoys access to all the secrets and hidden stores of the father. He can creep freely as the father enjoys his son's creeping. Even places that the father has not seen for a long time are open to the small child. Unlike the case of a grown son, towards who a father experiences some form of reticence, with the small child nothing similar is possible:

In the case of the small son, there are no calculations at all because it is out of his nature [*mi-tzad tive'o*] . . . that he belongs to the very essence of the father [*'etzem mahuto shel ha-'av*], and he feels that all the father possesses . . . does belong to him.<sup>173</sup>

Let me emphasize that while the Great Maggid stresses the distance between the father and the son, like that of a sovereign mind that contemplates the limitations of a youngster, in the more recent Hasidic interpretation, based

explicitly on the Great Maggid,<sup>174</sup> the distance between the two is dramatically reduced. The verb translated as 'belongs to the father' is *nimshakh* [*me-ha-'av*]. The root *MShKh* is quite a widespread and polisemic verb in both Kabbalah and Hasidism, and it may signify, inter alia, the emanation of the son from the essence of the father.<sup>175</sup> In a manner reminiscent of some texts dealt with in the Introduction, the implicit assumption is that there is an ontic continuum between the father and the small son. However, the growth of the son creates some form of distance between the father and the more mature son.

In fact, the formulations used by this quite traditional figure in New York in 1983 are reminiscent of the famous *homoousia*-doctrine declared at the Council of Nicaea in 325, according to which the Son has the very same substance as the Father.<sup>176</sup> In some of those discussions, the *physis*, namely the common nature of the persons of the Trinity, is used as a synonym for *homoousia*.<sup>177</sup> According to some formulations, like that of Hilary of Poitiers, the Father and the Son are consubstantive though their personae are not identical.<sup>178</sup>

Interestingly enough, in another discussion the same Hasidic author speaks about the eating of the *matzah* during the days of Pesah as including 'an aspect of the essence of the *Gadelut* of 'Abba',<sup>179</sup> the essence of the Divinity, namely that his material body is linked to the vitality of his soul, so that even by his corporeal life, by consumption of the food where there is the essence of the divinity'.<sup>180</sup> This eucharistic understanding of the eating of the *matzah* is fascinating, especially if added to the homoousic vision of the small son. In another Yiddish sermon, the same master distinguishes between the special love for the small son and the attitude towards the grown son by saying that while the child is small, he has no attribute other than his smallness, as he is not extremely wise, learned or well behaved. Thus, the love of the father is to a great extent a self-love, 'ahavah 'atzmiyt.<sup>181</sup> The term he uses is important since the very root that has been used for conveying the consubstantiality, 'Atzmiyyut, appears here in another form and in a reflective grammatical structure. The human situation is compared to the relationship between God and the Jews, who are his small sons; as such, the real worship is supposed to take place in the form of *qatnut*, an issue discussed above.<sup>182</sup> In yet another sermon, the same R. Menahem Mendel interprets a Talmudic statement in quite an original manner, according to which the strength of the son stems from the strength of the father, which means that the power of the son emanates from the essence, 'atzmiyyut, of God.<sup>183</sup>

Elsewhere in another of his sermons, R. Menahem Mendel interprets the verse from Genesis 'And God added to me another son' as some form of expectation that the Jews will be transformed into 'a son of the Holy One,

blessed be He'.<sup>184</sup> Alternatively, the 'other son' may refer to the elevation of someone who is already a son to an even higher level.<sup>185</sup> This is quite a strong inversion: while in the Bible it is Rachel who expresses this event in giving thanks to God, here God expects to have one more son. This call to transform Jews into Sons of God is especially interesting because it reflects the main ideology of the modern Habad, a movement that has strong missionary ideals and practices. In a way, the extreme emphasis on consubstantiality is connected to the view of the election of the Jewish people as a people whose souls are part of the divine essence, and who therefore represent unique sons.<sup>186</sup>

Leaving the discussion of sonship in Hasidism, I would like to return to the principles of sonship that I referred to in the Introduction. The morphic aspects of sonship are evident from some of the previous discussions, especially R. Moshe Hayyim Efrayim of Sudylkov's version of the parable, wherein the son inherits all the prerogatives of the father. However, the nominal aspect has not been addressed in our discussions. Indeed, it is hard to find explicit statements reflecting it at all. The explanation for this absence may be that for the Hasidic masters, their very names were conceived of as divine names, or at least as effective names. Through this conception, they followed a kabbalistic view formulated in late sixteenth century, according to which:

There is a great preparation inherent in the names of the righteous [men which enables] the dwelling of the divine overflow on them as it is written: 'See I have called you by name' and only afterward [it is written] 'I shall fill him of the spirit of God.'<sup>187</sup>

We learn from a story about the Besht that he considered his names to be magically efficient.<sup>188</sup> In a hagiographic collection of traditions regarding the Besht it is said that: 'Since the name Israel, son of Eliezer, is a name,<sup>189</sup> it means that he is a *Tzaddiq*.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the importance of someone's name is put in relief in an important discussion of the Great Maggid's, who claims that the name of the small son is given not by the father and mother alone, but by a divine inspiration, reflecting the fact that the son's name is related to the root of his higher son.<sup>191</sup> Thus, we may assume that Hasidic sources did not marginalize nominal resemblance with the divine, but that people's names are given with God's consent and as such, possess special features. The emphasis we have seen on the small son reflects, in my opinion, the reservation many of the Hasidic circles evince regarding the importance of advanced rabbinic studies as a paramount religious value. It is the more emotional aspects of religion that attract the attention of the Hasidic masters, and consistent with such an approach, it is the small rather than the more mature son who constitutes a better representative.

Let me turn to two interesting Ḥasidic discussions that exemplify the affinity between sonship, ecstasy and intimacy. R. Ḥayyim Tyrer of Czernovitz, an early nineteenth-century figure active in Bukovina, wrote as follows:

Then, even fulfillment of the Torah is irrelevant because the passion of attachment is so great. This is like the case of a father and his much-loved only son who have not seen one another for many years. When they see one another face to face they embrace and kiss with a love that is as strong as death, their souls going out to one another. All their senses cease to exist, just like at the moment of death. This is the love that the children of Israel should have for their Creator, blessed be He and His name, a love of such great passion and desire, since they are a part of Him. But if they were constantly in this state there would be no Torah. One who has left the bounds of humanity<sup>192</sup> can fulfill no *mitzvah* and can study no Torah because he has [already] left human condition. This is why God put it into our nature to be cut off and fall back from too much love. Then he will be able to fulfill the Torah ... because he falls back from the aspect of *Hokhmah* ... that is the annihilation of [his] existence.<sup>193</sup>

The son in the parable represents the children of Israel. The intensity of their love to the father is so strong that it obliterates the performance of the commandments. However, even when not in the ecstatic state, sonship is not mitigated, but constitutes a constant. It should be pointed out that here the ecstatic experience and sonship are not a matter of the elite figures, like in Abulafia's Kabbalah, but of the people of Israel in general. A similar less elitist interpretation of the son in a parable is found in R. Ḥayyim's contemporary R. Aharon ha-Kohen of Apta:

Why is the reader of the Torah called a reader, because he calls the Holy One, blessed be He, he is like a man who calls his father by his name. This is similar to the son of the king who is in pain and calls to his father by many cognomens: 'My father', 'My Lord', 'My King', 'My Master', etc., until the father has mercy on his son. So too the reader of the Torah by an immense *kavvanah*, that all the words of the Torah are the cognomens of God, in addition to those cognomens that are known ... and by the greatness of the awe and cleaving, he draws Him down, Blessed be He, to His names, which are the words and the expressions of the Torah and of prayer, the mercy of God is arisen in him, and this is the meaning of 'and they should take Me'<sup>194</sup> – to My name, namely to draw Me down to My name.<sup>195</sup>

Here we have again a parable about a father and a son, but now there is no mention of the righteous, but just a reader of the Torah, who is described as drawing down the father into His name, by a sort of imploration when reading the Torah.

Last but not least in this context, Ḥasidism is the first and most important Jewish movement in which the filial inheritance becomes dominant. Never before had the status of sons benefited so much from the spiritual achievements of their fathers or forefathers. This change is paramount for understanding the sociology of the Jewish religion, and might have been partially influenced, though not exclusively, by the assumption of the strong connection between the father and his son. However this diagnosis notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that most of the material discussed above was formulated before the routinization of the charisma and the emergence of the Ḥasidic dynasties.

### 9. Eighteenth-century Ḥasidism and Christianity

The idea outline above, of describing an aspect of the wall-parable as consisting in the adoption of the view of sonship found in Christianity, or other suggestions related to consubstantiality of the son are, to be sure, not the first attempts to find some form of affinity between this phase of Jewish mysticism and Christianity. Other scholars have made similar attempts in relation to other topics. The first comparison was formulated by a brilliant thinker who was, for a short while, a Ḥasid. The late eighteenth-century philosopher Salomon Maimon compared the Ḥasidic masters with the Bavarian *illuminati*.<sup>196</sup> Jaffa Eliach saw in the very specificity of some elements of Ḥasidism the result of the impact of Russian dissident sects.<sup>197</sup> In a more phenomenological vein, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer suggested comparing Ḥasidism to Christian quietism,<sup>198</sup> and Jacob Taubes pointed out the similarity between the Ḥasidic and the Christian views on redemption as an inner event.<sup>199</sup> Closer to home from the point of view of our topic as well as in terms of timescale, Byron Sherwin proposed to see the impact of the ancient concept of *Corpus Christi* in some views of the community of Ḥasidism,<sup>200</sup> and even more recently Igor Tourov published an article pointing out, again, the possible contacts, historical and phenomenological, between nascent Ḥasidim and the *starets* movement of neo-hesychastic origin, especially in the Paisian form it took later on in Northern Moldavia and in the Ukraine.<sup>201</sup>

Yet Messianism is the topic closest to sonship, as well as being a topic that has been addressed by scholars on numerous occasions. Jacob Taubes even claimed some affinities between the Ḥasidic and the Christian persons of inner redemption. Indeed, the Ḥasidic introversive versions of personal

redemption are highly similar to the Christian spiritualistic versions of redemption, which emphasize the inner transformation and tend to marginalize the public event, as represented both in Jewish apocalypticism and in the passion of Jesus in history. However, in spite of this crucial phenomenological similarity, as well as other interesting parallels to Christianity,<sup>202</sup> I assume that historically speaking the two versions of personal redemption stem from different speculative sources. At least as far as the Jewish mystical sources discussed in scholarship go, the formative factor for Ḥasidic Messianism, in my opinion, was not so much a lateral Christian influence on the theory of messianic sonship, as it was concepts in Greek psychology that provided the terminology for the understanding of inner processes, concepts that were missing in the Jewish tradition before the Middle Ages. Indeed, what seems interesting to me is the absence in the Ḥasidic discussions of the strong emphasis on historical redemption found in ancient Christianity, that accompany the visions of sonship, as well as the minor place of eschatology in the general economy of the passages surveyed above. Less than in any forms of Jewish mysticism surveyed so far, Messianism is scarcely seen accompanying the concepts of sonship in Ḥasidism. In fact the only passage known to me in the vast Ḥasidic literature in which Messianism and sonship are related in a significant manner is found in a sermon of R. Abraham Yehoshu'a Heschel, a late eighteenth-century master, who discusses linguistic affinities between the concept of firstborn son – *bekhor* – and that of the Messiah.<sup>203</sup>

I assume that the recourse to Greek psychological concepts and their appropriation either in the ecstatic Kabbalah or in Ḥasidism has nothing special to do with a sense of crisis in public Jewish life, nor is a reaction against an active apocalyptic Messianism. Rather, in my opinion it was part of the enrichment of Jewish Messianism by conceptual paradigms supplied by medieval theologies and psychologies new to the Jews of the Middle Ages. This comment, already introduced elsewhere,<sup>204</sup> relates to Jacob Taubes's assumption that the interiorization of the messianic experience is part of the crisis of outer Messianism, or of the decline of external eschatology. In other words, Taubes applies the theory of the de-eschatologization of early Christianity, as proposed a generation ago by Albert Schweitzer, to the history of Jewish Messianism, which means that while Lurianic-Sabbateanism cultivated an external Messianism, Ḥasidism cultivated an inner experience of redemption. If we accept such a reading,<sup>205</sup> then Taubes's criticism of Scholem has to be expanded not only to take into account Scholem's vision of the Ḥasidic neutralization of Messianism, but also to accommodate Abraham Abulafia's brand of non-apocalyptic Messianism, without however, being able to pinpoint a crisis of an external Messianism immediately beforehand. Yet I am inclined to highly doubt this

approach. In general, Taubes's understanding of the process of interiorization, as belonging to the career of one single 'idea', assumes both the crucial role of history in the changing of the nature of the 'messianic idea' and the direction of the change, thereby establishing another type of link between the reaction against Sabbateanism and personal Messianism in Ḥasidism.<sup>206</sup>

In principle, Taubes would like to legitimize the Ḥasidic concept of Messianism against Scholem's reluctance to attribute to it the Messianism label, an endeavor with which I agree in principle. However, I am reticent in accepting his historical explanation, which is still deeply Scholemian despite the author's well-known strong anti-Scholemian leaning. For Taubes, Ḥasidism, namely the Ḥasidic 'messianic idea', could be understood 'as the viable mythic response whereby Lurianic Kabbalah overcame the disastrous apocalyptic consequences manifested in the Sabbatean comedy'.<sup>207</sup> Therefore Taubes, like Isaiah Tishby,<sup>208</sup> envisions Ḥasidic Messianism as an inner though later development within the history of Lurianic Kabbalah, and as constituting a response to the 'apocalyptic' disaster, namely the Sabbatean debacle, itself understood by Scholem as conditioned by theories of messianism in Lurianism. To a great extent, this author accepts a type of dynamics in the evolution of Jewish mysticism which is informed by Scholem's intellectual universe, even though he offers an explanation that was rejected explicitly by Scholem: he assumes that dialectical spiritual responses may solve quandaries created by earlier historical events. Like Tishby before him, Taubes sees a continuation, though after some transformation, of the messianic drive in Ḥasidism.

At the same time, in the context of the above discussion Taubes mentions the resemblance to Christianity and, though the affiliation of some of the Ḥasidic ideas seems to be independent of Christian formulations, there is nevertheless in the restorative theory of the primordial man an affinity to the view, found in Christian thought, of the membership of the faithful ones in the body of Christ.<sup>209</sup> The proposal of such an affinity between the two concepts presupposes the entrance of the Christian influences already in Zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalah.<sup>210</sup> Though Ḥasidism no doubt inherited some of the motifs that informed its vision of the sonship of the righteous, we may surmise that in this form of literature some desire of sonship was active among its leaders.

As to the question, is the original source for the Ḥasidic idea of the faithful joining the *corpus Christi* the Greek Bible or one of its reverberations, as far as the immediate sources of Ḥasidism are concerned, such sources are to be found in the Jewish mystical texts that nourished the Ḥasidic formulations. Whether the Greek Bible's view on the topic, which turned into a very influential concept in Christianity, is itself of Jewish extraction is an issue that transcends the present discussion.<sup>211</sup> Thus, I would say that

though recent research in Ḥasidism points in the direction of Christian sources, and though such a direction is plausible in historical terms, the textual and conceptual arguments for this are still quite vague and require much more investigation. I hope that these remarks regarding various aspects of the status of the *Tzaddiq* in Ḥasidism and regarding the son of the king and his resort to the famous verse of the Psalm, according to a version of the palace-parable, may serve as an indication of the possibility that contact between nascent Ḥasidism and the various forms of Christianity found in the immediate vicinity of the Ḥasidic master was more substantial than assumed to date. It should be mentioned that the openness of Ḥasidism to other forms of behavior, *en vogue* in the Christian environment, like dancing, drinking alcoholic drinks, special garments, or the importance of story-telling,<sup>212</sup> reminiscent of what was found in the immediate vicinity of nascent Ḥasidism, are hardly explainable by Jewish antecedents. Therefore, it may well be that the adoption of a Christian understanding of sonship is a small part of a greater openness than witnessed earlier to non-Jewish religious practices and other phenomena.

## Notes

- 1 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 341.
- 2 See Idel, 'Enoch, the Mystic Cobbler'. In fact early Ḥasidism set in relief other simple figures who became some form of holy man, without resorting to the classical rabbinic way of religious life, study of Torah or prayer. See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 153–78. All those instances are related to the writings of R. Isaac of Acre.
- 3 See the important analysis of ecstatic prayer in the Mishnah period, related to R. Ḥanina ben Dosa', in Naeh, "'Creates the Fruit of Lips'", especially pp. 217–18 note 164 as well as the approach of Kosman, in his article cited above. Chapter 1 note 276.
- 4 See his 'Jesus within Judaism', in Chilton-Evans, *Jesus in Context*, pp. 181–4. For a more recent and elaborated resort to M. Weber in order to describe the emergence of Ḥasidism see Philip Wexler, 'Social Psychology, the Ḥasidic Ethos and the Spirit of New Age', *Kabbalah* 7 (2002), pp. 11–36.
- 5 Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 334, 342, 344; Rachel Elijor, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1993), pp. 2, 8, 229–30, notes 5, 8; and S. Daniel Breslauer, 'Charisma and Leadership: Images of Ḥasidism', *Hebrew Studies* 20–1 (1979–80), pp. 88–97.
- 6 BT *Yoma*, fol. 38b. See the very interesting confession of Buber about his early encounter with Ḥasidism in Sadigura in Bukovina, and his vision of the essence of this movement as gravitating around the helper, printed in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, eds, P.A. Schilpp & Maurice Friedman (Open Court, La Salle, Ill., 1967), p. 20. For Buber's opposition to magic as a category pertinent to an understanding of Ḥasidism see e.g. Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of*

- Ḥasidism*, tr. Maurice Friedman (Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1988), pp. 133–4. Buber's attitude is quite evident in many of the modern interpretations of Ḥasidism, and we shall deal with this issue below.
- 7 Ibid.
  - 8 See Pamela Vermes, *Buber* (Peter Halban, London, 1988), p. 16.
  - 9 See Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 88–139; Galley, *Der Gerechte*, pp. 230–3, 409–11; Idel, *Ḥasidism*, pp. 198–201; Margolin, *The Human Temple*, pp. 381–2, 386–7, 398–400, 415–16 and Kosman's article referred in Chapter 2 note 276 above.
  - 10 'What Can be Learnt from the Typology of the Ḥasidic Movements in Israel on those Movements themselves and on the Jewish Religion?', *Studies in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature in Memory of Tirtzah Lifshitz* (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 113–26 (Hebrew).
  - 11 See Azriel Shohat's otherwise insightful, though quite neglected study 'The Tzaddiq in the Ḥasidic Doctrine', *Yaacob Gil Jubilee Volume*, eds Jacob Hokherman, Mordechai Lahav & Tzemah Tzamryon (R. Mass, Jerusalem, 1979), p. 302 (Hebrew).
  - 12 Piekartz, *The Beginning of Ḥasidism*, pp. 15–16. See for some very interesting parallels between the view of the Besht on this topic and some of his contemporaries on the *Berakhot* passage. Also his 'Ḥasidism, A Social-Religious Movement from the Perspective of "Devequt"', in ed., David Assaf, *Zaddik and Devotees* (Merkaz Shazar, Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 458–60 (Hebrew). Piekartz, who diligently discovered the three main sources of early Ḥasidism, did not perceive the common Cordoverian source, neither did he analyze the magic aspects of the Cordoverian tradition as inspiring Ḥasidism. He was, like in many other instances in his studies, interested in tracing literary parallels rather than taking the conceptual cargo of those sources into serious account. For additional material dealing with the concept of son see his *The Beginning of Ḥasidism*, pp. 229–31. See also Liebes, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', pp. 120–1 note 140.
  - 13 R. Benjamin of Zalovitch, in his *'Ahavat Dodim* (Jerusalem, 1978), fol. 114a.
  - 14 R. Israel of Kuznitz, *'Avodat Yisra'el*, fol. 70d. For another example quoting the Besht's interpretation see R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye, *Ben Porat Yosef*, translated and discussed in Arthur Y. Green, 'Typologies of Leadership and the Ḥasidic Zaddiq', *Jewish Spirituality* 2, p. 131. For a review of some of the early Ḥasidic discussions of the righteous as a channel see Dresner, *The Zaddik*, pp. 125–8 and Mendel Piekartz, *Between Ideology and Reality* (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 173–4 (Hebrew) and note 12 above.
  - 15 It seems that the occurrence of the liquid in this context reflects the influence of the view of the pipeline as righteous in R. Abraham Azulai's *Ḥesed le-Abraham*. See the discussion in Idel, *Ḥasidism*, p. 202. I assume that, ultimately, the metaphor of irrigation stems from the *Book of Bahir*, as analyzed above in Chapter 4.
  - 16 Additions printed at the end of *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*, p. 407.
  - 17 Gen. 28.21. For more on the image of ladder see immediately below.
  - 18 *Ben Porat Yosef*, fol. 59d. For more on the issue of the Besht's embracing the

- mystical-magical model as formulated by Cordovero see Idel, 'The Besht as Prophet and as Talismanic Magician'.
- 19 Gen. 28.12.
- 20 'Or Torah, p. 12; see Green, 'The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi', and also 'Or Torah, p. 13: 'The Tzaddiqim sustained and nourished the world' and the numerous discussions on pp. 28, 118, 148. See more on this subject in Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Quietistic Element*, pp. 114, 119, 120; and Elior, 'Between Yesh and Ayin', pp. 426-7, 448 note 48. See, however, the interesting discussion of R. Aharon Shemuel ha-Kohen, who introduces the motifs of the drawing down of the influx by becoming a path and a pipeline, without mentioning the idea of the Tzaddiq. Though close to the Great Maggid, this author did not create a Hasidic community, and he seems to ignore the ideal of Tzaddiq in the context of the talismanic model. See Idel, 'The Besht as Prophet and as Talismanic Magician'.
- 21 See above, Chapter 4, Section 13.
- 22 69.3. On this Midrash see Kister, 'Observations', pp. 19-20; Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, p. 326 note 158, as well as note 24 below.
- 23 *Porat Yosef*, fol. 67b. See also the other quote on the topic found in this book adduced above, where the gist of this interpretation is found in a tradition stemming from the Besht himself. Compare also to the view of the Besht's grandson, R. Barukh of Medzibush, *Botzina' di-Nehora' ha-Shalem* (Benei Berak, 1985), p. 115.
- 24 1.51. On this passage see the detailed analysis of Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, pp. 135-51; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 244-6; and Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 342-8, who already summarized the views pointing out the possible impact of the theme found in *Genesis Rabba'* on this Gospel. See also Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man*, pp. 226-31. For another interpretation of the verse, which rejects the potential relevance of the view found in *Genesis Rabba'* see Burkett, *The Son of Man*, pp. 114-19. In this context it should be mentioned that Jacob has been called by God 'El, God. See below, note 42.
- 25 See the tradition adduced in the name of the Besht by his grandson R. Barukh of Medzibus, *Botzina' di-Nehora'* (Lvov, 1880), fol. 25a.
- 26 See also Jn 1.7, where Christ is described as the door. Cf. also *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 1.26.1, where Christ is described as *Horos*, the Gnostic concept of limit. For the early Christian development of the theme Jesus-door see Henne, *La Christologie*, pp. 249-52; DeConick, 'Heavenly Temple', pp. 339-40.
- 27 *Me'or 'Einayyim*, p. 216. For another quote from the same book see Green, 'Typologies of Leadership', p. 132. For more on the view of the righteous in this author see Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 155-7.
- 28 *Parnasah*. It is ironic that R. Hanina was described in this way since according to all the ancient sources he was living in extreme poverty.
- 29 *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 96c. See also *ibid.*, fol. 100a, and his *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 50a, and Dresner, *The Zaddik*, p. 126.
- 30 *Sefer ha-Ma'amarim, Ba'ti le-Ganni*, vol. 1, p. 290, *Liquṭei Sihot*, vol. 2 (Bamidbar-Devarim), additions, p. 460.
- 31 *Ner Mitzvah*, fol. 5b. See also above, note 20.
- 32 See R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, in Arthur Green, *Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Upright Practices, The Light of the Eyes* (Paulist Press, New York, 1982), p. 100, where the Hasidic masters view the prayers and speeches of Israel as creating a path, *shevil*, for the divine influx.
- 33 It may be that the metaphysical interpretations of Jesus's sonship in the last phases of the New Testament and in the Council of Nicaea deterred Buber's interest in questions of sonship.
- 34 See Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, vol. 3, p. 683. See also Luzzatto's classic *Mesillat Yesharim*, ch. 18, eds Abraham Shoshanah & Yosef Avivi (Makhon Ofeq, Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 178, 278-9.
- 35 For other traditions on righteous and son in his school see below, par. 8 and Margolin, *The Human Temple*, pp. 382-5. See also the very interesting discussion of the righteous as a son in R. Jacob Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, known as the Hoze of Lublin, in his *Zot Zikkaron* (Gross Bros, Brooklyn, 1981), fol. 3d, and in his other book *Divrei 'Emmet* (Gross Bros, Brooklyn, 1981), fol. 5ab. Another interesting passage belonging to this Hasidic school is found in a book close to R. Levi Isaac of Berditchev, *Shemu'ah Tovah* (Ginzei Hasidut, Jerusalem, 1973), fol. 35b-36a, where the perfect sinless person is described as the Son of God, who has unlimited powers.
- 36 *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, p. 284.
- 37 *Ibid.*, footnote.
- 38 Cf. BT *Sotah*, fol. 12a. This view is discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 323-4.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 BT *Megillah*, fol. 18a.
- 42 BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 21a.
- 43 *The Testament of Rivash*, cf. *Testaments and Guidances from the Besht and His Disciples*, ed. Y.D. Weintrob (Toldot Aharon, Benei Beraq, 1987), p. 44, pars 159-60 and *Liquṭei Yeqarim* (Jerusalem, 1974), fol. 85b. On the bibliographical matters related to these two treatises see Ze'ev Gries, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae) Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Hasidism* (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 149-230 (Hebrew).
- 44 *'Avot ha-Hasidut*, ed. M.M. Gerlitz (Jerusalem, ND), vol. 2, Letter 35, p. 59.
- 45 On the concept of the righteous as a receptacle, again a case of the Cordoverian impact on Hasidism, see the sources adduced in Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 191-8, and Margolin, *The Human Temple*, p. 385, 398-400.
- 46 *Ben la-Maqom*. *Maqom*, which means Place, is a name for God since Philo and the rabbinic literature. For Place as a name for God see Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 37-70, and Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 190-204.
- 47 *No'am 'Elimelekh*, fol. 12a. See also *ibid.*, fol. 17c, where the expression 'son of the Holy One, blessed be He' is predicated on the righteous.
- 48 For the plural form '*banim la-Maqom*' see *'Avot* 3.14. For more on this issue see below, Concluding Remarks.
- 49 *No'am 'Elimelekh*, fol. 20c. The source of this understanding of the son and the

- performance of the divine will is probably in the Great Maggid's *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, p. 284.
- 50 See *No'am 'Elimelekh*, fols 30cd, 31b.
- 51 Ps. 118.20.
- 52 *'Avot* 3.17.
- 53 Cf. BT *Ta'anit*, fol. 23a.
- 54 *Qol Simḥah* (Jerusalem, 1997), p. 65; for another discussion related to this Ḥasidic master see below, par. 8.
- 55 See *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, pp. 233, 321, where he emphasizes the importance of the small son.
- 56 Mordechai Pachter, 'Katnut ("Smallness") and Gadlut ("Greatness") in Lurianic Kabbalah', in eds, R. Elijor & Y. Liebes, *Lurianic Kabbalah* (Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 171–210 (Hebrew), available now in English in his *Roots of Faith and Devekut*, pp. 185–234; Yehuda Liebes, "'Two Young Roes of a Doe": The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before his Death', *ibid.*, pp. 113–26 (Hebrew); Mark Verman, 'Aliyah and Yeridah: The Journey of the Besht and R. Nachman to Israel', *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times* 3 (1988), pp. 159–71; Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness in the Work of R. Nahman of Bratslav* (Makhon Hartman, 'Am 'Oved, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 2003), pp. 294–329 (Hebrew) and Scholem's differing stand, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 218–22.
- 57 See Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 219, and Idel, 'The Besht as Prophet and as Talismanic Magician'.
- 58 See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 219, and Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 1979), pp. 68–9. It should be mentioned that this phrase is reminiscent of the sequence between the phase of *katabasis* and then that of *anabasis*, in Christian views of Jesus. See Longenecker, *The Christology*, pp. 58–62.
- 59 On the thought of this Ḥasidic author see Allan Brill, 'The Spiritual World of a Master of Awe: Divine Vitality, Theosis, and Healing in the *Degel Mahaneh Ephraim*', *JSQ* 8 (2001), pp. 27–65. It should be mentioned that the story is not found in the writings directly attributed to the Great Maggid of Medziretch but only in a substantially different form in R. Zeev Wolf of Zhitomir's *Sefer 'Or ha-Me'ir* (Perizek, 1815), fol. 26ab. The possible significance of the recurrence of the parable in writings by the family of the Besht, as we shall see below, and in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, who was close to this family but is absent from other early Ḥasidic sources, requires a more detailed analysis. This analysis may point to an understanding of the development of Ḥasidism, in which the Great Maggid will have a stand that is more independent of the Besht, as is also evident from the scant references to the founder of Ḥasidism, in comparison to the writings of R. Jacob Joseph and R. Moshe Ḥayyim Efrayyim of Sudylkov. In any case, in the version of the story as preserved by R. Ze'ev Wolf, there are some elements that may point to affinities to the Besht, like the resort to the concept of *ta'anug*, namely delight. See also Scholem's interesting remarks in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 225–6.
- 60 Namely, what is the meaning of the fall into smallness.
- 61 Ps. 22.2.
- 62 *Degel Mahaneh 'Efrayyim*, p. 154.
- 63 See *ibid.*, p. 154, where this author explicitly describes Adam as *madregah 'elyonah* – the sublime rank. This rank is identical with *Gadelut*. In various Lurianic writings there is an affinity between the two concepts but they refer there to the divine configuration known as *Ze'yir 'anppin*. In the context of the above discussion of this Ḥasidic master, the term *neshamah* is used as Adam. As we shall see below, there is a connection between reaching the state of Adam, the sublime rank and the investment with light. This connection seems to be very ancient. On the theme of Adam's primeval luminosity see David H. Aaron, 'Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam', *HTR* 30 (3) (1997), pp. 299–314; Alexander Golitzin, 'Recovering the "Glory of Adam": "Divine Light" Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia', Paper given at the International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls, St Andrews, Scotland, on 28 June 2001; and Idel, 'Adam and Enoch'. On the affinity between *Za'yir* and the sons of Israel see Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, *Kutonet Passim*, ed. Gedalya Nigal (Makhon Peri ha-'Aretz, Jerusalem, 1985), p. 153.
- 64 See e.g. the text from R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, *Kutonet Passim*, ed. G. Nigal, pp. 297–8, and in his *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 22b.
- 65 For the collection of the variants of this parable see R. Shimeon Menahem Mendel of Gwartshaw, *Ba'al Shem Tov* (Lodge, 1938), vol. 2, pp. 235–41 (Hebrew) who adduced the earlier and also the later versions that will not concern us below. For secondary literature on the topic see Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 224; Joseph Weiss, 'Reshit Tzemihatah shel ha-Derekh ha-Ḥasidit', *Zion* 16 (1951), pp. 97–100 (Hebrew); Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 3, pp. 1010–11 note 354; Rachel Elijor, *Ḥasidic Thought – Mystical Origins and Kabbalistic Formulations* (Misrad ha-itahon, Tel Aviv, 1999), p. 102 (Hebrew); Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al Hashem, The Besht – Magic, Mysticism, Leadership* (Merkaz Shazar, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 144–7 (Hebrew); and Margolin, *The Human Temple*, pp. 262–3.
- 66 Cf. Deut. 31.8. See also the short quote in the name of the Besht adduced in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy's *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 2a.
- 67 See BT *Hagigah*, fol. 13a, and BT *Pesahim*, fol. 94b. See also Arthur Green, *Keter, The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997), pp. 21–32.
- 68 Compare to the view of the Besht quoted in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 2c, according to which prayer is called *Shekhinah*. For prayer as a name for God in Kabbalah and Ḥasidism see Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 165–204.
- 69 *'Alizat 'Einayyim*. In this context I cannot enter into a discussion of the possible Hindu impact on this aspect of the parable. See, meanwhile, Scholem's short remark in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 224 and Joseph P. Schultz, 'The Concept of Illusion in Vedanta and Kabbalah', in his *Judaism and the Gentle Faith* (Associated University Presses, East Brunswick, 1982), pp. 93–4. For the

- acquaintance of early Kabbalists with some form of theory dealing with the world as a dream, namely some sort of Maya, see Assi Farber, 'A New Fragment from the Introduction by Joseph Gikatilla to *Ginnat Egoz*', *JSJS* 1 (1981), pp. 162–3 note 9 (Hebrew).
- 70 *Beno Yedido*. This is a relatively rare expression, found in earlier sources, like R. Elijah da-Vidas, *Reshit Hokhmah*, the Gate of Love, ch. 7, in R. Hayyim ben 'Attar, 'Or ha-Hayyim, on Exodus 14.24, and in another citation in the name of the Besht found in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 169b. See also *ibid.*, fol. 22b, where the expression 'ha-'ish ha-yadid' points to someone who draws power from on high as part of a talismanic vocal operation.
- 71 This is a formula for the end of a quotation recurring in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph.
- 72 Ps. 92.10. The last lines are quoted also in the Besht's name in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 13d (and see also *ibid.*, fols 9b, 18a); *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 86b.
- 73 *Ben Porat Yosef*, fol. 70c, quoted with some few changes in R. Aharon Kohen of Apta, *Keter Shem Tov*, I, fol. 8a. A parallel to this variant, quoted again in the name of the Besht, is found elsewhere in *Ben Porat Yosef*, fol. 111a, but there the son of the king is not mentioned. However, immediately after adducing the parable, on fol. 111b, R. Jacob Joseph resorts to the phrase 'Benei ha-Qabah', namely the sons of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in order to describe a Jewish elite, not just a single son of the king.
- 74 See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 147–88, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fols 22b and his *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 2d.
- 75 Here *masakh mavdil*. This phrase occurs in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy's quotation from the Besht, to the effect that when someone prays for something material, it becomes a separating screen. See *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 2c.
- 76 Namely of the recitation of the Torah. For the widespread couple of concepts 'Torah and Tefillah' in Hasidism see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 180–1 and especially in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 25a. See also an interesting parallel found *ibid.*, fol. 3a, where the adhesion to the higher worlds without a separation is described as taking place during the performance of the commandments.
- 77 *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 7a. It would be interesting to compare the various versions of the parable, where light is so important, to another parable, printed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, where images of darkness are mentioned in the context of preventing people reaching the king, and only the righteous soul, in the moment of death, is able to see the him. See the eighteenth century R. Mordekhai ben Shmuel of Wielkie Oczy in Galicia, *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Melekh* (Horodna, 1816), fol. 120b. An accomplished Kabbalist, his parable avoids any form of immanentism, nor does he mention a son. For the resort to darkness in another version of the parable see immediately below. In this version of the parable, darkness is not ambivalent, and has only a negative sense, keeping everyone from going to the king while alive. On this author see Piekarz, *The Beginning of Hasidism*, pp. 74–8.
- 78 'Reshit Tzemihat', p. 97.
- 79 *Mishnah, Berakhot* 2.8.

- 80 Isa. 6.6.
- 81 Here the term *Homah* is used while earlier the term *kotel* recurred.
- 82 This is an approximation of the Hebrew phrase *Me'av hamu le-'aviv*. Cf. Jer. 31.19 where it is God who longs for Efrayyim, described as a beloved son. Here, however, the same expression is used in order to describe the longing of the son for the father.
- 83 This is an ancient view related to redemptive figures. See especially Jn 5.20–23, and see Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 255–7 and Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 220.
- 84 Some of the descriptions here reflect passages in the Eighteen Benediction prayer.
- 85 I assume that this is a version of the view, recurring in Hasidism, according to which the power of the cause is found in the *causatum*. The standard formulation found in Hasidism is *koah ha-po'el ba-nif'al*. This view stems from Neo-Platonic theories, which reached medieval Jewish thought via *Sefer ha-Sibbot*. For the importance of this substantial linkage between the king and the son see below in the commentary on the parable. For the formula: 'the power of the father is found in the son' see R. Yehudah Leib of Zekelekov, a mid-nineteenth-century Galitian Hasidic writer, in his *Liqqutei Maharil* (Lublin, 1899), fol. 6a, where he defends the dynastical transmission of leadership in the Hasidic camp, by resorting to this theory.
- 86 Moser 'atzmo. I wonder if this phrase does not reflect the concept of self-sacrifice related to Jesus. See below, note 136.
- 87 *Va-Yar*'. This elliptic spelling of the verb can be translated also as 'he feared'.
- 88 Ps. 30.8.
- 89 No doubt a paraphrase of Est. 4.11, 5.2. For the role of the scepter as part of the royal man rites see Borsch, *The Son of Man*, pp. 97–8, and the view found in the *Odes of Solomon*, adduced there pp. 190–1. See also Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 229–30.
- 90 *Beni 'atah*. It is possible that this is reminiscent of Ps. 2.7, another proof-text used in the context of Jesus's sonship.
- 91 *Magdilim 'aleikha*. This syntagm is not clear. It may point to the fact that the enemies are enhancing the sins of the son.
- 92 In the printed text it is written 'elu, namely 'those' but I assume that the correct reading is 'elai, namely, to me.
- 93 Isa. 60.1. I have translated the verse in accordance with the interpretation offered by the Hasidic master immediately below.
- 94 Eccles. 1.5.
- 95 Isa. 60.1.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 60.2.
- 97 Gen. 2.7. On the history of the interpretation of this verse in order to underscore the divinity of the soul see my study 'Nishmat 'Eloah'.
- 98 This is a rhetorical question to the effect that someone cannot infuse something that he does not possess, hence God infused a divine essence within the nostrils of Adam.
- 99 See also BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 65b.

- 100 This is a description reminiscent of the regalia in ancient myths of the installation of the king. See e.g. Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 95.
- 101 On this phrase and its history in Jewish mysticism see Moshe Idel, 'From "Hidden Light" to "Torah-Light": A Chapter in the Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism', in ed., Aharon Zion, *Migwan De'ot Bi-Ysrael, 'Al ha-'Or* (Rehovot, 2002), pp. 23–61 (Hebrew). On this view see *Degel Maḥaneh 'Efrayyim*, p. 223 in *Ḥasidism*, see especially Idel, *ibid.*, pp. 46–62.
- 102 In the prayer of Eighteen Benedictions.
- 103 Cf. *Genesis Rabba* 77.1, p. 909. Cf. BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 65b.
- 104 Ps. 89.16. Again the cultic background of the parable occurs, as is evident in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy's quote above. For the analysis of this Psalm as part of an ancient Jewish cult related to sacred kingship see e.g. Audrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1967), pp. 106ff, especially p. 109.
- 105 *Ibid.*
- 106 It seems that the *Teru'ah* – namely the festal acclamation – is understood here as breaking the power of the enemies.
- 107 7.8.
- 108 I could not locate his source. However, it is remarkable that in the theory of the ancient Assyrian kingship, someone entering the shadow of the king was conceived of as becoming immune. See Leo Oppenheim, 'The Shadow of the King', *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 107 (1947), pp. 7–11.
- 109 Esther 7.8.
- 110 *Degel Maḥaneh 'Efrayyim*, pp. 234–5.
- 111 The discrepancy between the feminine form of the first verb and the son demonstrate that the parable, whose protagonist is a male person, is independent of the Isaiah verse and has been subsequently connected to it.
- 112 See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 307–11.
- 113 For an interesting distinction between different forms of suffering in the myth-and-ritual approach to kingship see Borsch, *The Son of Man*, p. 94 note 1.
- 114 For a critique of the acosmistic or pantheistic reading of the parable see already Weiss, '*Reshit Tzemihatah*', pp. 97–100.
- 115 See above, Chapter 4, Section 4. Compare also to the view found in the school of R. Dov Baer of Medziretch, *Rimzei Torah* (Brooklyn, 1986), fol. 84a, where the soul is called son. This statement may point to the possibility that the interpretation offered by the grandson is consonant with views of the Besht. A more elaborated discussion of the higher souls of man as the sons of the supernal Father and Mother, in a context of a theurgical understanding of sonship is found in the late eighteenth-century Ḥasidic author R. Benjamin of Salositz, *Sefer 'Ahavat Dodim* (Brooklyn, 1978), p. 210. Theurgical sonship is related in this text to a theosophical picture of the divinity, reminiscent of theosophical Kabbalah. This spiritual sonship is found also in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Sefer ha-Tanya*, 1.2, p. 12. For other instances of theurgical sonship in Ḥasidism see R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, fol. 134b, as well as R. Israel ben Sabbatai, known as the Maggid of Kuznitz, '*Avodat Israel* (Jerusalem, 1993), p. 182. Let me draw attention to the fact that in the writing of the same author, namely in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, there is a theory of intellectual sonship (see fol. 201a), and one of theurgical son, as mentioned earlier in this note.
- 116 See Evans, in Chilton–Evans, *Jesus in Context*, pp. 45–6.
- 117 See Edouard P. Dhorme, 'L'emploi metaphorique des noms de parties du corps en Hebrew et en Akkadien', *Revue Biblique* 30 (1921), pp. 374–99; Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God, The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983); Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. A.J. Baker (SCM Press, Bloomsbury Street, London, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 35–40; Yohanan Muffs, *Love & Joy, Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York and Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 104–5, 113, 124, 146, 178, 190; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983), pp. 329–34. For the various understandings of the divine face in Islam see Henry Corbin, *Face de Dieu, Face de l'Homme, Hermeneutique et Soufisme* (Flammarion, Paris, 1983), pp. 237–310. For more about face in Jewish mysticism see M. Idel, 'Panim – On Facial Representations in Jewish Thought: Some Correlational Instances', in ed., Nurit Yaari, *On Interpretation in the Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies in Honor of Moshe Lazar* (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2000), pp. 21–56.
- 118 For reverberations of this concept see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., 'Glory reflected on the Face of Christ (2 Cor 3.7–4.6) and a Palestinian Jewish Motif', *Theological Studies* 42 (4) (1981), pp. 630–44, who adduced instances in the Qumran literature dealing with the illumination of the divine face. For other views dealing with the face of Jesus as found in Orthodox Christianity see Vassily Rozanov, *La Face sombre du Christ*, tr. N. Reznikoff (Gallimard, Paris, 1964).
- 119 See Alexander Golitzin, '"Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men": The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Nicetas Stethatos, and the Tradition of "Interiorized Apocalyptic" in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), pp. 125–53. It should be mentioned that Ḥasidism developed first in provinces in which the Orthodox Christian religion existed, with its emphasis on the possibility of theosis. Compare also to Magid, 'Ethics Disentangled', pp. 32–3.
- 120 See especially his discussion of the external and human nature in *Degel Maḥaneh 'Efrayyim*, pp. 1–2 and 225.
- 121 The valence of the consonances of *ha-teva* [the nature] amounts to 'Elohim, namely to 86. On the history of this gematria see Moshe Idel, '*Deus sive Natura, The Metamorphosis of a Dictum from Maimonides to Spinoza*', in eds, S. Cohen and H. Levine, *Maimonides and the Sciences* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2000), pp. 87–110.
- 122 *Degel Maḥaneh 'Efrayyim*, p. 238. See also his discussion in *ibid.*, p. 225.
- 123 See *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 124 *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 219.
- 125 See in Pachter's article referred to in note 56 above.
- 126 See e.g. the text of the Besht that attributes the states of Grandeur and Smallness even to men's clothes. Cf. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 219.

- 127 Ioan P. Coulianu, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, tr. Margaret Cook (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1987), p. 11.
- 128 See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 470–81.
- 129 See also Idel, *Ḥasidism*, pp. 46–8, 227–38; Mark, *Mysticism and Madness*, p. 296.
- 130 See Moshe Rosman, *The Founder of Ḥasidism* (California University Press, Berkeley, 1996).
- 131 See Haviva Pedaya, ‘The Besht, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, and the Maggid of Mezeritch: Basic Lines for a Religious-Typological Approach’, *Daat* 45 (2000), pp. 25–73 (Hebrew).
- 132 See Idel, ‘The Besht’ and Idel, ‘From “The Hidden” Light’.
- 133 Deut. 31.8.
- 134 ‘*Am qerovo*.
- 135 Place is a name of God in rabbinic literature. This phrase stems from BT *Sabbath*, fol. 31a. See also note 46 above.
- 136 See above, note 86.
- 137 Gen. 46.4.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 See above, note 133.
- 140 The spelling of Esther is identical to that of the verb ‘I shall hide’.
- 141 BT *Megillah*, fol. 13a.
- 142 *Hadas* amounts to gematria 69 while *Ḥayyim* (life) only 68, but if the word is added, it amounts to 69 too. This gematria points to the fact that even in the hiding, namely in Esther, there is life.
- 143 The word *Keseh* means the ten days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, but here is also related to the verb ‘to cover’. A similar interpretation of *Keseh* as God’s hiding, in order to increase the pleasure from the search of the son, is found in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Liqqutei Torah* (Otzar ha-Ḥasidism, Brooklyn, 1979), vol. 4, fol. 82a.
- 144 *Lulav* amounts to 68, plus the word, to 69.
- 145 *Degel Maḥaneh Efrayyim*, p. 241.
- 146 On this seminal figure see e.g. Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 1979) and Mark, *Mysticism and Madness* as well as the pioneering studies of Joseph Weiss mentioned in note 151 below.
- 147 In Hebrew *baṭel u-mevuṭal*.
- 148 *Liqqutei Moharan*, vol. 2, no. 46.
- 149 On the concept of awe as a treasure existing on high in Ḥasidism and its background see Moshe Idel, ‘Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism’, in eds. M. Idel & B. McGinn, *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith, An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Continuum, New York, 1989), pp. 40–1; and Brill, ‘The Spiritual World’, pp. 45–9.
- 150 See, especially, *Liqqutei Tefillot*, vol. 2, prayer no. 30, which betrays a close terminological affinity to the language of the parable. This liturgical formulation is important for the point made above, concerning the importance of the ritual as the starting point of theological speculations in Jewish mystical thought.
- 151 On the dialectic aspects of his thought see Joseph G. Weiss, *Studies in Braslav Ḥasidism*, ed. Mendel Piekarz (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 109–49 (Hebrew).
- 152 On this figure see Weiss, *ibid.*, pp. 66–84.
- 153 *Sefer ‘Ezot Yesharot*, item ‘*Emmet ve-’Emunah*’ (Agudat Meshekh ha-Naḥal, 1982), pp. 6–7.
- 154 The sources for the emphasis on the special love for the small son are rabbinic. See *Deuteronomy Rabba’* 5.7, and ‘*Aggadat Bereshit* 5.1.
- 155 See e.g. *Maggid Devarav le-Ya‘aqov*, pp. 9, 193–4, 201, 284. In some cases the affinity between the concept of son and righteous is quite clear. It should be mentioned that the issue of intimacy between the son and the father, based upon the feeling of compassion of the latter for the former, is discussed by R. Barukh of Kosov, *Sefer ‘Amud ha-’Avodah* (Czernovitz, 1863), fol. 99a.
- 156 Ps. 104.31. I mistranslate the verse in order to give the sense of the Ḥasidic author. While according to the biblical sense of ‘*Olam* in the form *le-’olam*, in the verse is ‘forever’, the Great Maggid speaks about the immanence of the divine Glory within the world.
- 157 *Behint*. The term recurs in this Ḥasidic author’s writings. See *Maggid Devarav le-Ya‘aqov*, p. 18.
- 158 Ps. 104.31.
- 159 Namely the righteous who are leading the worlds.
- 160 Ps. 145.19.
- 161 On pre-existence of soul see the Midrashic literature, like *Genesis Rabba’* 8.7 and above, Introduction note 147.
- 162 *Maggid Devarav le-Ya‘aqov*, p. 21. Let me point out that a version of this parable is found in the name of the Besht, in the book of R. Gedalyah of Lunitz, *Sefer Teshu’ot Hen* (Moriah, Brooklyn, 1982), p. 29.
- 163 *Maggid Devarav le-Ya‘aqov*, p. 9.
- 164 See, however, Schatz-Uffenheimer, *ibid.*, p. 21 footnote, who claims that God ‘looks from above and directs the acts of men or the righteous’ and the leadership is just a game, which I see as being untrue.
- 165 Cf. *Maggid Devarav le-Ya‘aqov*, p. 222.
- 166 *Ibid.*
- 167 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 168 *Ibid.*, p. 401.
- 169 ‘*Avot* 6.2.
- 170 *Qol ha-Mevasser*, vol. 2, ‘*Avot. Siyah Sarfei Qodesh*, vol. 1, par. 627.
- 171 See the passage from *Genesis Rabba’* 8.10, dealing with the creation of Adam. On this text see Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. 112. Interestingly enough, this Midrashic view has been recently suggested as the background to 2 Cor. 2.14; See James E. Scott, ‘Throne-Chariot Mysticism in Qumran and in Paul’, in eds. C.A. Evans & P.W. Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997), pp. 112–14.

- 172 R. Menahem Mendel refers explicitly to three sources that informed his parable and interpretation: the book of the *Zohar*, vol. 3, fol. 111b, the Great Maggid, and the classical book of Lubavitch Hasidism, the *Tanya*, by R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, ch. 41.
- 173 *Sefer ha-Hitwa'aduyot*, year 1983, vol. 4, p. 1998.
- 174 Ibid. R. Menahem Mendel refers to the parable of the father who contracts his mind in order to speak or teach his son. See *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, p. 9. See also the Great Maggid's statement in 'Or Torah, fol. 175a, according to which the son always has the nature of God.
- 175 For the importance of this verb in Hasidism see Idel, *Hasidism*, especially pp. 71–3, 97–8, 120–1. For the concept of son as an emanation from a higher principle described as father see the view of the early Hasidic master R. Pinhas of Koretz, printed in *Yalqut 'Ohev Israel*, a collection of material attributed to R. Abraham Yehoshu'a Heschel (Mekhon Siftei Tzaddaqim, Jerusalem, 1987), p. 21. For another discussion of the terms father and son in the context of emanation from a common source see the early nineteenth-century R. Aharon ha-Levi of Staroselye, *Sefer Sha'arei ha-Yihud va-ha-'Emunah* (Mekhon Siftei Tzaddaqim, Jerusalem, 1964), p. 74.
- 176 On the issue of consubstantiality in early Christianity see Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man*, pp. 122–3, who uses Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 1–39, to deny the possibility of continuity between God and man in Paul because of his Jewish roots. However, even he attributes the view that accepts consubstantiality to a Philonic background. See *ibid.*, pp. 121–2. For ontological continuity and sonship see also above, Introduction, Section 1.
- 177 See e.g. Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 187, 368; Chesnut, *Three Monophysites*, p. 9. For the assumption that the Son is a natural representation of the Father in Christian thought see the view of John of Damascus, cf. Moshe Barasch, *Icon, Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York University Press, New York, London, 1992), pp. 221–3.
- 178 Hanson, *ibid.*, p. 479.
- 179 'Abba', father, is the configuration of *Hokhmah* in Lurianic Kabbalah.
- 180 *Liqqutei Sihot*, vol. 12 (Leviticus), p. 155. In a conversation Professor David Berger kindly drew my attention to a similar stand regarding the *matzah* in a commentary on the Passover Haggadah, entitled *Lo Titosh Torat 'Immekha*, but I have not been able to identify this book. On the mediating role of R. Menahem Mendel and even an understanding that he is some form of divine embodiment see Jonathan Garb, *'The Chosen Will Become Herds' – Studies in Twentieth Century Kabbalah* (Carmel, Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 126–7 (Hebrew).
- 181 See *Liqqutei Sihot*, vol. 21 (Shemot), pp. 20–2.
- 182 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 183 *Liqqutei Sihot*, vol. 23, (Bamidbar), p. 222. Compare also to *Sefer ha-Hitwa'aduyot*, 1982, vol. 4, p. 1901.
- 184 *Sefer ha-Hitwa'aduyot*, 1985, vol. 2, p. 1197.
- 185 *Ibid.*
- 186 See e.g. *Sefer ha-Ma'amarim Meluqat*, vol. 4, pp. 70–1.
- 187 R. Menahem Azariah of Fano, *'Asarah Ma'amarot*, vol. 2, fol. 41b. Compare also the quote from Menahem Azariah of Fano's compendium of Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim*, *Pelah ha-Rimmon*, cited in the early Hasidic thinker R. Barukh of Kosssov, *'Amud ha-'Avodah* (Czernovitz, 1863), fol. 113c.
- 188 See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 75–7.
- 189 Namely an efficient or divine name.
- 190 Dan Ben Amos & J.R. Mintz, *In the Praise of Baal Shem Tov* (Aronson, Northvale, London, 1993), p. 181. Interestingly enough, both names relate to the Besht as theophoric.
- 191 *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, p. 288.
- 192 The Hebrew phrase is *Ki yatza' mi-geder ha-'adam*.
- 193 *Sidduro shel Shabbat* (Jerusalem, 1960), fol. 81ab; I have used Arthur Green's translation, found in his *Devotion and Commandment* (Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1989), p. 87 note 103, with some slight changes. There is a certain momentary antinomianism related to the experience of the meeting of the sons and God. Compare also to Bar Asher & Kofsky, *The Nusayri-'Alawi Religion*, pp. 82–3.
- 194 Exod. 25.2.
- 195 (Lemberg, 1850), col. 6, fol. 4b–col. 7, fol. 1a. See also Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, pp. 155–7.
- 196 Salomon Maimon, *An Autobiography*, tr. Y. Clark Murray (London, 1888), p. 173.
- 197 See her 'The Russian Dissenting Sects and Their Influence on Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, Founder of Hassidism', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 36 (1963), pp. 57–83.
- 198 See R. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism, Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought*, tr. J. Chipman (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993).
- 199 'The Price of Messianism'.
- 200 '*Corpus Domini*'. See also above, Chapter 4 note 295. On the possible Jewish source of the ancient Christian theory of *corpus Christi* see Lorberbaum, *Image of God*, pp. 415–18. See also Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, pp. 2–96 and Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 194–206.
- 201 See Igor Tourov, 'Hasidism and Christianity of the Eastern Territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Possible Contacts and Mutual Influences', *Kabbalah* 10 (2004), pp. 73–105 and see also Magid, 'Disentangled Ethics'. In fact, it was Scholem who pointed out first the possible affinity between the Neo-Hesychastic movement of Paisie Welicikovskiy and Hasidism, which flowered in both the same period and geographical area, namely in the Carpatian mountains. See his 'The Historical Figure of R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov', reprinted in *Explications and Implications, Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance* (Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 294 (Hebrew).
- 202 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 240–1.
- 203 See his influential *Sefer 'Ohev Yisrael* (Zhitomir, 1863), fol. 30cd. On the 'firstborn' see also above, Chapter 3 note 118, and Chapter 4 note 83.

- 204 Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'.
- 205 Taubes, 'The Price of Messianism', p. 556.
- 206 On interiorization in Hasidism see Margolin, *The Human Temple*.
- 207 I am inclined not to accept Taubes's solution because he assumes, even more than Scholem did, the centrality of Lurianism in the general structure of Hasidic messianism, without being aware of the greater diversity of the 'messianic idea'. See also R. J. Zwi Werblowsky 'Mysticism and Messianism, the Case of Hasidism', *Man and His Salvation, Essays in Memory of S. G. F. Brandon* (Rowman and Littlefield, Manchester, 1974), p. 307.
- 208 See Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, vol. 2, pp. 475–510. More recently this approach has been developed in Mor Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism* (Haifa University Press, Haifa, 2002) (Hebrew).
- 209 See e.g. Tarsicius van Bavel, 'The "Christus Totus" Idea: A Forgotten Aspect of Augustine's Spirituality', in eds, Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey, *Studies in Patristic Christology* (Four Court Press, Portland, 1998), pp. 84–94.
- 210 Sherwin, 'Corpus Domini'. For a suggestion as to the possible impact of views on what has been designed as 'incarnation' in Hasidism see Magid, 'Ethics Disentangled', pp. 54–75.
- 211 See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 139–161; Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, pp. 416–17, especially note 104.
- 212 See, more recently, on this issue Lewis Glinert's study, 'The Hasidic Tale and the Sociolinguistic Modernization of the Jews of Eastern Europe', in eds, Avidov Lipsker & Rella Kushelevsky, *Studies in Jewish Narrative: Ma'aseh Sippur, Presented to Yoav Elstein* (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan 2006), pp. vii–xxxvi.

CHAPTER 7 **Concluding Remarks**1. *Sonship of God, Metatron and rabbinic 'orthodoxy'*

The aim of this book so far has been to make the first sustained attempts to survey structures of sonship of God in different layers of Jewish mystical literature. No doubt much more material will surface, and new readings will be offered of the texts I have collected and presented here. Given the amplitude of the Jewish primary sources, written in a span of two millennia, the treatments in previous chapters cannot be considered exhaustive, even less so as far as the manuscript material is concerned. However, preliminary as the above analyses are, let me insist that they do not make a theological point concerning a wider picture of Judaism, beyond the specific passages discussed in this book. As mentioned in some cases above, theology is rarely a significant aspect of the main Jewish literatures. Therefore, the simple existence of this religious category cannot serve for ecumenical discussions, nor point to significant historical affinities between sonship as shaped in Judaism and Christianity. Its lingering on in Judaism in the Middle Ages represents, in many of the cases discussed above, the reverberation of ancient themes that found their way into medieval sources. This parallelism – though not symmetry – between Judaism and Christianity insofar as sonship is concerned, with all the great differences between them, may nevertheless contribute to a better understanding of both religions. Instead of concentrating attention solely on the ancient Jewish apocryphal material as historically relevant for the understanding of the Christian sonship of God, one may turn now also to other Jewish material in order to compare the two religions from a phenomenological point of view. Surprisingly enough, the Middle Ages, which constitutes one of the darkest periods in the history of Judaism from the point of view of the attitude of both Muslims and Christians toward the Jews, represents also a period of relative openness to the idea of a Son of God, much more so than in late antiquity and in modern times. Hasidism constitutes, indeed, an exception to this assessment.

Let me attempt to have a succinct look at a process that deals with the ascent of sonship in both religions. The Enochic elements that were instrumental in shaping the apotheotic vector in nascent Christianity lost their formative status, while in Jewish mysticism, whose first clear manifestations as literature coincided with this decline, the ascent of the Enochic movement as shaping important aspects of this mystical literature only started then. The concepts of sonship operate in dramatically different,

larger contexts, and in my opinion meaning is produced not by the very existence of a theme – a theme that appears frequently in a fragmentary manner – but by the special concatenation of several cardinal religious categories in a certain system. To a large extent this book is an exercise in detecting the brief pertinent discussions about theophoric and mediating sons in Jewish writings, and in discovering diversity, in revealing divergences and subsequently, the richness that such a religious category can assume in different mystical systems. Needless to say, I do not believe that any of these types of sonship are better or worse, authentic or less authentic, than other types, whether within Judaism or outside of this tradition. My approach, rather, is concerned with changes within various forms of religious systems.

To formulate it differently, early Christianity, no doubt a Jewish phenomenon, among many others, drew most of its visions of sonship from biblical sources, as well as from the Greco-Roman world, and from pseudepigraphic and apocryphal sources. Some of those themes remained, at least to some extent, part and parcel of rabbinic as well as other forms of post-biblical Judaism.<sup>1</sup> My question is what the possible implications of this situation are, when in Christianity, a special emphasis on the sonship of the person of Jesus is highlighted, but at the same time, this religion has dominated many geographical areas in which post-biblical forms of Judaism developed. To be sure, Christianity is a vast and variegated religious phenomenon, which has produced an immense theological literature, more diverse and rich than Judaism. Thus, speaking about reactions to Christianity as a whole is at once a correct though nevertheless a precarious assumption, as it is difficult to determine the precise Christian theology addressed by one Jewish thinker or another.

What happened, may we ask, to the earlier, pre-Christian Jewish traditions pertinent to our discussions above, in the new religious circumstances and contexts in which Jews found themselves? In my opinion, in principle and also in praxis, many kinds of processes can be discerned in the history of post-biblical Judaism regarding the status of sonship. The main processes are: (a) suppression of the concept of sonship as formulated in Christianity, as dealing exclusively with one unique individual, as seen in rabbinic literature, and (b) restructuring of earlier views of sonship within new conceptual systems, or forms of order, as is the case in medieval literatures, an approach that is close to the Freudian view of 'formative reaction', or (c) adoption of some form of Christian view of sonship, at least theoretically, as seen, for example, in the quotation from Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah* or in R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah's view of the birth of the son as intellect by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Not one of these three alternatives is conceived in previous chapters as being the only,

or even the most basic answer, and no monolithic understanding of one 'basic' reaction of 'Judaism' to sonship in 'Christianity' is plausible, in my opinion.

However, let me point out that, significant as explanations (b) and (c) are, I see only little impact on the structure of either rabbinic or kabbalistic forms of Judaism. To resort to a parable: consider the birth of a new infant in a family: it dramatically changes the status and the self-awareness of an older child, which sizes up, competes with and often attacks the newborn. However, this does not necessarily change the basic form of the older child: neither his intellectual nor his physical form, pre-established prior to the birth of the younger child. Insufficient as such a parable is from many points of view, it catches at least one basic point I would like to make: the theological vortex that is characteristic of Christian theological attempts to define sonship time and again scarcely affected Rabbinism. It did not adopt the theology of Philo, nor the theologoumena found in Judaism of the late Second Temple, which contributed to the emergence of Christianity, since its main project was the elaboration of ritual as a shared worship, much more so than building theologies or philosophies. From this point of view, Christianity as a theological system – though not in its social and institutional forms – was less formative for the sort of literatures I am concerned with in this book, than the encounters with the Greek philosophies as mediated by Muslim thinkers, a point to which I shall return immediately below. This impact was not only on the surface in the form of explicit quotations, but also discernible as profound structures that enriched dramatically and immediately some speculative literatures, a phenomenon that is unparalleled in its profundity as far as the theories of Christianity are concerned.

The theological fluidity and flexibility of theological reflections in rabbinic Judaism, both in late antiquity and in most of its subsequent forms, facilitated the emergence of different reactions during the Middle Ages. Both Maimonides the philosopher, and Rabad or Nahmanides the Kabbalists were rabbinic Jews, and the deep theological divergences between them, quite explicit and explicated in some writings, do not attenuate their shared adherence to a common rabbinic heritage.

Yet, the question as to what the implications of these three religious strategies are is also relevant for an understanding of rabbinic Judaism in general, as well as the specific religious developments dealt with above. I subscribe neither to a vision in which Judaism developed independently of its various cultural and religious environments, nor to a view that it is basically grounded in these environments, but rather, to a need to explore the variety of possibilities in the spectrum between these two extremes. Most of the sonship phenomena described above fall into such a range. Too

strong a grounding of the Kabbalists in a Christian background would amount to the perception that they implicitly subscribed to a Christian theology, and thus produce a rejection of Kabbalah on the part of other Jewish thinkers. Neither do I find in the writings of Jewish thinkers discussed above anything suggesting a substantial adoption of philosophical theologies, which abound in philosophical forms of Judaism. This is the reason why we see so little protest against the emergence of Kabbalah, in comparison to the much sharper controversies generated by the ascent of Jewish philosophical theologies. Even in cases in which lateral Christian influences on views concerning sonship may be detected, they have been expressed by resorting to earlier Jewish mythologoumena.

It should be emphasized that in the same authors who adopted some form of sonship of God, we may also find a sharp rejection of Christian theological theories. This is the case with Abraham Abulafia's adoption of philosophical sonship, which reflects a vocational sonship, as he rejects the Christian narrative of the inception and birth of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, this complex strategy is also evident in the sharp Zoharic critique of Christianity,<sup>4</sup> and in the anti-Christian attitude of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*.<sup>5</sup> After all, sonship in religion may have many forms, and thus its Christian versions, based on the centrality of crucial events like incarnation, vicarious suffering, death and resurrection, seem to have been rejected in Judaism without, however, rejecting the idea that another, more open-ended form of sonship is possible, grounded as it is in many verses in the Hebrew Bible. Interesting from this point of view is the recurrence of the verse from Hosea 2.1, where the children of Israel are described as 'sons of the living God'. Many Jewish authors resorted to this phrase and some of their references may have polemic underpinnings, in reference to the worship of Jesus, considered by Jews to be a dead God.<sup>6</sup> Less paradoxical and dialectic than Christian theologies, the more modest theological speculations of the Jews were less focused on a cult of a divine Son, and more interested in the performance of commandments that reflect and impact on dynamics within the divine realm, be it transcendental or immanent.

At the same time, an increasingly full and explicit rejection of sonship is evident in Jewish theologies that emerged, as we shall see below, in geographical areas in which Christianity was not the dominant form of religion. Thus, this rejection cannot be explained as an attempt to withstand Christian thought, but rather as a subscription to philosophical stands that are independent of any immediate fear of the impact of Christianity. This does not mean that philosophers like Maimonides were not acquainted with or concerned by the theological implications of Christianity, as is evident from his writings or from the Arabic sources he was acquainted with;<sup>7</sup> rather, it means that taking issue with Christianity was not the main trigger

for his exclusion of the concept of sonship from his theological constructs. Maimonides' exclusion of the category of sonship from his theological thought, viewed in contrast to those Kabbalists who were much more open to various views of sonship and who included them in their thought, reveals that such divergences have little to do with a shared homogenous rabbinic heritage. These differing attitudes are part of systemic changes that were adopted in medieval forms of Judaism. Exclusion is no more rabbinically determined than is the greater openness toward views of sonship reflected in certain themes that entered medieval Judaism as part of what I called the great by-pass of late antiquity material, which circumvented rabbinic literature. By resorting to these themes Jewish authors could elaborate on sonship independently, or react in their elaborations to Christian views, or even adopt some Christian views on the basis of the themes they viewed as authoritative.

I attempt to be as equidistant as I can from two main scholarly proclivities. The first is the lacrimose perception of Jewish history, evident in the earlier forms of Jewish scholarship, as a culture repressed by and quite strongly dependent on the majority cultures which were imagined as being inimical to the Jews and their religion. Focused on discrimination, atrocities and the destruction of Jewish individuals and communities by Christians as well as Muslim civilians and soldiers, not to mention the suffering inflicted by masses of Mongols, the 'lacrimose' or neo-lacrimose histories of the Jews are prone to ignore the larger periods of relative calm that nevertheless occurred in between these difficult times, during which Jewish tradition was able to flourish and Jews able to create decisive literatures for their culture, mainly in Hebrew.

At the same time, I am also skeptical as to the potential contribution of the more recent scholarly emphasis on various forms of symbiosis which ground the creation of Jewish thought in, what is in my opinion, an overly simplistic vision, in which the alleged intimate acquaintance with and impact of the environment are envisioned as decisive for understanding the bigger picture of Jewish culture in a particular medieval context. While the lacrimose theories reflect the old Jewish emphasis on difference, separation and suffering, which still endure among Jewish thinkers, including scholars, the new trends represent an anachronistic vision of the past in terms much more adequate to some aspects of the present. While creativity does not arise, to be sure, in a cultural vacuum, neither is it a process that must be significantly determined by majority cultures. A scholar does better by not subscribing to one basic type of explanation of a cultural dynamic, and he or she should inspect the various relevant sources against more than one single cultural background, thereby allowing as much room as possible for earlier traditions as well as personal creativity to shape a speculative position.

Let me offer a more general overview of the major occurrences of the theme of the Son of God in the material surveyed above. It appears in pre-rabbinic literatures, almost totally disappears in rabbinic literature, is quite veiled in the Heikhalot literature, and returns more conspicuously in Hasidei Ashkenaz, Abraham Abulafia, and the Zoharic literatures as well as the literatures of those impacted by them, finally becoming quite prominent in Hasidic literature. We may speak generally of a by-pass of rabbinic literature by more ancient traditions, which found their way into Jewish forms of literature in which rabbinic authority was weak. This is certainly the case in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, Abulafia, the Zoharic corpus, as well as in Sabbateanism and Hasidism, not to mention the Renaissance figures, both Jewish and Christian. Since many of these traditions are related to the figure of Metatron and connected to each other, their emergence in the Middle Ages is hardly an example of the lateral influence of contemporary Christian theologies, but rather represents a resurgence of earlier views, from either Jewish or Jewish-Christian traditions, despite the importance of sonship in medieval Christianities. In Hasidic discussions however, the absence of Metatron in the specific context of sonship while not in other contexts is related, as I suggested above, to a lateral Christian impact.

All this being said, it would be simplistic to explain the by-pass as a simple anti-rabbinic move by medieval Jewish thinkers in the vein of Gershom Scholem's explanation of the emergence of Kabbalah as the return of elements that had been repressed, namely the resurgence of ancient mythical, Gnostic-like themes suppressed by the late antiquity Rabbis. In both cases, it is important to point out that the development of the two types of themes, the Gnostic-like themes and those related to sonship, did not trigger a significant rabbinic response in the Middle Ages. I am not acquainted with a single critique of the Ashkenazi discussions treated above, nor have I discovered any attack on the *Zohar* or on Abulafia on the basis of their theories of sonship. Nor is Hasidism, which has been attacked so ferociously on a variety of topics since the 1870s, subject to any attack based on its theories of sonship. The question that may therefore be asked is whether the hypothetical rabbinic *vigilanti* simply fell asleep in these cases, and never woke up to protest against the intrusion of an allegedly alien religious category. Or were they aware of but indifferent to these Christian-like structures emerging in various Jewish mystical discussions? Or, is there another explanation that may help better our understanding of the Rabbis' overwhelming silence in these cases?

Let me start by pointing out the fact that not only mystics belonging to the secondary elite adopted theories of sonship. Such theories were also adopted, though much more mildly, by R. Eleazar of Worms and R. Shlomo ibn Adret, two Halakhists who were also leading figures in their

communities and whose writings remained influential for generations. Was there indeed a process of transition from what may be called a proto-orthodox stage of Rabbinism, to an orthodox one shaped by the exclusion of the two-powers 'heresy' as Daniel Boyarin claims? Or were heresies about these two powers in heaven so pronounced before and during the re-emergence of rabbinic Judaism, as Segal claims?<sup>8</sup> Were the Rabbis truly shaping their identity by giving primacy to theology, and by excluding and in a certain way creating at the same time the two-powers view, just as the Christian orthodoxy did so by labeling Monarchianism as a heresy? Does a symmetry so neat as this really work in these different religions? Did the Rabbis become orthodox at an early stage in the same manner as their Christian contemporaries? Are processes that take place in different languages, centers and communities, in such different cultures, ever symmetrical? Since Boyarin's argument is directly related, inter alia, to Metatron, whom he understands, correctly in my opinion, as parallel to the Son of God, let me address again the status of Metatron in rabbinic circles.

There can be no doubt that the episode of the punishment of Metatron by 60 pulses of fire, found in the rabbinic literature, the Talmud and the Heikhalot literature, reflects an attempt to deflect the special status of this angel and thus denigrate the theology of the two-powers in heaven. However, we may ask whether this factor was as formative for an allegedly new rabbinic identity such as Boyarin envisioned? It serves in his work as the main proof for the rejection of the theory of two-powers in heaven, insofar as this angel is concerned. However, such a punishment should not automatically mean that its 'application' was intended to exclude Metatron from the rabbinic pantheon. This is evident from the way in which Elijah and another archangel, Gabriel, are treated in rabbinic tradition. Both are imagined to have been punished in exactly the same way, but no one would claim that Elijah<sup>9</sup> or the angel Gabriel<sup>10</sup> have been excluded from rabbinic tradition or that their status has been attenuated. On the contrary, these three punished entities remain revelatory beings that function quite safely and actively in numerous rabbinic texts over the centuries as part of the 'open channels' I discussed previously, in spite of their alleged ancient 'punishment'. The rabbinic silence regarding Elijah and Gabriel as 'problematic' figures should alert us to the negligible religious valence of the punishment of Metatron according to the Talmudic discussion or in the Heikhalot text. In a way, the punishment is reminiscent of the parables in which a father or king punishes the son as part of a process of education, rather than in order to dislocate him.<sup>11</sup> Too much theology has been read into a literature that is made up of many voices.

To reiterate, one should not exaggerate the impact of the two passages on Metatron's humiliation on his status in the general configuration of

Rabbinism. In fact, Metatron did not disappear from the Talmudic worldview, and for this reason it is not plausible, at least in my opinion, to attribute such great significance to one specific episode of humiliation, even if it is repeated in the Talmud and in the *Heikhalot* literature. First and foremost, the humiliation passage notwithstanding, Metatron retained an important role in other rabbinic discussions, as well as in medieval forms of Rabbinism.<sup>12</sup> The loose theological approaches found in the early phases of Rabbinism, namely in late antiquity, have been neither defined nor redefined by the attitude towards Metatron, nor by any single specific theological theme accepted or rejected by late antiquity Rabbis. These Rabbis distinguished themselves from Jewish-Christians and from Christians by keeping alive and constantly developing the reservoir of associations they based on Hebrew and Aramaic canonical sources, by interpreting them in non-constellated manners,<sup>13</sup> and by the performance of commandments. Theology was, therefore, far from constituting the most important distinguishing factor, since these schools defined themselves through the actions of these Jewish masters, whose main religious purpose was the shaping of a mode of behavior much more than the shaping of a theology.

Or, to put it in other words: in my opinion, religious thought in Rabbinism never attained a degree of orthodoxy even remotely similar to the dogmatic formulations which permeate Christianity through the centuries, but loose forms of theological thought remained part and parcel of Rabbinism in the Middle Ages. The marginal presence of theology no doubt distinguishes halakhic from theological discourses, and the very existence of such a huge literature in Judaism shapes the real structure of this religion. In the halakhic writings, Metatron appears as an authority, sometimes even in legalistic matters, just as the angel does in Jewish mysticism.<sup>14</sup> Here we witness the smooth transition of Metatron from late antiquity into Jewish medieval traditions on the one hand, and the more dramatically increased importance of Enoch on the other hand, as we shall see below in the Appendix.

Yet an understanding of the emergence of the specific configuration of the rabbinic system should also take into consideration other forms of rejection or 'purification'. An entire series of topics found in Jewish culture were eradicated or marginalized. The vast Philonic corpus of writings, available in Caesarea, the center of rabbinic learning, disappeared from the horizon of rabbinic culture.<sup>15</sup> Joseph Flavius did not fare much better even though an abridgement of one of his books was known in the Middle Ages. Though the absence of these writings from Talmudic literature may have something to do with the fact that they were written in Greek and Latin, this is not the case with many pseudepigrapha texts, probably written originally in Hebrew, which also essentially remained beyond the range of

interest of the rabbinic circles. Thus, much more drastic and efficient forms of censorship were applied to less dangerous topics found in pre-rabbinic Jewish culture than were applied to the possible status of Metatron as a kind of Son of God.

Defining Rabbinism in its most comprehensive sense, namely since its inception up to its modern forms, there is no reason to assume that the relatively modest role of Metatron has been diminished over the centuries. We may instead discern an increase in the importance of this angel as a kind of vice-regent, including the emergence of a cult in an obscure circle during the Middle Ages, as we shall see in the Appendix. Unlike the Christian orthodoxy articulated in the mid-fourth century, the first clear and influential expressions of what may be called 'orthodoxy' in Judaism may be connected to the name of Maimonides at the end of the twelfth century, when a form of the principles of faith of 'Judaism' were formulated and disseminated. These expressions were made in Egypt, a location not dominated by Christianity. In the system of this great Jewish thinker the name of Metatron is indeed absent, but this absence is neither accidental nor dictated by Maimonides' Rabbinism. Yet as we have seen above in Chapter 3, even among the ardent followers of the Great Eagle Metatron returned and played an important role, especially in the thought of Abraham Abulafia. Again, I see a certain affinity between Maimonides' implicit rejection of the role of Metatron and his anti-Christian attitude in an Islamicate sphere, just as some of his followers would retrieve the role of Metatron and the concept of Son in a sphere dominated by Christian theology. It seems that there is a correlation between the distribution of the two themes: Metatron, while only rarely depicted as a son, appears in writings in which some form of sonship may be found.<sup>16</sup>

We may reformulate these observations differently: the role of theories about the Son of God was much less important in Islamicate areas than in the lands of Christianity – Western Europe, Germany and Italy – where they became relatively much more prominent. The reluctance to elaborate on concepts of sonship does not reflect a different attitude among Jewish philosophers active in the Near East to that of Jewish mystics acting in the West. Jewish mystics of the Near East, like the Sufi-oriented authors from Maimonides' family, also ignored sonship. We may have an exception in the form of R. Yehudah ha-Levi's theory of '*Amr 'Ilahi*', which ensured the status of the Son of God to Adam. However, as H.A. Wolfson has pointed out, the ultimate source for the book on this issue is a Christian view of Logos.<sup>17</sup> Thus, I would say that the strong animosity for the concept of Son of God in Islam, against a background in which both Jews and Christians were sometimes described as believing in the Son of God, created a reticence among Jews to resort to this concept.

Let me turn to another example of the view of Adam as a Son of God. In the writings of an influential seventeenth-century author, R. Yeshayah Horowitz, whose views have been already quoted several times above, it is said:

I said: 'You are 'Elohim, and all are sons of the Most High.'<sup>18</sup> The aim of the creation of Adam was to be[come] 'the man of God',<sup>19</sup> and a son of the Most High in his entirety, as it is his soul, and his entire body, to become intellectual.<sup>20</sup> And he reaches from heaven to earth holy in his entirety,<sup>21</sup> and so in future he will become *qommemyut*.<sup>22</sup> But because of the sin, he was diminished, as is written 'You laid your hand upon me'<sup>23</sup> from the expression *Kaf*,<sup>24</sup> and it was amended by the revelation of the Torah, the ten commandments corresponding to the ten utterances by which the world has been created, and when you will add them it will be twenty.<sup>25</sup>

The two decads mentioned here are quite interesting. While a correspondence between cosmic and ritualistic decads is found in numerous instances in Jewish tradition since the early Middle Ages, here these are related, perhaps for the first time, to the cosmic perception of Adam in rabbinic thought, the ten creative utterances on the one hand, and the Mosaic revelation, the Ten Commandments, on the other hand. Adam, described in the text as initially possessing a body that fills the universe, has been diminished by God's hands – but there is a remedy to this diminution: the Mosaic revelation at Sinai. In other words, the sonship that was originally intended for Adam will be retrieved after its loss, by the reception of the Torah in the present, and even more so by redemption in the future. In any case, Adam, both as the Son of God and as a divine man, is conceived of as an ideal in the past and in the future. However, according to Horowitz, the condition for this retrieval is the acceptance of the Torah. I wonder to what extent the vision of Adam as the Son of God reflects the influence of R. Yehudah ha-Levi's understanding of Adam mentioned above.<sup>26</sup> Whether such an influence did or did not operate on the seventeenth-century Kabbalist is less important from my point of view. In any case, both ha-Levi and Horowitz are conservative Jewish thinkers whose impact on Jewish thought has been tremendous. The fact that they share the assumption that Adam was the Son of God demonstrates that at least this specific vision of sonship has not been conceived of as a theological problem, even in the most conservative and widely accepted pictures of Judaism. Neither of them has been criticized, at least not to the best of my knowledge, for taking this position.

Even more dramatic are the views of R. Meir ibn Gabbai, another fairly conservative Kabbalist active during the first decades of the sixteenth

century in the Ottoman Empire. In a chapter found in his influential *Sefer 'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, devoted to the concept of Son, he describes the souls of the Jews as the Sons of God, and claims that the descent of the Godhead – the Hebrew phrase used in this context is *Hul ha-'Elohut* – onto them is related to an organic nexus between God and the Jews, who are linked by the bonds of ritual or worship, necessary for the amendment of the divinity.<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that this is a fascinating example for what we described in Chapter 4 above as 'theurgical sonship'. The gist of the discussion is not the lost perfection of Adam as a Son of God and its restoration, but the privileged status of Jews as sons in the present, and as responsible for the betterment of the processes taking place within the divine realm by the performance of rituals.

So, to summarize: just as Boyarin has pointed out a great diversity in Jewish rabbinic and non-rabbinic texts, in what he may call the proto-orthodox period, we may assume an even greater diversity emerged in the Middle Ages, at least as far as the attitude to the Son of God category is concerned. Though for many scholars the existence of discussions on the Son of God may be a great surprise,<sup>28</sup> for someone who has perused vast speculative corpora written in the Middle Ages and later on by Jewish authors, especially material found in manuscripts, the appearance of such theological views is much less surprising.

## 2. Sonship: Judaism and Christianity

This religious-cultural correspondence of discussions on sonship in mainly Christian countries is too obvious to be accidental. It points not only to what I called at the end of the Introduction 'a desire for sonship', but more so to the return of elements already found in ancient Jewish traditions, especially in the Hebrew Bible, in Christian cultural contexts which were somehow consonant with the ancient mythologoumena that produced aspects of these contexts. Our discussions about the views of Cardozo, who delved into Christian theology, are the most outstanding examples of such an affinity. Though antagonistic to the various Christian forms of sonship, he proposed a form of his own, though he did so by putting in relief the Zoharic and Lurianic theories of divine countenances in a manner characteristic of his kabbalistic thought, as the framework for his own theory of sonship. Thus, in this specific case a direct and sharp attack on Christian theories of sonship does not translate into a rejection of the concept of sonship as such. Can we extrapolate from the dynamics of Cardozo's thought to other instances in Judaism? Or to put it more explicitly, is a rejection of Christian sonship by Jews always and inevitably tantamount to a rejection of sonship? Are there cases in which sonship

appears in Jewish thought which are not connected directly or necessarily to Christianity, either by adopting some notion from this religion or reacting to it? Our answer to this question is positive in several of our previous discussions.

What can discussions of various forms of sonship in Jewish sources tell us about Judaism and its relationship to Jewish-Christians and to Christianity? Many of the discussions regarding the Son of God in Jewish sources suggest a situation similar to what we find in Christianity: an ontological being, which pre-exists creation, profoundly connected to and functioning as a representative of the higher divinity in its relationship with the non-divine realms, is designated by a filial term. This is the case in many of the Zoharic and Lurianic discussions, of Abulafia's understanding of the cosmic Agent Intellect, or of Cardozo's theory. However, in other instances sometimes found in the same literary corpora, it is less the creational and representative functions that count, namely less the descending theophanic vector, but the apotheotic one. The term son is in those cases not incarnational, or a result of an emanation, but more a matter of vocation or adoption. It reflects moments of a dramatic shift in the status of the aspirant mystic to a special type of relationship with God. This is especially the case in Abulafia, in Cordovero and in Ḥasidic theories of the *Tzaddiq*. It is the entrance into the 'realm of God' that is reflected in the term Son, not a simple assessment of an objective fact unknown to the other. This is the reason Enoch played such an important role in the *imaginaire* of the Jewish mystics, while remaining on the margins of the interest of Christian mystics. In other words, to return to the opening remarks in my Introduction, the open channel is conceived of as operating in the present not only by means of the unique incarnate Son, but also through the existing paths for the mystic to ensure his election as a Son of God. From this perspective, the attainment of an intimate relationship with God is part of the way in which sonship functions in Jewish mysticism. In fact, in several instances revelations are addressed to figures that are designated as sons, as in the cases discussed above (R. Ḥanina ben Dosa', R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai, R. Abraham Abulafia, R. Asher Lemlein, or Joseph Qaro, to give just some examples). While for the theophanic forms of sonship the supreme divinity impresses its will, form or wisdom on the lower worlds, a form of divine self-fulfillment, apotheotic sonship reflects the efforts of elite figures' towards self-fulfillment, through forms of expression intended towards the higher realms. In the Christian understandings of sonship, the main impulse is the portrayal of a subordinated entity, due to the exalted status of the Son, and the need to create some form of hierarchy. In the Jewish sources such subordination is evident in the use of the adjective 'small', in both the description of Metatron as Lesser *YHWH*, and of the Zoharic syntagm

*Ze'vir 'Anppin*. However, in other cases, the starting point of the mystic is much more elevated and the issue of subordination is so evident that there is no need to deal with it; the emphasis is on the attempt to ascend towards God or even to be united with the divine realm.

We may distinguish between three cases where discussions of sonship become more prominent:

1. As part of a messianic self-understanding: Abulafia, Tzevi and Cardozo were messianic figures, and their resort to the concept of sonship is obviously, though never exclusively, related to this development. If the Besht identified himself with a messianic mission, a view that is in my opinion quite plausible, the parable of the son may point to a salvific role on the part of the son in fathoming the nature of reality as divine. Those figures, though messianic, are nevertheless not atoning, in contrast with the vicarious task of the ultimate son in Christianity.
2. In instances in which there is a return to the ancient Jewish literatures, either real or imaginary. This is the case with respect to the *Zohar* and Abulafia, where access to various ancient themes is quite plausible, as I have attempted to show above in Chapters 3 and 4. The importance of Enoch and of Metatron in these cases is quite obvious, and we may also mention the writings of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo as belonging to this category, since traditions about Yaho'el have been preserved in both the writings of Nehemiah and Abulafia.
3. In instances in which the impact of Christianity on Jewish thought becomes more accentuated, as is the case with regard to *Sefer ha-Meshiv* and Cardozo, and in what I call a 'lateral' influence, though in these cases Messianism is also conspicuous.

In the first two cases, various religious developments independent of a close relationship to Christianity nourished the use of concepts of sonship. An individual's understanding of himself as a Messiah may involve Christian theologoumena, but this self-understanding stems from a variety of sources – psychological, social or political – that do not necessarily have to be related to Christian theologies of sonship. The resort to ancient sources, real or imaginary, may well be part of an attempt to establish a new form of authority for ideas, old or invented, which is essentially independent of Christianity. I would say that, by and large, Jewish mystics, like other Jews, resorted to biblical verses in which concepts of sonship were mentioned without always knowing or even considering the Christological interpretation of such verses. While such interpretations point to a personalized and quite specific understanding of the relevant verses – prefigurations for Jesus – my assumption is that Jews were less deterred to use the verses, even

polemically, than modern understandings of the processes of the creativity of these Jews may assume. After all, exegesis was a main concern of rabbinic Judaism and efforts to imagine oneself as a Son of God did not automatically have to adopt a Christian mold. The projection by modern scholars of the equally modern acquaintance with Christianity on to Jews in earlier periods may well be anachronistic. If not fostered by the specific details of an affinity to Christianity, such a nexus – or any other type of linkage – remains in the domain of hypothesis, which requires corroboration before it can become solid ground to support further broader conclusions as to the relationship between the two religions.

As to the question of lateral Christian influences on Jewish concepts of sonship, there are several instances treated above in which the Christian influence is undeniable. Such is the case in discussions of the *Zohar*, *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, Yehudah Moscato's appropriation of Pico's view, Sabbatai Tzevi, and Cardozo, while in other instances, like Abulafia and Hasidism, the situation is much more complex. First and foremost we should point out that the role played by the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz material, and of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo in particular, is quite decisive for the way in which Abulafia dealt with many cases of sonship, as seen in Chapter 3. Though the lateral influence of Christianity should certainly be taken into consideration, scholars should first analyze the sources which inspired his view in a direct and overt manner, like R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's influential passage. Thus, it would be better to speak about instances in which a *variety* of explanations converge in explicating the views of a particular Kabbalist. However, we should also recall that the origins of some views found in R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* are not quite clear and may reflect more ancient Jewish-Christian traditions, especially because of the reference to 'Jeshua' as one of the three Princes of the Face.

Some of our discussions of sonship stem from sources written by authors who believed they were prophets or were believed by others to be so. Abraham Abulafia and Sabbatai Tzevi fall into the first category, while R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo and the Besht fall mainly into the second category. Three out of the four, the exception being R. Nehemiah, were less concerned with hypostatic, objective understandings of the sonship of other figures than with the possibility of attaining such a status themselves. Even when hypostatic structures concerning sonship appear in their writings, as in the case of Abulafia, these authors nevertheless speak mainly about their own sonship. I would say that given the rejection in Jewish sources of Jesus's sonship or that of any other single specific person, sonship becomes a possibility available to many or even all Jews.

According to these authors, the status of sonship is acquired in a sense by the depersonalization of the person when he becomes a son. Their accent

is not upon the idiosyncratic vicissitudes undergone as Son of God. The objective son, whether such be the Agent Intellect, a *sefirah* or a divine countenance, determines much of the way in which sonship is understood, as part of the 'double sonship' logic I have explained previously, which creates the conditions for forms of intimacy that may culminate in moments of mystical union. This is part of the 'open channels' that were believed to exist. In some cases, as seen above, authors who dealt with sonship also assumed that prophecy was possible. However, the existence of the supernal son is related in many cases to the possibility of revelations or ecstatic experiences, as in the case of Philo, R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, Abraham Abulafia, or Sabbatai Tzevi. Whether the Lurianic theory of double sonship is also related to the revelations R. Isaac Luria was reported to have received from Elijah is still a matter that requires further investigations.

### 3. *Jewish versus Christian sonship*

As seen above, explicit references to sonship are found in all the major forms of Jewish esotericism in the Middle Ages: Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, ecstatic Kabbalah, the *Zohar*, Cordovero, Luria, Sabbateanism, Hasidism, and a Kabbalist belonging to the school of R. Elijah of Vilnius, as we shall see below (as far as his self-perception is concerned). There is good reason to assume that the commencement of the discussions on sonship owes much to one of the first mystics in Judaism, Philo of Alexandria. Some Jewish philosophers also adopted the category of intellectual sonship, though none of the major Jewish philosophers – with the exception of Gersonides – gave expression to such a view. Though these literatures are not representative of the much more variegated religion understood as Judaism, I would say that for the authors discussed above sonship was an important religious category. Unfortunately, the standard descriptions of Judaism have ignored this category as significant, or at least neglected the more comprehensive picture that emerges from bringing together the above testimonies. I would not conclude that these testimonies prove that Jewish mysticism represents a religion of the son, but that simplistic descriptions that negate the existence of one religious category or another before a serious study throughout Judaism has taken place are representative of general presumptions that do not engage a comprehensive reading of Jewish literatures. Such an example is found in an interesting and quite influential discussion of one of the major Jewish figures of the twentieth century.

In a succinct and elegant statement Sigmund Freud characterized Judaism as the religion of the Father and Christianity, its offspring, as the religion of the Son: 'The religion of the son – he said – succeeds the religion of the father.'<sup>29</sup> This is no doubt a very elegant and fascinating formulation,

genial in its simplicity and with a history that backs some of its content. No serious scholar can ignore the fact that Christianity emerged later and that it therefore may be regarded as a son or daughter of biblical Judaism, having at the center of its religiosity the cult of the Son of God. However, according to Margaret Barker's view, Christianity follows a mold that is even older than the Hebrew Bible and that expresses the Enochic vision she calls *The Older Bible*. Sonship, according to this reading, is neither a late development nor just a reading into an older document a new religious vision, but rather the result of a process of ascent of apothotic elements found in documents that did not make their way into the Old Testament. The New Testament is therefore conceived of as – conceptually speaking – older than the old one. Sonship, less evident in the Old Testament, retrieves something vital in the hypothetical even 'Older' Testament. Here we may also mention the theory of the nineteenth-century rabbi and Kabbalist active in Italy, R. Elijah ben Amozegh, who claimed, no less, than that Christian sonship follows various earlier Jewish esoteric teachings on the topic, that surfaced in theosophical Kabbalah: the son of God as the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*.<sup>30</sup> There is no need to deny such a far-fetched theory based upon a totally non-historical assumption, related to his belief that Kabbalah is a very ancient lore. Unlike Barker, who presents a non-kabbalistic though esoteric stream of pre-biblical traditions that were not adopted by the Hebrew Bible, ben Amozegh assumes that there was an ancient esoteric, though quite traditional, form of kabbalistic Judaism that generated Christianity. The Italian Rabbi was inspired<sup>31</sup> by the passage of Profiat Duran or R. Isaac ben Moses ha-Levi, known as ha-Ephodi, a late fourteenth-century Catalan writer who claimed that an unnamed Ashkenazi Rabbi informed him as follows:

In my youth I have heard from an Ashkenazi rabbi, who was a Talmudist, and also from the people of the science of Kabbalah, that said that Jesus and his disciples were Kabbalists, though of quite a distorted Kabbalah, and he performed all the strange, supernatural things that he did by means of the practical part of this science . . . and he [Jesus] did so by means of the impure side, which there is a warning against it. And after I<sup>32</sup> have perused on some occasions the deeds of the errants I have seen things that confirm this opinion. In that science [of Kabbalah] there are fathers and sons, which are *sefirot*, and they are called *Tiferet* fathers, and *Malkhut* sons. And also the 'Word of God' is attributed to the *sefirot*, especially to *Tiferet*, and so 'the image of God'. And all this is found in the books of the errants since they called Jesus the Son of God, and John at the beginning of his Gospel called him 'the Word of God' which is the *logos* in Greek . . . And the error of the

Christians is that they see in divinity a trinity, which stems from a faulty interpretation of this science [Kabbalah], where the [concepts of] Primordial light, the Pure light and the Resplendent light are found.<sup>33</sup> And starting with those three, which are one in the science of Kabbalah, they erred regarding the ten *sefirot*. The intention of the masters of Kabbalah concerning them [the *sefirot*] is like that of the philosophers concerning the attributes that they attribute to the First Cause.<sup>34, 35</sup>

The theosophical details of the passage are not entirely clear. Father and sons may, in principle, stand for the theory of the Ancient Holy – '*Attika' Qaddisha*' – and the Lesser Face – *Ze'yir 'Anppin* – while the sons would stand for the *sefirah* of *Malkhut*. In any case, the context in which these two generations within the divine realm have been described is clearly related to a theory of sonship that was imagined to have impacted early Christianity. Once again, let me emphasize, an Ashkenazi Jewish author is quoted as agreeing with some form of sonship, a Trinitarian view no less, though this position is described in the above passage as corroborated also by a Kabbalist, probably of Spanish extraction. Whether indeed such a Rabbi was a historical figure or a figment of the imagination is an open question. However, the historical existence of such a Rabbi would corroborate José Faur's view regarding the impact – in his opinion deleterious – of Ashkenazi material on Christological speculations in Spanish Kabbalah.<sup>36</sup>

Against the background of these traditional Jewish theories of the dependence of Christianity on an Enochic or alternatively a kabbalistic form of religion, a number of new approaches to the emergence of Christianity have been articulated recently in scholarship. According to one of these views, Christianity is an independent religion, in itself contemporary and in a way parallel to Rabbinism. The two religions are deemed to be but different versions that emerged from a series of mutations, with the Israelite religion as their common background. Some recent scholars, Boyarin for example, oppose the more widespread view that Christianity is the daughter of any other religion. Thus, Freud's Oedipal explanation of the emergence of Christianity as the son-cult stemming from a Father-religion, is avoided either by claiming the contribution of sources earlier than even biblical Judaism (M. Barker), or by marginalizing the question of the relevance of sources (D. Boyarin). Such a 'suddenness' in the emergence of the worship of Jesus is also evident in L. Hurtado's last book. I assume an intermediate position, between M. Barker's propensity for a *long durée* vision of the Enochic tradition culminating in Christianity and the abruptness of the emergence of Christianity, as suggested by Boyarin and Hurtado in their recent books. I propose to combine the different approaches to the history

of various themes, in order to reach what seems to me to be a better historical account. Enoch after all remained a marginal figure in Christianity when compared to the role his image played in the history of Jewish mysticism – see further in the Appendix – while the affinities between Christianity and the Older Testament, as claimed by Barker, were more significant than to the Old Testament, a stance that calls into question the views of Boyarin/Hurtado.

I believe that the issue of sonship is especially relevant for the three versions of affinity between Christianity and its Jewish sources. Christians themselves believe that their main religious message is encoded in the Bible and they attempt to demonstrate it by resorting to verses in the Hebrew Bible. This strategy has remained a central exegetical tactic for generations, and scholarly theory regarding the independence of Christianity conflicts with the self-perception of believing Christians, who see the tenets of Christianity as dependent upon the ‘Old’ Testament. Additionally we should note the findings of a growing number of scholars, especially subsequent to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, regarding apothetic drives in some forms of ancient Judaism, especially the apocalyptic genre. In attempting to avoid the concept of influence, a concept that has come under attack in recent years, scholarship on this subject may indeed become politically correct, but at the same time it may offer a highly anachronistic picture that conflicts both with the views propagated by believers, as well as with the views of many scholars that have adopted a more panoramic and diversified understanding of late antiquity forms of Judaism. In general, politically correct language, that avoids taking a stand on value-matters in order not to insult others, is almost always less correct when applied to events of the past.

I would say that while the ancient Christian type of exegesis can be described as part of a development of strong hermeneutics, like many forms of Jewish exegesis in the Middle Ages, rabbinic exegesis is much milder and can be described as weak exegesis.<sup>37</sup> Not that the early medieval Rabbis were modern philologists in any sense, or that they could claim the ultimate truth about the Hebrew Bible, but rather their interpretations were much less theologically constellated than both Christian interpretations and many of the Jewish medieval forms of interpretation. Moreover the Rabbis, like most medieval Jewish commentators, knew Hebrew much better than the Christian exegetes over the centuries – to put it mildly – and their reservoir of association was constituted mainly by material found in the Hebrew Bible much more than that of any traditional Christian commentator with whom I am acquainted. Thus, my assumption is that these Rabbis were less concerned with metaphysical systems or systematic theologies, and their exegesis was freer from intrusions from external speculative systems, while

Philo, Christian exegetes and many Jewish medieval speculative interpreters gave priority to modes of thought alien to the thrust of the Hebrew Bible. Like the fluid theology of the Hebrew Bible, the Rabbis did not subscribe to an articulated theology, as many later commentators would.

Though the use of terms like daughter and son when describing the relation of one religion to another indubitably constitutes poor imagery, such imagery is nonetheless closer to the historical development as I see it than are modern attempts to portray symmetries in historical complex developments that start with the Hebrew Bible. In this vein, a son-centered exegesis represents an attempt to reinterpret many parts of the Bible as reflecting statements found in a minimal part of this literature. A less constellated hermeneutic, like that of the Rabbis, is not only more directly related to the language of the interpreted sources – its development notwithstanding – and to the reservoir of associations constructed by repeatedly reading the sources in their original language, but also much less centralized and considerably less dogmatic.

Even more problematic however is the first part of Freud’s statement adduced above in this section. In some way it adopts the Christian assumption of a development moving from one stage to another, from the ancient and thus old [Testament] focusing on the Father, to the new, which is of course considered to be the more advanced form of revelation belonging to the Son. The implicit view is that the Jews retained a more primeval form of religion without continuing to develop through their history. Even assuming that Christianity is a more advanced form of religion, were Christian thinkers ready to adopt Freud’s characterization of Judaism as a religion of the Father? The answer is rather complex: major Christian thinkers, like Origen, would maintain that the people of the Old Testament do not even know God the Father, as He only became such with the incarnation which generated the Son. There is no father without a son.<sup>38</sup> Thus most ancient Jews knew, according to such a view, neither the Father nor the Son. Many Christian thinkers regarded the Son as the only way, gate or door to the Father, and dislocated the possibility of a by-pass, especially by those who thought themselves to be sons.

However as we have seen above, Jewish theologies flourished, especially in the Middle Ages, and sometimes even adopted forms of sonship. Therefore Freud’s understanding, which reflects the dynamics of his psychoanalysis in relation to the history of religion, at least implicitly envisioned the Father as never changing and the Son as waging a struggle against his static Father – a form of Oedipus complex projected on the theological level. The fact that Jesus was not erotically attracted to his mother, at least according to early Christianity, or the fact that she was always considered a virgin, not conspicuously intending to marry God the

Father, did not preoccupy Freud. Neither have these problems concerned two other distinguished German Jewish thinkers, Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse, who regarded Jesus as an agonic son fighting his father. Married or not, virgin or not, the mother must be the object of the complex of her son. C.G. Jung, however, integrates these facts regarding the Holy Family in the introduction of Mary in his quaternity. If we distance ourselves from Freud's statement, which in my opinion represents also a tacit consensus in the vast majority of modern Judaism, we must ask what the differences are between the types of sonship in Judaism and Christianity?

Two basic directions concerning sonship are evident in the phenomenology of Christianity: the concentration around the one and single Son of God *par excellence*, and the widening of the reservoir of secondary sonship – those who become sons by dint of their belief in the definitive sonship of the Unique Son. The dogmatic focus on the category of Son of God as attributed exclusively to one single person who occupies forever this category in an absolute manner is evident; a later assumption is that Jews and gentiles may share this sonship by the mediation of the belief in Jesus. In the first case the genetic relationship is strengthened – incarnation – and the Son acquires a status almost equal to that of the divine Father, while in the case of secondary sonship this status is achieved by spiritual orientation, and we may even speak about the metaphorical, adoptive or spiritual sonship of the ordinary Christian in his/her relationship to the single ultimate Son. To be sure, such a difference between the Jewish and Christian understanding of sonship is already adumbrated in a dispute between Jesus and various Jewish contemporaries. The Jews claimed that they were not born by fornication but had God as their Father, and for this reason they rejected Jesus's sonship (according to a Christian passage).<sup>39</sup>

Both Christian assumptions are difficult to accept from the point of view of rabbinic Judaism. On the one hand, Christian particularism is too particularistic, since it reduces the status of sonship to a totally unique event related solely to one person, the only-begotten son Jesus, a view that is problematic in a relatively democratic religious form, such as biblical and rabbinic forms of Judaism. Yet, on the other hand, for the Rabbis, Christian universalism, that represents an opening of a Jewish and Jewish-Christian elite toward all gentiles, is probably conceived of as too universalistic, since it obliterates the concept of the election of the Jews as a nation in favor of a more inclusive approach to gentile Christianity, based on faith rather than deeds or righteousness. Though concepts of corporate personality are found in early Christianity, the participation in this communal body is not a matter of the primordial quality of the souls, as in several forms of Judaism, but of souls that, in a certain moment, acquire the special status of a member in the

*corpus Christi* through an act of spiritual conversion and faith in Jesus as the savior.

Formally speaking, a rabbinic requirement demands that a man must procreate so as to have a son and a daughter, thereby fulfilling a rabbinic command. However, procreation is not the final aim of this religious modality. The understanding of sonship in early rabbinic texts is based not only on a two-generation relationship of father and son, but on a three-generation relationship between father, son and son of son, as we shall see below. This is quite clear also from pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms's discussions adduced in Chapter 2. The view of a threefold relationship emphatically resurfaces in medieval sources in both rabbinic and kabbalistic texts. In many cases this has to do with the joint study of sons and grandsons, a way of transmitting the Torah that ensures it endures in the family forever. In these cases, procreation is evidently related also to the enhancement of the Torah. Therefore, both the family and the nation not only serve a procreative reproductive purpose but also a spiritual purpose. The corporeal extension of the son serves also as a spiritual expansion for the father. Thus, the father, by teaching his sons – though almost never his daughters – participates in the drama of the enhancement of the spiritual patrimony of the nation. In Judaism, it is the genetic and conceptual elements that are to be preserved and multiplied by procreation and sustained study, much more than gravitation around individual salvation by an intense belief as in Christianity, despite the fact that something like a Christian emphasis on faith can also be found, especially in some forms of Eastern European Hasidism. In the circle of the Besht, the belief of the Son in the omnipresence of God is of utmost importance, while in the school of the Great Maggid the more corporeal aspects of sonship are important, as demonstrated by the emphasis on God's amusement at righteous men, figured as small sons. In no instance in the Hasidic texts that I analyzed could I detect an explicit belief in the specific 'righteous' as a unique Son of God. Unlike the theory of sonship of the Hasidic righteous as expressed in their writings, faith in the righteous as being eminently or explicitly Sons of God seems to be absent in this movement.

Or to formulate this issue differently, much of the Christian literature on sonship deals with someone else's sonship, a unique event that took place in the glorious past, while in the Jewish sources surveyed above it is the potential of sonship *in the present* that is important, even if it is not strongly personalized and never understood as an exclusive event. The identification of Christian Son with Godhead, developed since the time of the later layers of the Greek Bible, did not encourage Christians to attempt to compete with Christ. The function of the Son was not only elevated and exalted to the maximum, but also understood as a box occupied forever. In a way, this

exalted status of the Son as redeemer correlates perfectly to the importance attributed in many forms of Christianity to man as a fallen being, dependent on the crucial activity of the sublime Savior. In the cases discussed above in Jewish traditions, there is no category of sonship that is occupied forever in a final manner, and some Jewish mystics strove to fill them, either by their pretension to prophecy or by claiming themselves to be messianic figures. Since the messianic box was also relatively free, its pursuit was sometimes integrated with sonship.

The availability of the status of sonship during one's lifetime is also related in some cases in Jewish sources to the assumption that all the children of Israel are, in a way, Sons of God, each as an individual and all together as a collective personality.<sup>40</sup> This means that according to some rabbinic statements, the plurality of the Israelites did not prevent God's special attention to each of them as individual sons. For example, we read in a late Midrash:

“Ephraim”, my cherished son.<sup>41</sup> *Knesset Israel* said: ‘Master of all the worlds, all my days I was beloved by you, and you were bringing me closer [to you] like a son beloved by his father. You carried me in the desert on the wings of the eagle, you guided me by the pillar of the cloud during the day and by the cloud of fire during the night, you gave me Torah, you behaved toward me in respect and splendor, you elevated my horn among the nations, you took revenge on my foes.’ And thus said the Holy One, blessed be He: ‘I have behaved toward you as a father who has mercy on his single cherished and beloved son, who is longing for his father, and this is the reason why it is written: “Ephraim”, my cherished son’, my heart reverted to mercy toward him, because he is my single son, as someone who has only one son and he did his will.’<sup>42</sup>

‘Ephraim’ was already conceived of as a general designation for the entire people of Israel in the prophetic verse and more widely in rabbinic literature. It is possible to see here the nexus between sonship and the fulfillment of the will of God, which becomes later on a matter of more pronounced theurgy in *Sefer ha-Bahir*.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly enough, in this case *Knesset Israel* is a corporate representative of the entire people and is construed in a masculine manner. It seems that the covenant-theology, which is based upon a marriage image, has been transferred here to the Father–Son relationship. This passage is quite a telling example of Jewish thinkers reading sonship-events in the Hebrew Bible in the manner Christianity has done, but while the latter deals with only one incarnated Son, the former deals with the corporate entity that is a nation. The affinity

between sonship and corporate personality is quite evident in the following Midrashic treatment. Commenting on Jer. 31.19, another rabbinic author wrote that:

even if Israel are thousands of thousands, and tens of thousands of thousands, they count in the eyes of the Place [God] just as one single son, as it is written<sup>44</sup> ‘God your Lord multiplied you’ . . . all these<sup>45</sup> were in His eyes just as one single [person] as it is written<sup>46</sup> ‘Israel My firstborn son’ and it is written<sup>47</sup> ‘Send My son and he shall worship Me’. And this is the reason why it is said<sup>48</sup> ‘I was a son to my father’.<sup>49</sup>

Of special interest here is the sonship of each of the Israelites, their great number notwithstanding. On the one hand, we may speak about the uniqueness of each of them in the eyes of God, who takes care of each one individually, a view found in other Midrashic discussions describing the Sinaitic revelation.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, all these individuals are recorded as one entity and depicted in the singular, pointing to a single corporate personality as a son. The interface between the individual and the community is quite strong and is exemplified by a further rabbinic text. Just as in the passage above the emphasis is on the continuation of the nation more than individual salvation, the following passage similarly states:

R. Parnakh said in R. Johanan's name: ‘He who is himself a scholar, and his son is a scholar, and his son's son too, the Torah will nevermore cease from his seed, as it is written: “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”<sup>51</sup> What is meant by “saith the Lord”? – The Holy one, blessed be He, said, I am surety for thee in this matter. What is the meaning of “from henceforth and for ever”? – R. Jeremiah said: From henceforth [i.e., after three generations] the Torah seeks its home.’<sup>52</sup>

The double sonship that involves three generations is reminiscent of the triple generations we discussed in Ashkenazi sources in Chapter 2 above. A similar point is made elsewhere in rabbinic literature:

Now, is the grandfather under this obligation? Surely it was taught: ‘And ye shall teach them your sons’,<sup>53</sup> but not your sons' sons. How then do I interpret [the verse], ‘and thou shalt make them known unto thy sons, and thy sons' sons’?<sup>54</sup> As showing that

to him who teaches his son Torah, the Scripture ascribes merit as though he had taught him, his son and his son's son until the end of all time! – He agrees with the following Tanna. For it was taught: 'And ye shall teach them your sons': hence I only know, your sons. How do I know your sons sons? From the verse: 'and thou shalt make them known unto thy sons and thy sons' sons'. If so, why state, 'thy sons'? – To teach: 'thy sons, but not thy daughters. Joshua ben Levi said: He who teaches his grandson Torah, the Scripture regards him as though he had received it [direct] from Mount Sinai, for it is said; "and thou shalt make them known unto your sons and your sons' sons", which is followed by, "that is the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb".<sup>55</sup> R. Hiyya ben Abba found R. Joshua ben Levi wearing a plain cloth upon his head and taking a child to the synagogue [for study]. "What is the meaning of all this?" he demanded. "Is it then a small thing," he replied: "that it is written: 'and thou shalt make them known to your sons and your sons' sons'; which is followed by, that is the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb?" From then onwards R. Hiyya ben Abba did not taste meat before revising [the previous day's lesson] with the child and adding [another verse]. Rabbah son of R. Huna did not taste meat until he took the child to school.'<sup>56</sup>

This special attention to continuity achieved by leaving behind a learned son is to be compared to another early rabbinic statement, which has reverberated in many writings, according to which an individual who leaves a son who is studiously immersed in the Torah is considered to live on.<sup>57</sup> In some later versions,<sup>58</sup> the son is described as a righteous son and the nexus between son and *Tzaddiq* created a nice proof-text for eighteenth-century Hasidism, where the dynasty has been a matter of family inheritance since the late eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Competing as these two images of the perfect son may be, they both see in the son's spiritual achievement a spiritual continuation or even expansion, and not only procreation per se.

Let me finish this brief survey of sonship, continuity and teaching the Torah, with a discussion of a short passage of R. Elijah ben Shlomo, known as the Gaon of Vilnius, one of the most revered and outstanding figures in eighteenth-century Jewish culture and onwards. A paragon of Jewish learning in all its major forms, R. Elijah wrote a commentary on Proverbs where we find the following explanation of 30.4, a text that has already attracted our attention on several previous occasions:

Who is the person whose name is like his, namely like him to

know the arcana of knowledge in the paths of God; 'and what is the name of his son' – since in each and every generation Moses will embody<sup>60</sup> himself in a great sage of that generation and he is called 'his son' and this is the name of his son, namely the sage within whom Moses has embodied.<sup>61</sup>

Instead of the more common assumption that Moses' spark is found in every sage, here the concept of sonship has been explicitly introduced. No wonder that the famous Lithuanian author recreated sonship in his own image, as the most learned person of his generation. Moreover, there is good reason to assume that by creating a category of trans-historical sons of Moses that return generation after generation, he may have thought about himself as the son. One of the greatest experts ever in matters of Judaism, he was certainly acquainted with the gematria 'Eliyahu = Ben and this was, after all, his own name.<sup>62</sup> Let me elaborate on his proposal regarding the existence of a category of sonship that recurs every generation: this is an open category which may be filled by Torah study and dedication to the knowledge of the secrets of God, namely Kabbalah, both domains in which R. Elijah excelled. There can be no *ultimate* paragon of learning that serves as the seal of Judaism's scholars, as Muhammad was the seal of prophets in Islam. Learning is an ever-expanding enterprise and, accomplished as someone may be, he can never claim that he is the last and definitive scholar, but just one of the numerous avatars of Moses' soul passing on Torah generation after generation.

This position parallels the view according to which in every generation there is a candidate for Messiah, again an example of a category available for filling.<sup>63</sup> According to other views a spark of Moses' soul is found in the sages.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, though dealing with an open category as stressed above, R. Elijah's elitist view may constitute a reaction to the more democratic vision of the contemporary Hasidic masters who described the presence of Moses' spark in every generation within the soul of each of the Jews.<sup>65</sup> According to an elaborate discussion by the same master, this expansion is also related to the soul of the Messiah.<sup>66</sup> If our inference as to R. Elijah's understanding of himself as one of the sons of Moses, or Moses's son in this generation, is correct, we may assume that in his school there was not only a theoretical interest in the topic but possibly also a more personal stake in describing this category. It would be illuminating to compare R. Elijah of Vilnius's understanding of sonship as related to Moses' presence in each generation to Maimonides' vision of Moses. Maimonides – whose first name was Moses – believed that Moses was the ultimate Jewish legislator and that the Torah as formulated by him is immutable, meaning that no sonship is necessary to perfect the primordial revelation. In a way Maimonides, who so

strongly opposed Christianity, worked with a concept of Moses' finality, perfection or supremacy that is more characteristic of the vision of sonship in Christianity, or of the vision of Muhammad's prophecy in Islam. A Kabbalist like Elijah of Vilnius was much more open to a process of perfecting the Torah in its broader sense by the recurring Moses.<sup>67</sup> Much of what he wrote concerns the amendment of the corrupted versions of kabbalistic books like the *Zohar*. It should be pointed out that, great an opponent to Ḥasidism as R. Elijah was, his vision of the one single representative of Moses in each generation is reminiscent of the Ḥasidic theory of *Tzaddiq ha-dor*, the Righteous of the generation, sometimes described also as the universal righteous, *ha-Tzaddiq ha-kolel*.

After emphasizing the deep discrepancy between the rabbinic corporate sonship and more democratic forms of sonship in Judaism, versus the Christian 'only-one-son', the question may be asked whether both are: (a) a continuation of the biblical forms of sonship (b) equidistant from it, or (c) if one of the two is more consonant with biblical types of sonship. A politically correct scholar would avoid such a question and the possible subsequent accusation of having theological predilections, by not attempting to establish the authority of one of the two religions over the other. Nevertheless, I shall try to express my opinion on the topic since I trust that the discerning reader will understand by this point that I care little about the authority of theological analyses. If the scholars who postulate the importance of the corporate personality in biblical writings are correct, and I assume they indeed are, then in the Hebrew Bible the center of gravity is the community or the nation and not the individual in its particularity. Being part of the greater national entity is conceived to be the main way of participating in religious life, through which the individual finds or shapes his or her identity. As seen at the end of Chapter 6, both ancient Jews and Christians had some form of theory about the corporate personality: *Knesset Israel* in early rabbinic views and the *Ecclesia* in early Christian thought.

However, the process of becoming a member of one of the two communities differs dramatically. For most of the Jewish concepts of *Knesset Israel*, Abraham Abulafia being an exception,<sup>68</sup> belonging to a nation is strongly related to an event that took place in the past: someone born Jewish is conceived of as being elected and as having a priori a superior status. Sonship is a quality related to a divine decision in the glorious national past. In Christianity, in contrast, becoming part of the ecclesia is based upon choice and faith in the present in the redeeming role of the Savior as the Son of God. It indeed starts with baptism but is not grounded in any form of primordial myth of national unity or corporate personality that reverberates and is renewed through generations. In Christianity, the main subject of redemption is the individual, not the collective that is conceived of as the

emerging ecclesia. In a way, the majority of Jewish understandings of sonship and of the collective personality are Platonic, assuming some form of pre-existence of the community, while in Christianity the pre-existence is postulated for the Only Begotten Son, but Aristotelian for all others. In comparison with biblical views the assumption of the nation's pre-existence is a new notion brought to Judaism by rabbinic thought, though some references to Israel as an angel predate Rabbinism. However, the pronounced Christian departure from the corporate personality as the most important foci of religious life seems to me an even stronger departure than Rabbinism from biblical thought as found in the Hebrew Bible. To be sure, both understandings represent significant shifts in comparison to the main attitude toward national identity as articulated in the Hebrew Bible. However, if early Christianity and apocalyptic literature are more 'Enochic', hypothetical Older Testament, as Margaret Barker emphasized, Rabbinism is much closer to the Old Testament than to the hypothetical Older Testament, to resort to her locution. Yet many forms of Jewish mysticism turned more and more 'Enochic' and these concepts of sonship appear in these literatures at times in the context of the ascent of the figure of Enoch. From this point of view, we may speak about a convergence between some forms of Jewish mysticism, especially the ecstatic forms and Ḥasidism, on the one hand, and early Christianity on the other, despite the fact that the affinities do not necessarily reflect the lateral impact of Christianity, but rather phenomenological similarities caused by dealing with similar materials.

Last but not least in this context, I would like to make a psychological observation: while the Jewish authors mentioned above wrote out of concern with their status in the present as Sons of God and fathers and grandfathers, the Christian authors aspired to become Sons of God by His grace. This is but another formulation of rabbinic Judaism's emphasis on the more concrete moments of life. The strong family imagery, fraught with sexual overtones found in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah examined in Chapter 4 above, reflects the main thrust of rabbinic thought: a dynamic and inclusive monotheism that resonates with a parallel anthropology. In more elite forms of Christianity, monks and nuns reflect values consistent with Christian anthropological beliefs: a celibate Son, a virgin mother, and a transcendental father, whose interpersonal relations are by and large quite static. From this point of view, Christianity is more Platonic, while Judaism is more Aristotelian.

#### 4. Some linguistic observations

In the vast majority of Christian texts – some Gnostic speculations and the sixteenth-century propagandist of the *devotio* to the name of Jesus, St

Bernardine of Siena being quite rare exceptions – the tragic details of the life of Jesus, rather than of the inner structure of the name, became the topics afforded the most importance. By identifying Jesus with the incarnate Logos in early Christianity, the literary aspects of the Logos are attenuated, as the ‘Logos become flesh’, as also is the status of the holy book, namely the Hebrew Bible, which turned, according to its ‘deeper’ sense, into a reservoir of prefigurations of the emergence and vicissitudes of the son. The one single, messianic son became an exegetical code around which many unrelated topics in the Hebrew Bible have been brought together. The marginalization of the Hebrew language in Hellenistic Judaism, and the transition of part of Christianity to a variety of other languages – Greek, Latin, or Syriac – did not encourage speculations on the ‘unique’ character of linguistic units, important as they might be conceived to be in theory. The term *Ben* in the various forms of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, in Abraham Abulafia and in the followers of both, played a similar though much more modest role in the general economy of their thought, in comparison to Christianity. What are the differences between the two main ways in which the concept of the son was inserted within the Hebrew Bible, beyond the discrepancy between the central roles this figure played in the two religions?

First and foremost, the meaning of this figure in the Jewish literatures mentioned above has been ‘disclosed’ by a certain type of semiosis, which brings together different words in canonical books on the basis of linguistic speculations, of which gematria is the prominent example. Jewish types of sonship are much less interested in the dramatic life of the son than in the properties of his name in Hebrew. In these Jewish sources his essence is less metaphysical and his ‘private’ life much less important, as reflected in the belief that it is possible to fathom his nature from a contemplation of the inner structure of quite a simple linguistic unit. The theophoric nature of *Yaho’el* and *’Eliyah*, and emphasis on the two Tetragrammata that amount to 52, like *Ben*, are rather oblique manners of guessing or explicating his divine nature. From another point of view, the instances of linguistic iconism as found in the writings of R. Nehemiah and Abraham Abulafia reflect another dimension of the specificity of the Jewish approach to sonship. Also the various puns on the possible implications of the permutations of the consonants of the root *BKR*, related to *Bekhor*, the firstborn, *Keruv*, and *Barukh*, or *Rokhev*, found in both Ashkenazi and Spanish texts mentioned above, are impossible for someone who has not mastering Hebrew to understand. To be sure, there are also many instances in Christianity where the name and title of Jesus is written over his icon, but this designation does not diminish the central role of the anthropomorphic picture or sculpture.

Thus, we may conclude that the realm of Hebrew language, as

articulated in the canonical writings, is conceived of as a domain of contemplation that can facilitate the understanding of the most important esoteric issues, and in the specific case of sonship, sometimes represented by the very name of the entity it refers to. In comparison to this propensity toward linguistic speculation, it is interesting to see how little may be detected in Christian literature about the linguistic constituents of the very name of Jesus. No doubt ontological structures were also involved in this linguistic-oriented enterprise, as is especially the case in regard to Abulafia. However, even taking into account the central role played by Greek types of metaphysics in his Kabbalah, much of his message was explained by resorting to linguistic strategies. In the book of the *Zohar*, the ascent of the importance of the figure of Enoch, namely his being taken by God, is understood in terms of having been called by God’s name.<sup>69</sup> Let me emphasize that most of the authors discussed above regarded their theory of sonship as part of their mystical legacy, though they did not consider it as a highly esoteric issue. The detailed analyses offered above are not the result of the necessity to disclose a deep secret, or a mystery, but they are part and parcel of the normal discourse of those Kabbalists, and such elaborated analyses are necessary in order to adequately understand many other topics too. Moreover, most of the methodological discussions so far, especially in Chapters 1–4, are not matters characteristic of this specific topic, but more general, regarding the initial stages of scholarship in this field.

Another topic that distinguishes Christian from Jewish discussions of sonship is the emphasis on iconicity in the Christian treatments of the theme, and the representations of sonship in numerous and different graphic forms. In contrast, in Jewish sources we may find quite rare instances of anthropomorphic linguistic images, but there is hardly even a single instance of representation of the son as an anthropomorphic being by resorting to visual means before the end of the sixteenth century. I am not acquainted with a single instance in which the anthropomorphic concept of *Ze’vir ’Anppin* as a son has been represented iconically in medieval Jewish sources, though this happens much later, in pre-modern discussions. By remarking on the absence of iconicity in the graphical representation of concepts of sonship – unlike the existence of some few examples of anthropomorphism – I do not deny the place of linguistic iconicity as mentioned above, neither do I mean to deny the importance of linguistic iconicity in Judaism in general, and especially the role played by the scroll of the Torah representing God graphically in some kabbalistic discussions.<sup>70</sup>

This linguistic propensity notwithstanding, we should remember that understanding means, in its highest forms, coping with complexities that are created by systems. The physiology of speculative systems is the ultimate goal of such an understanding, which must start with anatomy but can

hardly stop with it. In our case the concept of sonship, so crucial for the entire theological structure of Christianity, is negligible in rabbinic Judaism. My efforts above to assemble the various examples in which sonship is important in Jewish mysticism only demonstrate the status of this theme as secondary. However, what seems to me even more important is the understanding of the various manners in which this theme is integrated into broader systems, as well as how it is represented as a response to the Christian claim of *Venus Israel*.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike biblical and certain post-biblical visions of the varieties of sonship, where it is connected organically to the father, many of the later Jewish discussions adopted the concept of sonship within more general systems of representation and manifestation of the divine, like the assumption that the son is identical to a divine name or to an angel, and later on, to a divine attribute, a *sefirah*, or a separate or cosmic intellect. In these cases, the concept of the son as an extension of the divine is caught within new cosmic webs, which deal with the different manners in which God acts upon lower planes. As seen above, after late antiquity, Jewish thought adopted much more elaborate maps of the divine realms as part of an attempt to create more ordered understandings of the nature of God, the universe and man.<sup>72</sup> Within such comprehensive cosmic nets, the son is no longer an organic continuation of the divine but, rather, is understood in line with less personalist systems, which reduce the personal aspects implied in this concept. The concept of the Son becomes depersonalized in order to play a role in systems in which the will of God and sometimes of man is less important, while other concepts, like intellect, emotion or power, come to the fore. As in the case of Christianity, there are various examples in medieval literature, which we have mentioned above, that deal with messianic aspects of sonship. However, a common denominator in many of the previous discussions is a concept of the Son which represents views of perfection and plenitude, much more so than passion and suffering, which often figure prominently in Christian theologians' vision of the life and activity of Jesus Christ. Unlike the earlier sorts of sonship discussed in the first part of this book and the Christian discussions dealing with *via passionis*, medieval Jewish treatments of the topic emphasize what may be described as *via perfectionis*, though the *via passionis* still remains tightly connected to some aspects of Jewish Messianism in its popular forms and in some Hasidic discussions.<sup>73</sup>

The strong divergences between these distinct concepts of sonship were acutely discerned by Pico della Mirandola, one of the first Christian intellectuals to become acquainted with the kabbalistic reverberations of sonship as well as with the Hermetic type of sonship on the one hand, and the more dominant vision of Christ in Christian thought on the other. As

shown, such a distinction becomes a topic addressed by Renaissance Rabbis including R. Yehudah Moscato and, to a certain extent 'Azariah de Rossi, and later on Leone da Modena.

In Christianity the concept of sonship is closely intertwined with the drama of the life of one person, already completed in the past. This nexus is part of a dogma that attempts to establish the centrality of the past event of the advent of the Son of God and to decode its most profound meanings. These meanings may vary, as we learn from the importance of a cosmic Christ for Origen in Caesarea, for Cambridge Platonists in seventeenth-century England and their contemporary Christian Kabbalists mentioned in Chapter 5 above, or for a twentieth-century scientist like Teilhard de Chardin in a scientifically oriented society such as France<sup>74</sup> within the Christian camp. Those views differ from each other even more than the concepts expressed by the Greek word *Christos* in Christian texts, and the Hebrew *Mashiyah* in Jewish literatures. Thus to clarify my suggestion, the variety of meanings in both Christian and Jewish texts on sonship may create overlapping zones in which some Christians and Jews have views closer to each other than such Christian and Jewish views are to those of their respective coreligionists. For example, I would say that aspects of sonship in Philo, Origen and Abulafia are, phenomenologically speaking, closer to each other than concepts that these thinkers were able to find in the writings of authors in their respective religions. Though this is certainly evident on the conceptual level, the lack of communication between the views of the Alexandrian thinkers and Abulafia, due to the inadequacy of the latter's linguistic skills, and because of the strength of religious inhibitions, did not allow anything like a dialogue between the similar views on sonship held in those religions.

Last but not least: it should be pointed out that in Judaism no term for sonship is available. Interestingly enough, the Greek term used by Christians that is closest to sonship, *Parrhesia* – which means originally boldness, straightforwardness, fearless confidence, assurance, from which Michel Foucault has derived the usage of the word in his philosophy – has been adopted in Hebrew in the Talmudic texts, but in its original Greek sense as 'public'. Neither in ancient Hebrew nor in its various transformations can the abstract form that designates the quality of being a son be found. In the earlier forms of Hebrew this absence is no doubt part of the more concrete orientation of this language, which was scarce in abstract nouns. However, since the Middle Ages this situation changed dramatically, but not in this specific case. Even in modern Hebrew, which generated new lexical forms for fatherhood and motherhood, 'Abbahut and 'Immahut, respectively, no corresponding noun for sonship has been coined. This absence is not just a matter of resistance to a certain type of theology, since it is also of the

description of the basic family relationship, and as such its absence is the absence of a term for a basic human situation. Important as having a son is in the axiology of Judaism in most of its forms, no corresponding linguistic category has been shaped to express it.

### 5. *On models and sonship*

A perusal of a small segment of the vast scholarly literature on sonship in Christianity reveals a great variety and richness of views, which cannot be addressed here even in a succinct manner. This variety is, undeniably, much vaster than that found in the Jewish texts discussed above. The distinctions between the various types of material dealing with sonship, as represented by the previous chapters and sections, reflect my general methodological assumption as to the importance of the conceptual or phenomenological variety that informs the Jewish mystical literatures. This variety is conspicuous insofar as many basic topics are concerned, including for example hermeneutics, Messianism, mystical techniques, as well as different forms of imagining sonship reflected in this multiplicity or constellation of ideas. As seen above, especially in the Introduction, I assume that several categories of sonship, none of them necessarily Christological, were available in ancient Judaism and even known by some later Jewish thinkers, even prior to their reinterpretation by means of the speculative models to be mentioned below. We may explain such a variety in two different ways: one that may be designated the 'grapefruit approach', the other by the 'theory of models'. Less concerned with theological consistency, rabbinic exegesis adduces a variety of explanations concerning a particular topic on the very same page, saying nothing about the divergences between interpretations of the same issues found in the wider rabbinic literature. The more important a topic is, namely when it occupies a main place in a certain system, the more it is commented on, such an exegetical approach resulting in greater numbers of differing interpretations offered for its meaning. Importance is thus exemplified by a great number of interpretations, which may be conceived, by a more theological or systematic-oriented mind, as diverging from or even contradicting each other. This grapefruit approach reflects the rabbinic contribution to the subsequent Jewish discourses and it lingered in many kabbalistic and Ḥasidic discussions.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, the variety of understandings offered for one topic can also be described, especially in the Middle Ages, as the result of the impact of different, more coherent models of thought, stemming from a variety of non-Jewish sources, especially of Hellenistic extraction, that were mediated and sometimes adapted in different ways by Muslim authors.<sup>76</sup> When dealing with speculative models, the eclectic nature of the medieval authors

is less prominent, since these models were oriented toward forms of order that organized much of their thought. Neo-Platonism, Neo-Aristotelianism, Hermeticism, Sufism, Pythagoreanism, and astrology were the most influential forms of order inspiring medieval Kabbalists. In some cases, the differences between understandings of the concept of sonship are not only a matter of the idiosyncratic mode of thought of a particular thinker, but also a matter of the application of a specific form of order inherited from speculative sources to this topic. In addition, let me emphasize that there are many aspects that inform conceptions of sonship. Perceptions of the genetic, psychological, social and even economical dimensions of this theme certainly had a strong impact on the religious *imaginaire* of this topic. In principle, there can be only little doubt that such factors are salient for understanding some aspects of sonship. However, given the paucity of information we have about the historical or family background of the Jewish authors who articulated the different discussions of sonship, it is hard to establish significant affinities between the personal experiences and specific situation of a given author and the contribution he made to the concept of sonship through his writings. If we insist on adopting a Freudian position when analyzing those texts, we are almost totally lost, since the childhood of the masters is nearly never documented.

Moreover, their general personal context, even when it is known, does not always illuminate their views. As pointed out in preceding chapters, especially at the end of Chapter 3, some of the Kabbalists were itinerant scholars. My view is that scholars would do better to trace the traditional sources, the adopted conceptual schemes – or orders – from the outside, or in more general terms the models that function as hermeneutical grids and allow access to meaning, more than to focus on their lives or immediate contexts, in order to penetrate the thought of these Kabbalists in a serious manner. To be sure, there is no single sound and general explanation for the wide variety of their discussions, but I propose the theory of models as one more approach to complement existing approaches. Though I would be the last to subjugate the importance of individual experiences to the formulation of a thinker's thought, the question remains: what can we learn by resorting to the available tools in order to understand the written documents expressing such experiences. This is why I propose to clarify the details and logic that inform the systems of thought that underlie the gist of mystics' discussions, as one more way to fathom the meaning of a concept found in those systems.

So, for example, the logic of Abulafia's understanding of sonship is more strongly dictated by his adherence to a variety of Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic modes of thought than by any lateral Christian impact. The intellectualization of the Son of God, either on a cosmic or human level, is a

conspicuous example that reveals the main source of this Kabbalist's thought, which is Maimonides' intellectualistic metaphysics and psychology. The comprehensive scheme dictates to a great extent the meaning of particular themes. This is also the case with other authors who followed him, and with the independent philosophers surveyed at the end of Chapter 3. In these cases, the sexualization of the Son, so characteristic among Abulafia's contemporaneous Kabbalists in Spain, and the importance of the theosophical family scheme in their writings, are irrelevant for understanding his kabbalistic views. The theosophical order informed the nature and functions of the intra-divine Son with valences that are alien to both ecstatic Kabbalah and its speculative sources and their reverberations in Jewish philosophy. Yet, the view of the soul of man as a Son of God expresses a Neo-Platonic approach based on the assumption that souls are emanated from the divinity, while Moses de Leon expresses the assumption that the descent of the spiritual entities upon man depends on concrete and sometimes corporeal aspects (reaching the age of 13 and performing the commandments). With Abraham Abulafia's Neo-Aristotelian model, the act of intellection is the crucial event that generates sonship, a process that depends neither on the *Bar-Mitzvah* celebration nor on the performance of the commandments, though it nevertheless may be connected to the understanding of the meaning of the linguistic material that expresses these commandments. Needless to say, both the Neo-Platonic and the Neo-Aristotelian models of sonship differ from the theosophical and mythical *Ze'vir 'Anppin*, or from the angelic Metatron as a Son of God, in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo. All of them differ from Abulafia's understanding of himself as a Son of God or the Ḥasidic understandings of the Son of the king. Differences, therefore, are not only a matter of an author's individual predilections, though we can more easily learn about the views of an author who adheres to a consistent model of sonship. Different as Abulafia's thought and that of his immediate followers may be from the thought of the early nineteenth-century R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, all these authors share a mainly Neo-Aristotelian understanding of sonship. The latter Kabbalist combined ecstatic Kabbalah with a strong interest in theosophical Kabbalah, especially Zoharic Kabbalah, in an original manner. In Renaissance literature the other forms of sonship, like that of Hermetic extraction for example, were compared to Kabbalah, as, for example, in Pico della Mirandola, Azariah de Rossi, Yehudah Moscato, Leone da Modena, to a certain extent Yehudah Abravanel, [Leone Ebreo], and independently of these specific Italian authors, by Abraham Michael Cardozo.

There is no reason to assume that the grapefruit-approach and the model-approach are mutually exclusive. Rather, they may apply to the same

author. For example, theosophical-theurgical sonship is quite evident in Cordovero, though he also elaborated upon more Hermetic or talismanic views, as seen in Chapter 4. In contrast and as seen above, R. Isaiah Horowitz, a major mediator of more complex elite views and popular forms of Kabbalah, speaks about Adam as the Son of God without reference to the theosophical-theurgical model. Though these occurrences may be simply accumulative, meaning that they appear in different instances in the writings of a single author, they may actually occur in the same context or passage, as evident in Moses Cordovero's combination of theurgy and magic in the passage from *Pardes Rimmonim* dealing with the son and quoted in Chapter 4. We have seen it impact on Ḥasidism, in Chapter 6. Let me emphasize that although I am unable to find in Jewish magical literature a clear and elaborated nexus between the concept of a son of God and the magician, this category nevertheless has occurred since Safedian Kabbalah, where there is an intertwined vision of theosophy and theurgy. Indeed, let me remind the reader that, as Morton Smith made clear in his book *Jesus the Magician*, the nexus between sonship and magic is found in the late antiquity Greek Magical Papyri, and reverberates in early Christianity. The pre-modern examples in Jewish mysticism represent therefore one more interesting instance of this fertile nexus.

Therefore sonship, a broad category in Judaism even before the encounter with the variety of Greek and Hellenistic modes of thought existing in the Middle Ages, adopted additional and diverse meanings inspired by conceptual contexts, which constellated the theological and cosmological discourses of the Kabbalists. There can be no doubt that when encountering Christianity, some form of corporate personality has been related to sonship and theurgy, and that a strong bond has been imagined that regarded the worship of the Jews, understood as sons, as strictly necessary for God Himself.<sup>77</sup> I would say that in Judaism the vision of the corporate personality of the Jewish people is strongly related to the perception of this people as collective sons of God.

Looking at the two main ways for explaining the variety of interpretations of sonship may help attenuate the unilinear picture of the history of Kabbalah proposed by the historiography of Scholem, or the more recent attempts to propose monolithic phenomenological interpretations for major mystical phenomena in Judaism, like Elliot R. Wolfson's strong phallogocentric understanding of Kabbalah and Sabbateanism,<sup>78</sup> or Avraham Elqayam's more recent Sufi-oriented general explanation for Sabbateanism.<sup>79</sup> How exactly these two different comprehensive phenomenological descriptions of Kabbalah in its metamorphoses may coexist or eventually contradict each other is a fascinating aspect of modern cultural and intellectual history, which is beyond the scope of my present analysis.

Yet it is surely a positive development that young scholars propose grand explanations that compete with earlier theories about the nature of Jewish mysticism. In any case, these scholars share a belief in an underlying conceptual coherence in the various parts of the Jewish mystical literatures. While Scholem sees the source of coherence in the Kabbalists' considerable response to history, Elqayam proposes to explain Kabbalah as informed by the alleged Sufi environments that permeated both kabbalistic and Sabbatean literatures, and E. R. Wolfson's, basically Freudian, theory conceives of kabbalistic ontology as a theosophy reflecting the ideal structure of an 'androgynous phallus' as the major symbol that informed the thought of numerous Kabbalists.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly enough though most of the above passages deal with concepts of hypostatic sons, sometimes depicted explicitly as a male divine potency, in none of them could I find an emphasis on male phallocentrism or even androgynous phallocentrism. This does not mean that I think that Wolfson's theory is totally wrong, but rather that it is limited to some instances in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, and moreover, that phallocentric interpretations should not be imported by relying too heavily on oblique connections in cases in which such are not explicitly mentioned, as discussed in Chapter 4 above.

In my opinion, each of these three comprehensive explanations contributes valuably to the understanding of various limited aspects of kabbalistic literature. Yet these explanations exaggerate the importance of specific themes found in the literature they scrutinize beyond what I consider to be reasonable. By doing so, the three scholars reduce the complexity of much richer conceptual points of view to relatively well-defined topics deemed to be quintessential. In contrast, a scholarly methodological theory, mine or another, that promotes the necessity of multiple models in order to encompass the diversity of earlier schools of Kabbalah and the variety of non-Jewish contexts may better enhance our understanding of such conceptual diversity and our perception of related complexities than the assumption of a hypothetical coherence found in such literatures. Unlike the assumption of types of strong coherence reminiscent of the *prisca theologia* on the one hand, or on the other, scholarly views that envision Kabbalah in strongly historicist terms and are unable to explain why kabbalistic systems reverberated in so many countries over so many generations, I propose the theory of multiple models as explanatory frameworks for understanding the historical structure of kabbalistic discourses and the phenomenological differences between them. This also means taking into account multiple histories that reflect the different trajectories of the variety of themes and schools understood as part of the literature that constitutes Jewish mysticism. These models too should not be seen as coherent in the philosophical sense, as offering a consistent

worldview, but as more modest moments of Gestalt-coherence, out of diverging themes, stemming from variegated sources. In other words, it is more a matter of ritualistic consistency than of theological scrupulousness that worked out systems present in most of the kabbalistic and Ḥasidic literatures, Cordovero's and Luria's writings being exceptions.

To be sure, by focusing attention on the special role played by concepts of sonship, I am not suggesting the discovery of a new comprehensive clue for understanding the developments of Kabbalah. Reluctant as I am to admit the importance of 'clues' in general and of hidden clues in particular for analyzing complex cultural processes that take place over centuries,<sup>81</sup> I strive to break away from a propensity to emphasize the importance of major clues for kabbalistic thought, endeavoring, on the contrary, to point out the importance of differences, and of turning points that triggered new interpretations of earlier mythologoumena against their different conceptual backgrounds. Likewise, I have pointed out the absence of theories of sonship in some forms of early Kabbalah in order to prevent a misinterpretation of my present project. Unlike most Christian theologies and mysticism, kabbalistic literatures, in all its forms, do not gravitate to the concept of son/s as indispensable components of the Jewish religion. Similarly, I attempt to reduce as much as possible what I called oblique connections between various major terms, such as *Ze'vir 'Anppin* and supernal Son, if the two concepts were not specifically connected to each other by the Kabbalists themselves, in order not to give the impression that concepts of sonship are necessarily hidden in places where they do not explicitly appear, and to avoid creating new views and conceiving them as the views of earlier Kabbalists, in the manner in which later Kabbalists did. What I have tried to do is highlight the importance of sonship, especially when it has been related to theophoric mediators, and the reverberations of this nexus in Jewish mysticism.

#### 6. Some modern expressions of sonship

Let me adduce an interesting example of the recurrence of a theosophical view of sonship found in the work of the most important modern Jewish poet, the early twentieth-century Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik. Born and educated in a traditional environment in Russia, a student in the famous academy of legalistic studies known as the Yeshivah of Volozhin, he later became one of the most eloquent figures of the new Jewish culture in Hebrew, with strong Zionist propensities, especially as developed in Israel. In one of his letters he reminisces:

Sometimes it seems to me that, behold, I am a single son to the

Holy One, blessed be He, and the child of amusement of His *Shekhinah*, and behold She is also with me here, covering me with her wings, and safeguarding me like the pupil of her eye.<sup>82</sup>

The experience of being the son of the divine theosophical couple is, perhaps for the first time in modern Jewish texts, expressed as a first-person confession. I have little doubt that this childhood feeling is cast in kabbalistic terms, which may have been acquired by Bialik much later in his life. Moreover, it seems that Bialik felt himself to be not just a son of the divine couple, but the single son, a formulation that comes closer to the Christian view of sonship.

This feeling of intimacy, however, is not just a piece of nostalgia, and it is possible to surmise that it inspired one of his best poems, entitled 'Put me under your wings'. Presumably addressed to a woman and written in a period when he was no longer a believer, the mature Bialik resorts nevertheless to traditional themes when he writes:

Put me under your wings, and be my mother and sister  
Let your bosom be the refuge of my head  
The nest of my rejected prayers.<sup>83</sup>

Reminiscent as the images used in these lines are of traditional views, they in fact reflect a feeling of crisis, or orphanage, that is quite different from Bialik's recollections of his childhood. It may be, if we extrapolate from this example, that one of the most interesting crises undergone by segments of the Jewish population in modern times relates to this very shift from their sense of being the Sons of God, to a feeling of orphanage or at least disenchantment. If Bialik's biography reflects something much deeper than a personal disenchantment with his previously held belief in his uniqueness as a son, then he expresses his feeling of the death of God, the Father. Does the erosion of confidence in election and sonship create the need for refuge under the wings of a flesh-and-blood woman instead of under the protection of the divine *Shekhinah*? Does the basic Zionist assumption not teach that the new man is responsible for his fate by entering historical activity, a mature approach, which differs from the sheltered position of the son protected by parents?

It seems, to revert to Freud's view, that the problem of many modern Jews is less their loss of confidence in the existence or power of the Father as the center of religion, as it is their questioning of whether they are indeed His sons. To be sure, the sonship of the collective Jewry or of individuals belonging to it was never rejected by the vast majority of Jewish thinkers in an explicit manner, and when such rejection occurred it was limited to specific forms of sonship conjugated with other religious events character-

istic of Christianity (see the Introduction). In my opinion, it may well be that it is not the acceptance of a concept of sonship but the weakening of its relevance that created a sense of crisis in some Jewish circles. Was not the hypostatic son expelled from the most Greek-oriented versions of Islam and Judaism in the Middle Ages, and from the central European forms of this religion in modern times from the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment onwards? Metatron, for example, is totally absent in Maimonides' philosophical version of Jewish theology as well as in Moses Mendelssohn's thought or that of Solomon Maimon or Herman Cohen. In other words, at least in Judaism the hypostatic understandings of sonship are part of complex forms of kataphatic theologies, and they dissipate when those theologies are removed because of the encounter with more philosophically oriented theologies. This disappearance is sometimes part of a sharp spiritualization of religion, which in some cases has inspired conversion to Christianity, at least according to the analysis of Franz Rosenzweig.<sup>84</sup> With the dissipation of the significant role played by the traditional mediators in the beliefs of some Jewish communities under the spell of the Enlightenment, (angels, *sefirot*, separated intellects, and the privileged status of the righteous) the discussions about the hypostatic son disappeared as well. Attempts to fill this gap with dialogical understandings of Judaism, like Martin Buber's approach in his *I and Thou*, turned out to be intellectually fascinating though sociologically of very little impact. This vacuum was filled mainly by Franz Kafka's vision of the absurd, which was accompanied or perhaps even triggered by an agonistic attitude to his father on the one hand, and an Oedipus complex on the other.<sup>85</sup>

Christianity, the religion of the ultimate unique and hypostatic incarnate son, and Judaism, the religion of the democratic sons, as well as the various hypostatic views of sonship described above, generated in the specific cultural ambiance of early twentieth-century Vienna a new religion, Freudianism. According to this new religious outlook, a psychological mythology of sonship and its complex relationship to the father became the basic facts for both individual and collective development. This understanding of man and religion became itself a religion, with its hierarchy, orthodoxy, heretics and followers. A Greek myth about a son, Oedipus, was envisioned as the clue for understanding the Jewish myth about the father of the nation, Moses. Unlike the Greek philosophies that served as hermeneutical grids for concepts of son, and transformed the mythical elements into more intellectual issues as seen in Chapter 3, Freud's theory reduced myth to psychology, but found its clues in the mythical aspects of Greek culture. His hermeneutical grid, like Abraham Abulafia's, gravitated around inner processes. East of Prague and Vienna, in the Ukraine provinces, the figure of the Hasidic *Tzaddiq* became more of a living Son of

God, though never as far as I know an ultimate and unique or incarnate one. Problems related to dominant fathers did not preoccupy Ḥasidic thinkers, who apparently were not familiar with the Oedipus' complex. Other modern forms of Judaism, however, took different paths.

Concepts of sonship did not completely disappear in the transformations that constitute modern Judaism: Freud identified the Jewish belief in national sonship as responsible, among other causes, for anti-Semitism. Whether this Jewish self-perception is a significant source of anti-Semitism, as he claimed, is certainly an open and quite interesting question.<sup>86</sup> Indubitably, Freud was not totally wrong, but such complex problems never have one simple answer in any case. At least according to a recent interview by the famous Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, a former admirer of Israel, and now its adversary, this may be an important factor. Answering a question posed by the Israeli journalist Ari Shavit, 'In your opinion, what is it that holds us Jews together?', he responded: 'It is the feeling that you are the Sons of God [*benei ha-'Elohim*]. That you are chosen.'<sup>87</sup> Immediately afterwards he qualified his statement by limiting it to religious Jews.

We might comment here that Theodorakis is apparently a Freudian without even knowing it, and he provides an unusual example of support for Freud's claim as to the cause of anti-Semitism. However he does not view this as just a social affair (as seems to be the case – in his opinion – with the Freemasons), but conceives of Jewish existence as something that cannot be understood, 'something metaphysical'.<sup>88</sup> The concept of sonship as referring to Judaism did not, therefore, totally disappear in modern contexts, as these examples from both Freud and Theodorakis demonstrate. It just dramatically changed forms. Whether they expressed their intuition about Judaism or their own hidden, projected 'desire of sonship' is a question that transcends our preoccupation here. Such a desire does not necessarily contradict the search for power by male mystics, or their conception or projection of the existence of a male mediator rather a neutral or a feminine one.

These two encounters, between Judaism/Greece on the one hand and sonship on the other, while explicitly mentioning Judaism, do not, however, affect Judaism's traditional understandings of sonship. In contrast, however, the medieval encounter between Greek Aristotelianism and Judaism left an indelible mark on Jewish thought, via Maimonides, and even shaped the view of sonship of the entire school of ecstatic Kabbalah, as seen in Chapter 3.

### 7. *Some final remarks*

I have attempted to examine the available evidence on sonship in Jewish mysticism from more than one point of view: to study their detailed expressions, to analyze the more general structure of the thought of the author or of the school to which these testimonies pertain, and to compare material from time to time to other discussions from outside Judaism. However, not everything that could be done has been accomplished in this study. Though I have put some emphasis on the linguistic aspects of the discussions, without which it is hard to understand the very meaning of the Hebrew texts under scrutiny, I have emphasized much less the literary aspects as a whole of the texts under scrutiny, for example, the literary genres in which discussions on the Son of God occur.<sup>89</sup> However, beyond those efforts to elucidate the details in their larger contexts I have attempted to identify even broader frameworks (the 'theory of models'), which unify the concept of sonship as found in different Jewish authors and allows for an understanding of the interaction of Jewish thought with wider speculative corpora. I have refrained from applying wider conceptual theories, such as Freudian ones, to the analyzed material, in order not to inflict on it stronger theoretical understandings than the conceptual (mis-)interpretations evident in the way in which traditional religious literatures have approached earlier theories of the son, as seen above.

Bringing together all the material I am acquainted with and that I have thought to be pertinent was therefore more than a first sustained inventory of the available material, but, I would like to think – a tool to facilitate wider reflection on the history of Jewish thought on different themes of the Son of God, and their basic categories in Jewish mysticism. By an examination of and an attempt to map the major developments in the entire spectrum of writings described as Jewish mystical literatures, the Enochic vector can be seen in a much more distinct manner as increasing steadily over the centuries, and readers can also understand the deep affinity of this growth with concerns of sonship. The scholarly fragmentation that affects the way in which the development of Jewish mysticism has been depicted on the one hand, and the isolation of Jewish mysticism from both its religious backgrounds, like rabbinic Judaism, and philosophical elements on the other, has prevented the understanding of the two basic impulses in these mystical literatures. Different as Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah was from the *Zohar*, both sorts of kabbalistic literatures emerged, inter alia, from a common belief that Judaism is constituted not only of the theophanic vector, but also of the apothotic one. Their impact not only reverberated in other formulations of these two major impulses, but also created new formulations such as Ḥasidism. Without seeing the bigger picture we cannot

understand the main strata of Jewish mysticism better. And without understanding the importance of sonship in the Hebrew Bible, which has been duly put in relief by scholars of Christianity, it is hard to understand the recurrence of this theme in medieval and pre-modern Judaism. Each of these strata were written, disseminated and consumed by authors who were embedded in more than one single type of cultural or religious activity. The richness of the spiritual life of many of the figures mentioned above is not always reflected in the manner in which their treatments are analyzed.

When pertinent literatures are taken in isolation, any subsequent analyses of them are less fruitful. Without understanding the earlier discussions about R. Hanina ben Dosa' it is hard to understand a series of images that recur in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, in Cordovero and subsequently in Hasidism. It is not possible to understand a series of Kabbalists without taking into account R. Nehemiah, and Abulafia's philosophical interpretation. In fact, the lineage constituted by the Heikhalot literature and pseudepigrapha material dealing with Yaho'el and Metatron represents a body of work that inspired Ashkenazi authors, ecstatic Kabbalah and some forms of later Kabbalah (including a passage in the Sabbatean apocalypse), as distinct from the theurgical son in other forms of Kabbalah. However, it is hard to understand the status of a certain theme appearing early in the history of a certain lineage of writing, without understanding the entire lineage. Myths are constituted, as pointed out by Claude Levi-Strauss, by all their historical variants, and there is no reason to ignore this methodological warning insofar as the material on sonship in Judaism is concerned. As such, the Jewish mystical traditions on sonship may add some special angles, be they intellectual or theurgical ones, to the much vaster theme of sonship.

Moreover, the neglect of important pieces of information found only in manuscripts means that the understanding of each of the different literatures remains problematic, and prevents a better understanding of the overall picture. The more detailed the history of an idea – a constellation of themes gravitating around a broad concept of sonship – as proposed above (or to cite another example, the Golem, as dealt with elsewhere), facilitates conclusions different to those reached when concentrating on one single school alone. The detailed examination of the significance of the passage on the Son in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, on the philosophically oriented version found in Abraham Abulafia and, following him, in a series of other Kabbalists, demonstrates that what may be considered by scholars as minor texts may nevertheless become more central if an adequate acquaintance with manuscripts and much later printed forms of mystical literature is applied. The relationship between the Ashkenazi and Spanish forms of mysticism may be reassessed,<sup>90</sup> the role of the circulation of manuscripts may be explored in terms of the impact of a certain theme, and the relative

importance of printed material and manuscript may be properly assessed, if a more comprehensive perusal of Jewish mystical literatures is undertaken. But, beyond these undeniably important textual problems, more complex pictures of what was possible and indeed conceived of as plausible in Judaism may emerge. Sonship, a topic that Geza Vermes believed, just a few years ago – to give just one example<sup>91</sup> – to be unacceptable to post-biblical Jews, has actually turned out to be a recurrent theme, certainly less so than in Christianity, but much more so than in Islam.<sup>92</sup> The recurrence of this theme in many texts demands a broader and more complex reflection on the content of many forms of Jewish monotheism.

From a more methodological point of view, the above analyses should be understood in the context of what Henri de Lubac called the 'panphilonist zeal' of Wolfson.<sup>93</sup> This great historian of Western philosophy was interested essentially in philosophical material, which is secondary from our point of view, and the material adduced above is quite marginal for Wolfson's analyses. In general, the latter scholar was not concerned with mystical authors or literatures. Moreover, even when dealing with material shared in the pages above, this topic did not draw his special attention.<sup>94</sup> Wolfson was also less concerned with another important piece for the discussions above, the Hellenistic *Wisdom of Solomon* and its possible impact. Neither is Wolfson's assumption of the profound impact of Philo on medieval philosophy shared as a whole in my discussions, though I do not negate in any way the substantial contributions of this approach insofar as Christian theology is concerned.<sup>95</sup> However, it seems that the mystical aspects of Philo left their imprint on some developments in Western mysticism too, and they should not be marginalized.<sup>96</sup> It is not only a matter of a description of his rapture, of his description of the practices of the Therapeutae, but also of the description of the ecstatic union with God, that could leave its imprint on Plotinus and thus on an entire range of Western mystical traditions, including the Jewish one – though to make it clear, only in an indirect manner.<sup>97</sup> Philo's descriptions of what I proposed to call the double sonship should in my opinion be seen in the context of this broader mystical framework, a framework that allows the few elite direct access to extraordinary spiritual experiences and strong transformations and leads to descriptions of Moses and Enoch as exalted men, the former even as God.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, I propose to see in the theory of double sonship as found in the Jewish Alexandrian thinker a major phenomenological framework for understanding later developments, with the possibility of serving, in principle, at least in some cases in Christian theologies and in Gnosticism – though much less or maybe not at all in medieval Judaism – as a direct historical source. Philo's application of the divine name to the Logos as son is one of the earliest instance of theophorism. One of the main working

hypotheses guiding many of the discussions above, the importance of theophoric language for the understanding of sonship, did not, however, play any significant role in the picture of intellectual history based on the different translation of concepts from one language to another that H.A. Wolfson was interested in portraying. Interested as he was in the status of the Hebrew Bible as the center of the speculative synthesis that Philo forged, Wolfson – and he is not alone in this – was less sensible to the role played by the dimension of the language, especially details related to the divine names, in the self-understanding of ancient and medieval Jews, in means of expression and even in speculations on the nature of sonship. Additionally, some of the more recent scholarly tendencies concentrating on the impact of Christianity on Judaism, in which incarnational and Marian interpretations have been proposed, are dissimilar to my own approach. Without understanding the general framework, as I have insisted at the end of the Introduction, and again in Chapter 4, drawing conclusions about influences may reflect too narrow an approach, to say the least. When compared to the impact of entire structures of thought stemming from Arabic philosophy, which mediated Greek philosophical systems, the possible Christian influences are marginal in shaping the mystical and philosophical systems of medieval Judaism. Even if we could accept the possibility of the lateral impact of Christian sonship in some cases, it cannot explain central transformations that produced theurgical, intellectual and angelic forms of sonship recurring in the literatures scrutinized above. Whatever the sources of inspiration for discussions of sonship may be, their meaning is shaped by their specific context in a certain conceptual system.

Less inclined to delineate stark dichotomies between literatures described as philosophy, magic and mysticism, or between religions like Judaism, Hellenism, Christianity or Islam,<sup>99</sup> the discussions so far deal less with a binary synthesis between Scriptures and philosophy, but with streams of diverse traditions, which were less articulated from a systemic point of view, and which encountered forms of more elaborated Greek and Hellenistic philosophies. I am, to be sure, not a Hegelian thinker, and the term synthesis can be, in many cases, changed for hybrid, were it not for fear of a post-colonial misunderstanding of my discussions. Whilst pointing out the eclectic moment in many of the developments described above, I do not see them as being superior – because of synthetic – to the elements that entered those processes of rapprochement. From this point of view, the mystical complex understandings of sonship are not to be seen as a progressive development over the earlier theories, which sometimes influenced them.

Less concerned with the supremacy of the Hebrew Bible in this synthesis, or the old visions of Judaism as a religion of the book, or the

recent scholarly discoveries of the importance of the body and incarnation in Judaism, my assumption is that the discussions in the present study are related much more to performances,<sup>100</sup> which were imagined to lead to events that sometimes constituted transformations – intellectual ones in Abulafia, more spiritual ones in the main schools of Kabbalah, and more theurgical in other instances – changes instrumental in ensuring the status of a son (in the case of the elite). As is the case in most of its forms, Judaism was a matter of orthopraxis, nomian (commandments or righteousness) or anomian (mystical techniques based on divine names in Abulafia), and these performative aspects are related to the events leading to becoming a son, as we shall see more in the closing paragraph.

One way to see the more general significance of discussions so far is to assume that the synthetic understanding of the Son of God offered in Philo's texts is a dominant position inspiring central matters in the subsequent developments surveyed above. This is no doubt true in the case of Christianity. However, it is hard to prove the same impact on the medieval Jewish discussions up to the late sixteenth century. Here we may better resort to the assumption that other traditions, less articulated and systematic than the views of the Alexandrine thinker, made their way from more than one source to medieval Jewish thinkers, and contributed to their speculations and experiences. From this point of view, the different concepts of son of the medieval Jewish mystics have many fathers.

This also means that there is no one single history of sonship in Judaism or Jewish mysticism, just as there is no such unilinear history in Christianity. In fact, different views of sonship have different histories – mostly non-linear ones – which are not always significantly separated but appear sometimes intertwined. Awareness of the need to address different histories, that in fact reflect different religious phenomenologies and sometimes different forms of syntheses is, to be sure, not only a matter of understanding sonship but also of a long series of topics in the entire kabbalistic literary corpus. However, few of them were evident in the religious consciousness of people living in the geographical areas where the various forms of Kabbalah made their first steps. Thus, attempts to discover lateral influences stemming from Christian sources should take into consideration the more diversified views of sonship that might have been available at the same time to Jewish thinkers. This is the case of Abraham Abulafia, who visited both Catholic (Spain and Italy) and Orthodox countries (the Byzantine Empire), and even more so Abraham Michael Cardozo, who sometimes quotes or describes in an explicit manner different Christian theories of sonship.<sup>101</sup> For the expelled from Spain, who traveled through the Ottoman Empire, which overlaps in part with the former Byzantine Empire (and there were many of them), the possible awareness of the existence of various Christian

theories of sonship, unknown in the Latin West, is plausible. I would say that such theories on one of the most important religious topics in Christianity were far from being homogenous even in a given specific environment, as the persistence of 'heretical' views is evident, especially in Eastern Europe, long after the decline of the strongholds of the Bogomils in the Eastern part of Europe, and of the Albigensians and Cathars in the Western part of the continent.<sup>102</sup> To formulate some of the discussions above dealing with transmission of knowledge, I would say that broadening the geographical area and the span of time that are pertinent for the understanding of religious phenomena may be necessary for a proper understanding of itinerant cultures, spread over many geographical centers and in different cultural circumstances, while in contact with a variety of other cultures. This need to expand the perspective of the academic discussions of at least some themes in Jewish mysticism, both spatially and temporarily, is necessary to account for the surfacing of a topic like sonship in R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi', in some discussions in the book of the *Zohar* about Enoch, or in Abulafia's discussion of the importance of Yaho'el as an angel that revealed his secrets. The persistence of the impact of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, both in late antiquity and in some early medieval authors, is just another example of the need to work with a much broader picture in mind.

In fact, another significant dose of early Greek and Hellenistic material, philosophical, magical and mythological, only scarcely known previously in the Latin West, had forcefully entered European culture since the late fifteenth century, with the emergence of the Florentine Renaissance, largely due to the broad and influential translation projects undertaken by Marsilio Ficino. However, the recommendation to employ a broader perspective to understand Jewish mysticism, should not – and let me strongly emphasize it – eclipse the need to carefully investigate texts and situate them in their specific systemic and other contexts.<sup>103</sup> The broader the cultural panorama brought into the discussion, the easier it will be to explain resemblances between different variants of a certain theme. Or, to put it in different terms: though recommending a widening of the panorama of material under scrutiny, I propose that we should not understate the differences between the differing perceptions of sonship, or of any other topic.

Thus, by operating on the one hand with a perception that theological orthodoxy is much less important in many forms of Judaism, and with the assumption that a variety of older traditions permeated some of the important territories where kabbalistic literatures developed, on the other hand, we may better understand the emergence of various discussions of sonship as a convergence between older Jewish traditions, a variety of Judeo-Christian ones, and lateral Christian influences. However, the

acceptance of rich imageries of filiation should also be understood as part of a need for direct contact with the divine realm, which was more strongly experienced among the mystics. The openness of so many Jewish mystics toward those filial mythologoumena, different from the rabbinic reticence toward theories of sonship, demonstrates in my opinion the need to approach Jewish mysticism as including, inter alia, ways of thought that were more open toward a variety of non-rabbinic sources, especially philosophies. Thus, the scope of Jewish mystical thought has been substantially broadened, and this broadening did not encounter a resistance comparable to that encountered by the medieval appropriation of Jewish philosophies. Such a broadening does not necessarily – and certainly not always – reflect the impact of mystical experiences, but on the contrary sometimes encourages them by providing a wider conceptual framework.<sup>104</sup> The relationship between experience and the wider conceptual framework has been described here as one of the principles that underlies the double sonship.<sup>105</sup> My contention is that the supernal son is meaningless, religiously speaking, if it does not procreate, in the different ways that have been described above, so that his extension below will continue his activity on high, or interact with it.

Last but not least: though the basic materials that served as sources for later developments were written in the Near East in antiquity and late antiquity, the most explicit material for the present study was written in medieval and pre-modern Europe. Excluding the first chapter, the study relies mainly on European material, and this is also true to a very great extent in the case of Safedian Kabbalah, which elaborated on theosophical views already expressed in one way or another in Europe.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, Jewish material written in the Near East since the Middle Ages, like the philosophical treatises – especially the books of Sa'adya Gaon and Maimonides – and the Sufi-oriented Jewish writings – especially authored by the descendants of Maimonides – lack any substantial discussion of sonship. This distribution is highly significant; medieval Jews living in the places where their ancient ancestors forged some aspects of the concept of sonship in late antiquity, in the land of Israel, Babylonia, Yemen and Egypt, were no more interested in the topic, which nevertheless attracted the attention of their contemporaries living in Europe, most of them in Christian countries. Let me emphasize that in Andalusian Spain, where Jewish culture flowered while Muslim culture was dominant there, questions related to sonship were not asked. The only significant discussion of the topic is Averroes' rejection of an intellectual understanding of sonship.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, there is not only the matter of the transmission of religious knowledge from one cultural centre to another over the generations, but also the matter of a new map of Jewish religion that, to

the best of my knowledge, has escaped the due attention of scholars.<sup>108</sup> However, while the areas where the discussions of sonship of God in the Middle Ages and pre-modern period coincide, geographically speaking, with regions in which Christianity was the dominant religion, the various models that shaped the theories of sonship differ from each other, and I would say differ dramatically from the models that inspired the Christian views in the respective areas. Thus, a simple explanation of a direct or lateral Christian impact in so many cases is quite problematic. We may better understand some of these phenomena as emerging out of earlier models, found in Jewish religion, like the magic, angelic and the theurgical ones, seen in the cases of R. Hanina ben Dosa', Metatron/Yaho'el, and the elaboration of the concept of theurgical sonship.<sup>109</sup> Those models developed in Jewish elite culture as it was articulated in Christian Europe but not in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. In a deeper sense, this is not a matter of simple differences between two cultures sharing the same geographical region but also of a profound dis-synchronization on the one hand<sup>110</sup> and perhaps of what the Freudians may call 'formative reaction' on the other.<sup>111</sup>

However, if there is a problem in demonstrating the simple influence of Christian visions of sonship on most of the Jewish models of sonship, we may nevertheless assume that the existence of Christian visions of sonship could trigger the thought of Jewish authors. Methodologically speaking, I have previously proposed an understanding of some peak moments in the development of Jewish mysticism as a consequence of the impact of renaissances taking place in European culture.<sup>112</sup> This does not mean, to be sure, conceptual transition from one culture to another, but the idea of cultural competition between neighboring cultures accelerating developments. This type of explanation sometimes invites a resort to older themes, relegated earlier to oblivion. This is the gist of my explanation of the emergence of early Kabbalah as both part of the European twelfth-century Renaissance and, as one of the most meaningful reactions to Maimonides' thought, the return to older mythologoumena restructured in more complex theosophical schemes.<sup>113</sup>

However, at the same time, we see at the start of the late thirteenth century the beginning of a decline in Muslim cultures in contact with Jewish thought. This development (or lack of) could not have triggered new developments in Jewish thought, as it occurred between the tenth and thirteenth century in such a powerful manner. In any case, while in the Islamicate Near East the assimilation of some of the Jewish elite to the Muslim mysticism in the form of Sufism was rather substantial, which included not only acceptance of an entire series of customs and techniques but also the writing of many books on Jewish mysticism in Arabic,<sup>114</sup> this was quite rarely the case in Europe, where Hebrew and Aramaic remained

the dominant language and there was a reticence toward adopting concepts from Christian mysticism. Furthermore, some of the impact of Muslim mysticism is detectable in Jewish mysticism not only in the East but also in Europe<sup>115</sup> as well as in the Hebrew book of a convert like Abner of Burgos, as analyzed in Chapter 3. It seems that only since the late fifteenth century did the Kabbalists' adoption of speculative elements found in the Renaissance reflect a more substantial affinity to Christian thought.

Let me return now to the question I left unanswered at the end of the Chapter 5: what is my approach when compared with recent developments in scholarship concerned with Jewish mysticism as influenced by Christian themes? This is an inevitable question in this book. As I have pointed out several times, the previous chapters have dealt with different systems, and sonship is just one element that should be understood within each of the specific systems. However, systems are rarely a given, and different scholars may have differing understanding as to what the content of these systems is or, what happens more often, may ignore the existence of such systems at all. When such neglect takes place, the theme is treated in isolation, as in Green/Schaefer's theory of the feminization of the *Shekhinah*, or in the incarnation as a category for the understanding of Kabbalah in E.R. Wolfson. In both cases, the idea of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah is involved, and the emphasis on their different visions comes at the expense of looking at the *context* of the discussions of those themes, of what constitutes one of the two central categories in those systems: the performative nature within which these themes occur, or from my point of view, the other concepts and deeds that those themes are conjugated with and how the links between them and the other elements in the system operate. The fact that the divine family theme discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4 has been ignored in these studies is quite revealing. This means, in my opinion, a misrepresentation of the system, which unifies some of the main topics, and therefore amounts to a misrepresentation of a major form of kabbalistic theosophy. However, it also ignores the 'physiological' element of the system, its inner dynamics and the interaction with the human world, most essentially theurgy.

What happens, we may ask, if the theurgical elements are ignored? Does this dramatically affect our understanding of the main schools of Kabbalah? My answer is yes, and I shall try to clarify the ramifications of such ignorance.

Kabbalists belonging to theosophical-theurgical schools often addressed the significance of the rituals they performed. This was one of the main, if not *the* main daily religious preoccupation, and ignoring it is ignoring the way in which Kabbalah functioned practically in their lives. The theurgical sonship was part of the self-understanding of the connection between the

lower son and the higher one, and this could be achieved only by means of the ritual. Removing the centrality of the performance of rituals and their specific meanings also problematizes the easy acceptance of this form of mysticism in larger audiences in Judaism. The main question for understanding these types of Kabbalah is therefore not whether there is an impact of a Christian view of the son on *Ze'vir 'Anppin*, or whether a certain passage can be labeled as dealing with a theory that can be designated as incarnation, or whether the Maria-cult influenced the 'new' understanding of the *Shekhinah* in the *Bahir*: the specific answers are thematically important, but systemically speaking negligible. L. Wittgenstein's observation that the same bricks can constitute different forms of buildings, is relevant here more than ever. We are losing the wood for the trees. Thematic understanding of issues in Kabbalah does not amount automatically to a structural reading of this lore, just as the discovery of a discussion of ecstasy in a certain Kabbalist book does not make the literature to which it belongs an ecstatic sort of Kabbalah. What I see as fascinating in the neglect of the centrality of the ritual and its impact on high in the main line of Kabbalah – Sabbateanism aside – is a Paulinian systemic understanding of these literatures.<sup>116</sup>

Let me be clear: this does not mean that I assume that all scholars must study the issue of the commandments: this is not my claim at all. Each scholar studies whatever he or she believes is necessary for advancing the field he or she chooses. However, no scholar should lose what seems to me to be the bigger picture when dealing with the details. The choice of a specific preferred topic should never impact on the entire edifice that the scholar deals with. And such ignorance seems to inform, from my point of view, the study of details detached from the broader issues that inform a certain system or literature. Thus, a Christian systemic understanding of Kabbalah, resulting from the removal of a central issue in the kabbalistic literatures from its proper place in a certain system, goes far beyond the thematic Christian understanding of details. Whether the later understanding may be correct in some instances or not is not the main question at all, and I have attempted to point out instances of thematic Christian understandings above. However, I doubt whether a systemic reading of Kabbalah as consonant with Christianity on the systemic level is cogent. And it is here that the moment of understanding a certain speculative literature should strive: to see the picture and not remain content with only the details. If the analytical approach is all we have to offer when investigating a text, we lose the main intention of the author, and become lost in the toilette of the text, rather than addressing the comprehensive picture that may emerge.

Sonship is a perfect example of a study that may confine itself to the

understanding of the details, assuming that pointing out the affinities between the Christian or other sources of a Jewish discussion of sonship exhausts what a scholar can do. My assumption is that discovery of the precise sources, important as they are, is just a preliminary step for reconstructing a more comprehensive aspect of a text: its meaning. To return to the discussion at the beginning of Chapter 4, for example: without understanding that the divine son is found at the confluence of different axes and is defined by them, or operates as part of the divine family, something central in understanding the detached component of a system is distorted. And, surprisingly enough, the centrality of the divine family as an organizing system seems to have escaped scholarship, including that which concentrates exclusively on the male or female aspects, but without considering the importance of the family in the specific contexts.

So far, I have looked at the Christian-oriented misunderstandings of Kabbalah. However, what seems to me a much more important conclusion to the present study is the possible contribution of the discussions so far for a better understanding of Christianity. If some Christian theories about sonship depend so much on Philo, or perhaps also on other Jewish theologoumena, as we have seen in the Introduction, and if some of the later Jewish discussions of this topic are both reverberations of older Jewish themes as well as 'back-borrowings', then the history of the main theological pillar of Christianity should be rewritten. This does not mean that the Christological understanding of the Hebrew Bible is the correct one, but that elements in late antiquity Judaism served as springboards for forms of theological speculation, which imposed themselves later on the Hebrew Bible, transforming many of its verses into proof-texts for a novel elaborated theology. Nevertheless, to cite Guy G. Stroumsa's conclusion in a recent and important article on the possible Philonic source of another tenet of Christianity, 'Traditions such as those retained by Philo about Isaac born of God and a virgin are cause for some dizziness; for it would mean that much of the building itself, not only most of its stones, was a Jewish creation.'<sup>117</sup> It may be that early Christianity recirculated very old themes, Enochic ones, and others related to ancient theories of the king as the Son of God, which constituted a revolution in comparison to the variety of forms of Judaism in late antiquity, in the manner Elijah Benamozeg understood an 'ancient Kabbalah', or M. Barker envisioned the 'Older Testament'. But, it should be emphasized, most of this revolution was carried out by persons who considered themselves Jews. In any case, the part the *imaginaire* of divine sonship played in the discussions above shows that the great divergence between some forms of Judaism and Christianity is not divine sonship, but Christology.

## Notes

- 1 For discussions about conditional or unconditional sonship of Jews conceived by some authors as independent of their deeds, see in BT *Qiddushin*, fol., 36a, a passage whose precise meaning has been debated by many commentators ad locum. On the background of Sonship of God in late antiquity see, especially, Byrne, 'Sons of God' – 'Seed of Abraham'.
- 2 See above, Chapter 3 note 197.
- 3 See his 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz', 1.3, ed. Gross, p. 118.
- 4 See Wilhelm Bacher, 'Judeo-Christian Polemics in the Zohar', *JQR* (OS) 3 (1891), pp. 781–4.
- 5 See Idel, 'The Attitude to Christianity'.
- 6 A study in itself may attempt to survey the use of this verse in different contexts, an issue that transcends our framework here. In any case, checking the wide occurrence of this verse as a proof-text we may feel an attempt to differentiate the sonship of the Jews from that of the Christians. Since the phrase 'El Hai' has been understood in many kabbalistic texts – following Gikatilla – as the symbol for the *sefirah* of *Yesod*, widely understood also as the divine phallus, the sonship is understood in quite an organic manner. See e.g. in R. Meir ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh* 3.39, fol. 100a, and in R. Aharon Shmuel ben Moshe Shalom of Kremenitz, *Sefer Nishmat 'Adam* (Mekhon Siftei Tzaddiqim, Jerusalem, 1989), p. 128. Hasidic masters, especially R. Abraham Yehoshua Heshel, were especially fond of this phrase. See his *Ohev Israel*, passim. However, even more prevalent in Jewish tradition is the expression *Benei Torah*, the sons of the Torah, a phrase widely used in the modern description of students who study Torah in a traditional manner.
- 7 See Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 28–33. For the discussions of the Christian theory of sonship within the context of the theories of attributes in the school of theologians known as Kalam, theories well known by Maimonides, see Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1976), and his *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979).
- 8 See e.g. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, p. 287 note 2 and Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, pp. 159–81. These are two antagonistic scholarly pictures of attitudes to issues related to the son. In a way Boyarin's vision of Rabbinism is close to Lawrence Kaplan's view, which I described above as compact Rabbinism. For the view of 'orthodox Rabbinism' that was 'nervously anxious' in the context of the two principles see e.g. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 324–5. I am much closer to the more relaxed picture of Judaism as less nervous, theologically speaking, as portrayed in Menachem Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (Littmann Library, London, 1999). The scholarly emphasis on the centrality of theology and the efforts to follow its development in rabbinic literature reflects concerns much closer to the Christian thinkers than the Jewish ones in late antiquity.
- 9 BT *Babba' Metzi'a'*, fol. 95b. See also Liebes, *Het'o shel Elisha*, pp. 34–5, 159.
- 10 BT *Yuma'*, fol. 77a and David Halperin, *The Merkhavah in Rabbinic Literature* (American Oriental Society, New Haven, Connecticut, 1980), pp. 170–2 and Boyarin, *Border Lines*, p. 143.
- 11 See Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*, pp. 220–1.
- 12 See, *exempli gratia*, the discussions about Metatron in *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, cf. Kanarfogel, 'Peering through the Lattices', pp. 169–70. See also Idel, 'Metatron a Paris', in eds. J.-P. Boudet, H. Bresc, B. Brevin, *Les anges et la magie aux Moyen Ages* (École Française de Rome, Rome, 2002), pp. 701–16.
- 13 On the non-constellated view of Rabbinism in general and its exegesis in particular see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 221–49.
- 14 See above, note 9.
- 15 See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 80–1.
- 16 That is not to say that the affinity between Metatron and some form of crypto-Christianity is so significant. I see the interpretation of the story of the four sages who entered the Pardes as hiding some form of Christian message, as offered by Samson H. Levey, as exaggerated. See 'Akiba: Sage in Search of the Messiah: A Closer Look', *Judaism* 41 (4) (1992), pp. 334–45; Levey, 'The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition', *Judaism* 21 (4) (1972), pp. 454–69. Since I am not looking for clues and secrets, these two studies remain, at least for the time being, as hypothetical possibilities.
- 17 See above, Chapter 3 note 186.
- 18 Ps. 82.6. See also Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, p. 323 note to p. 199, lines 20–1. This verse is interpreted here as an imperative to attain the status both of the man of the Lord and a son of the Most High.
- 19 'Ish ha-'Elohim, seems to point to Moses because of the view of the Mosaic revelation as an antidote to the original sin.
- 20 The meaning of this statement in the thought of this author is not so much an intellectualization of the religious life, but a refinement of the body so that it will become a spiritualized entity. This is a commonplace in Kabbalah since the sixteenth century and widespread in *ha-Shelah*.
- 21 This is a view regarding Adam in rabbinic literature and Enoch in the Heikhalot literature. See Idel, 'Enoch is Metatron', p. 225.
- 22 Perhaps 'upright standing'.
- 23 Ps. 139.5. The phrase 'Your hand' translates *kapekhhah*.
- 24 *Kaf* amounts to 20, namely two times 10. It is introduced because the word *kapekhhah* starts with *Kaf*. On the earlier variants of the theory of the two decads that will be mentioned immediately before see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 239–47.
- 25 *ha-Shelah*, vol. 2, fol. 72b, *Pesahim, Derush revi'yi*.
- 26 See above, Chapter 3, Section 4.
- 27 *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 3.39, fol. 102a.
- 28 See Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 146, 155–6, 177–8, 303 note 64.
- 29 *Totem and Taboo*, cf. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, tr. A.A. Brill (The Modern Library, New York, 1939), p. 925. See also Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1974), pp. 468–97.

- 30 *La kabbale et les dogmes chrétiens*, Chapter 4.
- 31 His French reference to the Hebrew passage to be translated below is rather questionable, as he introduces terms that are not found in Duran's texts.
- 32 Namely Duran himself.
- 33 See above, Chapter 4 note 317 and Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 354 note 308.
- 34 On the other claims for such a similarity, which does not concern us below, see Moshe Idel, 'Divine Attributes and *Sefirot* in Jewish Theology', in ed., S.O. Heller Willensky, *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 88–111 (Hebrew).
- 35 *Kelimat ha-Goyyim*, ch. 2, printed in Yehudah Eisenstein, 'Otzar Wikkuhim (New York, 1928), pp. 264–5; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 354; Scholem, 'The Beginnings of Christian Kabbalah', p. 29; Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 74–5; and Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 93. See also above, Introduction note 182. See also the early sixteenth-century testimony of R. Shlomo ibn Verga, in the name of a convert to Christianity, that he found a Trinitarian view in Ashkenazi writings. Cf. José Faur, 'A Crisis of Categories; Kabbalah and the Rise of Apostasy in Spain', *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, eds M. Lazar and S. Haliczzer (Labyrinthos, Lancaster, California, 1997), pp. 56–7. On Jesus as a sorcerer in Talmudic traditions see Lauterbach, 'Jesus in the Talmud', pp. 517–28, and for the view that he was a magician see Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, pp. 58, 94–139.
- 36 See above Chapter 2 note 264.
- 37 On Jewish mystical interpreters as strong exegetes see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, passim. See also my discussions above in the Introduction about Rabbinism, Christianity and the Hebrew Bible.
- 38 See the analysis of Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, pp. 110–11.
- 39 See Jn 8.40–42, and Segal, 'The Ruler of this World', pp. 66–7. For the democratization of the concept of sonship in the Hebrew Bible see the interesting remarks of Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, pp. 69–70, 225. For a kabbalistic position that assumes that in principle all the children of Israel are the sons of God see R. Meir ibn Gabbai's *Sefer 'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 3.39, fol. 100a.
- 40 For more on this issue see the detailed analyses of the Tannaitic literature in Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*, passim; Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*, p. 473, and 'Imago Dei Imitatio Dei'; for the view that the early discussion found in 'Avot 3.14 (and 5.20) about Jews as the sons of the Place is a replica of a Christian understanding of sonship see the interesting views of the historian of Jewish thought Neumark, *Toledot ha-Philosophiah be-Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 67–8. See also Cohon, *Essays*, pp. 173–4. For an interesting distinction between the meaning of the phrase 'sons of the Place' and 'sons of Israel', the former pointing to a direct sonship, see the late nineteenth-century Hasidic author R. Joseph Moshe of Zbarov, *Sefer Berit Avram* (Jerusalem, 1972), fol. 92a. It should be mentioned that in a forthcoming article by Israel Hazani, the widespread expression '*Benei Torah*', 'the sons of the Torah', should be understood sometimes as describing an organic affinity between the scholar and the Torah as a mother. For an interesting comparison between the Torah as a daughter of God and Jesus as the son of God, see the note added by the editors to Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, p. 322 note 1. See also Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', pp. 41–2 note 53.
- 41 Jer. 31.8. On this verse in the biblical context see Gruber, *The Motherhood of God*, pp. 3–4. For this verse in the context of the Messiah and sonship see the apocalyptic entitled *Pirquei Mashiah*, printed by Yehudah Even Shmuel, ed., *Midrashei Ge'ulah*, second edn (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1954), p. 338, and Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, p. 225.
- 42 *Midrash Shalosh Pisqa'ot* in Wertheim, ed., *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 1, p. 264. See also the sources referred to above in Chapter 1 note 262.
- 43 See above Chapter 4, Section 2.
- 44 Deut. 1.10.
- 45 Namely examples of excessive multiplication mentioned in a series of biblical verses I have skipped.
- 46 Exod. 4.22.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 4.23.
- 48 Prov. 4.3.
- 49 *Midrash 'Aggadah*, ch. 5.
- 50 See *Pesiqta' de-Rav Kahana*, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum (JTS of America, New York, Jerusalem, 1962), vol. 1, p. 224; *Yalqut Shimeoni*, Exodus, par. 286, p. 172; Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God, Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1993), pp. 131–2.
- 51 Isa. 59.21.
- 52 BT *Babba' Metzi'a'*, fol. 85a.
- 53 Deut. 6.9.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 4.9.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 4.10.
- 56 BT *Qiddushin*, fol. 30a.
- 57 *Genesis Rabba'*, 89.4, p. 503.
- 58 See Rashi's commentary on Gen. 18.19 as well as the Maharal's view in his commentary on the Pentateuch entitled *Gur Arie*, ad locum.
- 59 See e.g. in R. Yehudah Leib of Zekelekov, *Liqqutei Maharil* (Lublin, 1899), fols. 5d–6a.
- 60 Here and below the verb translated as 'embodied' is *hitlabesh*, which means literally 'to clothe itself'. In some few cases in the Middle Ages, this verb is used for designating the Christian understanding of incarnation. Therefore Moses, more precisely his soul, embodied himself into a son. Many Kabbalists resorted to this verb or nouns related to it, in order to describe the embodiment of the spiritual into less spiritual entities. This is the case also in some writings of R. Elijah himself. See above, Introduction notes 182–3.
- 61 *Commentary on Proverbs* (NP, ND), p. 170. See also above, Chapter 4 notes 86 and especially 153, where the Zoharic discussion brings the concept of name and Elijah together, and could inspire R. Elijah's self-perception.
- 62 As we have seen above, one of his major followers, R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, resorted to the gematria *Yaho'el* = *Ben* several times in his writings. See

- above, Chapter 3 note 161. See also now, Liebes, 'The Attitude of the Vilna Gaon', pp. 276–7, and see also above, Chapter 2, the passage from MS. London, British Library 752, translated and analyzed there.
- 63 For the first known instance of such a view see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 150, in a text belonging to Shlomo Molkho. The source may nevertheless be earlier and express a view found in the Nahmanidean type of Kabbalah, or a reverberation of a Zoharic view.
- 64 See Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 41; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, p. 306 note 54.
- 65 See R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, *Me'or 'Einayyim* (Yeshivat Me'or 'Einayyim, Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 15, 88, 115–16.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 196 etc. This issue deserves a much more detailed analysis which cannot be attempted here.
- 67 For the two concepts of the Torah as already perfect, or one that should be perfected, see Yochanan David Silman's important work, *The Voice Heard at Sinai, Once or Ongoing?* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1999) (Hebrew).
- 68 See above, Chapter 3 note 169.
- 69 See *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 179a and *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 179a, *Sifra di-Tzeni'uta*, ch. 5. For more on this issue see above, Chapter 4 note 162.
- 70 See Moshe Idel, 'Torah: Between Presence and Representation of the Divine in Jewish Mysticism', in eds, Jan Assmann & Albert I. Baumgarten, *Representation in Religion, Studies in Honor of Moshe Barasch* (Brill, Leiden, 2001), pp. 197–236; Idel, 'Concepts of the Torah', pp. 58–73, and *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 69–74. Compare to the more incarnational understanding of the same kabbalistic texts that I have collected and described in several instances, mentioned in the previous footnote, in Wolfson's discussions in 'The Body in the Text', especially pp. 494–5. For the iconic representation of the *Za'yir* see the article of David Sperber, mentioned above in the Introduction note 185.
- 71 See again, the important passage from ibn Gabbai's *'Avodat ha-Qodesh* 3.39, fol. 102a, cited above as a motto.
- 72 See Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'.
- 73 *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 212–47, 265–9.
- 74 See Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen*, pp. 51–2.
- 75 'The Land of a Divine Vitality: Eretz Israel in Hasidic Thought', in ed., Aviezer Ravitzky, *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought* (Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 256–75 (Hebrew).
- 76 See e.g. Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 45–145; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 248–56; the important contributions of Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2004) (Hebrew); and Margolin, *The Human Temple*.
- 77 See in addition to the material discussed in Chapter 4, especially the illuminating passage by R. Meir ibn Gabbai, *'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 3.39, fol. 100a.
- 78 See e.g. his 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics: Symbolic Significance of Sabbatai Sevi's Coronation', *Toward the Millennium*, eds P. Schaefer & M.R. Cohen (Brill, Leiden, 1998), pp. 203–58.
- 79 See above, Chapter 4 note 295.
- 80 For the much more modest and recent approach of Green/Schaefer, that puts an accent on the importance of Mariology for understanding the shift in the perception of the *Shekhinah* in early Kabbalah, and my reservations concerning its explanatory efficacy, see above, Chapter 4, Section 2.
- 81 See Moshe Idel, 'Hieroglyphs, Keys, Enigmas: On Gershom Scholem's Vision of Kabbalah: Between Franz Molitor and Franz Kafka', in eds, Bernard Greiner & Christoph Schmidt, *Arché Noah, Die Idee der 'Kultur' im Deutsch-Juedischen Diskurs* (Rombach, Freiburg, 2002), pp. 227–46.
- 82 Bialik, *'Iggerot Bialik, Tartzah/tartzat*, ed. Fishel Lahover (Devir, Tel Aviv, 1938/9), vol. 1, p. 164 (Hebrew).
- 83 *Kol Kitvei Ch. N. Bialik* (Devir, Tel Aviv, 1968), p. 48.
- 84 See Moshe Idel, 'Franz Rosenzweig and the Kabbalah', in ed., Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (University Press of New England, Hanover, 1988), p. 171. See also now Rivka Horwitz, 'From Hegelianism to a Revolutionary Understanding of Judaism: Franz Rosenzweig's Attitude toward Kabbalah and Myth', *Modern Judaism* 26 (1) (2006), pp. 42–3.
- 85 For a detailed analysis of Kafka's letter to his father and the vision of sonship implicit in this document see Peter Blos, *Son and Father, Before and Beyond the Oedipus Complex* (The Free Press, London, 1985), pp. 57–102. For Freud and his father see Marianne Kruehl, *Freud and His Father*, tr. Arnold J. Pomerans (Norton, New York, 1985). It seems that the most original contributions to the image of Jesus that modern Jews made were not the scholarly analyses, important as some of them are, especially those of David Flusser, but the more general views of thinkers without a philological basis like Freud, Bloch and Marcuse, who created the vision of the Son as a rebellious figure. This is an interesting Romantic religious picture, that fits even less the little we know about Jesus as a historical figure or as a religious thinker. See, indeed, Hengel's reactions to these attempts in *The Son of God*, p. 92 and Koschorke, *The Holy Family*, pp. 71–3, 170–4.
- 86 See his *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 144. For the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as fratricide see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses, Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991), pp. 92–4. See also Koschorke, *The Holy Family*, pp. 74–6.
- 87 See the lengthy interview entitled 'Our Antisemitic Friend', *Mussaf ha-'Aretz*, 17 (8) (2004), p. 17.
- 88 *Ibid.*
- 89 For such an approach see Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel*, passim.
- 90 See also my 'Ashkenazi Esotericism and Kabbalah in Barcelona', *Hispania Judaica* 5 (2007), pp. 69–113.
- 91 See Introduction note 189.
- 92 See Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, which does not deal with the category of sonship. For the Qur'anic attitude to Jesus see the detailed analysis of Robert C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times, An Essay in Comparison of Religions* (Faber & Faber, London, 1958), pp. 195–217. See, however, the particular forms of Islam influenced by Christian Trinitarian views analyzed in Bar Asher & Kofsky, *The Nusayri-'Alawi*

- Religion, pp. 36–7, 99–106, and Meir bar Asher, 'Sur les elements chrétiens de la religion Nusayrite-'Alawite', *Journal Asiatique* 289 (2001), pp. 185–216.
- 93 *Exégese medievale*, vol. 1, p. 204.
- 94 See, however, the quotation adduced in the Introduction note 149.
- 95 See, especially, his *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. On the problems related to Wolfson's general approach to Philo see David T. Runia, 'History of Philosophy in the Grand Manner: the Achievement of H.A. Wolfson', *Philosophia Reformata* 49 (Centrum voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte, 1984), pp. 112–33, reprinted in his *Exegesis and Philosophy*, vol. 10.
- 96 See Hans Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas* (A. Toepelmann, Giessen, 1929), and David Winston 'Was Philo a Mystic?' in eds, J. Dan and F. Talmage, *Studies in Jewish Mysticism* (Association of Jewish Studies, Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 15–39, reprinted in *The Ancestral Philosophy*, pp. 151–70, as well as the sensitive discussions on Philo in Heschel, *The Prophets*, where he claims that Philo was the first to use the term ecstasy in a technical sense for a higher form of cognition. See pp. 332–3.
- 97 McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 35–41; Dodds, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 93–6; Dodds, 'Numenius and Ammonius', *Études sur l'antiquité classique – Les sources de Plotin* 5 (Foundation Hardt, Vandoeuvres-Geneve, 1960), pp. 17–18. One of the possible channels of transmission of early Jewish themes into Neo-Platonism was the middle Platonist Numenius of Apamea. On Numenius and Plotinus, see Édouard des Places, *Numénius, Fragments* (Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1973), pp. 23–6 and Roberto Radice, 'The Nameless Principle' from Philo to Plotinus: An Outline of Research', in ed., Calabi, *Italian Studies on Philo*, pp. 167–82. On Numenius and the Jews, see Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Israel Academy of Humanities and Sciences, Jerusalem, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 206–16. On Philo and Numenius, see Stern, p. 207 note 5. For another affinity between Philo and Plotinus, apparently via Numenius, see Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, p. 315 note 103. Winston implicitly accepted a certain relationship between Philo and Plotinus, in his 'Was Philo a Mystic?', pp. 29, 32. See also Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 38–9. See also the juxtaposition of Plotinus and Philo in the quotation from Cornelius Agrippa of Netesheim, adduced in Chapter 5 above.
- 98 See e.g. the analysis of David Runia, 'God and Man in Philo', *JTS* 39 (1988), pp. 48–75, reprinted in his *Exegesis and Philosophy*, vol. 12.
- 99 See my discussion in the Introduction on the Mediterranean melting-pot that homogenized to a certain extent the various religions that circulated in these areas in late antiquity. However, as I shall make the point immediately below, I do not recommend that scholars should homogenize the phenomena under consideration but, on the contrary, my main methodological approach discerns between their different articulations and the diverse manners in which they have been transmitted to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.
- 100 See Idel, *Eros and Kabbalah*, pp. 23–4.
- 101 See above, Chapter 4. It should be pointed as it has been noticed by Gershenzon, *A Study*, p. 86, that it is possible there was an impact of some of the formulations of Abner of Burgos on two important Kabbalists, R. Isaac Mor Hayyim and R. Meir ibn Gabbai. However, the issue of sonship, found elsewhere in his epistles, is not appropriated by these Kabbalists.
- 102 See especially Stoyanov, *The Other God*, as well as studies on the presence of Bogomil groups in the various parts of Bulgaria and Romania, long after the mid- thirteenth century.
- 103 For a similar academic project, though dealing with other geographical areas and topics that are different from the conceptual point of view, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies, Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, tr. Raymond Rosenthal (Pantheon Books, New York, 1991), and see also Moshe Idel, 'Saturn, Schabbat, Zauberei und die Juden', in eds, Anthony Grafton & Moshe Idel, *Der Magus* (Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2001), pp. 209–49.
- 104 Whether the mystical experiences are ineffable or they are shaped by preceding theories, practices and aspirations, is a matter under discussion in recent scholarship, especially in the collections of studies edited by Steven Katz and Robert Forman. For tradition and community as framework for mysticism see Scholem, *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, pp. 5–31, and McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 50–1.
- 105 To a certain extent, the present discussions are reminiscent of the relationship between Bernard McGinn's book, *Golden Chains* (Cisterian Publications, Washington, DC, 1972) and Arthur Lovejoy's earlier *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, Evanston, London, 1960). In the latter, the Platonic worldview as the framework of approaches to reality has been analyzed, while in the former, examples of self-understanding of twelfth-century mystics within the general picture of the chain of being have been analyzed. See also Idel, *Enchanted Chains*.
- 106 See, in more general terms, my 'Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy; Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-century Kabbalah', in eds, D.B. Ruderman & Giuseppe Veltri, *Cultural Intermediaries* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 239–69.
- 107 See above, Chapter 3 note 83.
- 108 Attempts to describe Judaism only in its affinities to Christianity, as if the two religions never parted ways in quite significant aspects, ignore important segments in Jewish experience and creativity, even in the Christian countries.
- 109 See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 25, 248–56.
- 110 See *ibid.*, pp. 19–20.
- 111 See *Enchanted Chains*, especially, pp. 226–7.
- 112 See Idel, 'On European Cultural Renaissances'.
- 113 See Idel, 'Maimonides and Kabbalah' and 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah'.
- 114 See e.g. translation and introduction, Paul Fenton, *Obadia et David Maimonide, Deux traités de mystique juive* (Verdier, Lagrasse, 1987); *The Treatise of the Pool, Al-Maqala al-Hawdiyya*, by 'Obadyah Maimonides, ed. and tr. Paul Fenton (Octogan Press, London, 1981); Paul Fenton, 'Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments by Rabbi Abraham ha-Hasid, the Jewish Sufi', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 26 (1981), pp.

- 47–72; Paul Fenton, 'The Literary Legacy of Maimonides' Descendants', in ed., J.P. del Rosal, *Sobre la Vida y Obra de Maimonides, I Congreso internacional* (El Almendro, Cordoue, 1991), pp. 149–56; Paul Fenton, 'A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle', in ed., Daniel Frank, *The Jews in Medieval Islam* (Brill, Leiden, 1995), pp. 301–34.
- 115 See Idel; *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 63–170 and 'Mystique juive et pensée musulmane', *Perspectives* 9 (2002), pp. 138–57.
- 116 See my observation on Reuchlin's understanding of Kabbalah, in my Introduction to the Bison Edition, *De Arte cabalistica, On the Art of the Kabbalah*, tr. Martin and Sarah Goodman (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1993), pp. xxi–xxiii.
- 117 'Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (3) (2004), p. 288. See Israel Knohl, 'In these days, you shall live', *Haaretz*, April 20 2007, p. B7 (Hebrew), which proposes reading a recent inscription dated 1st century BCE as dealing with a messianic figure that was killed and should return in three days.

## APPENDIX Enoch the Righteous, and was there a Cult of Enoch/Metatron in the Middle Ages?

In the last generation, scholarship has described a view found in late antiquity Jewish sources that regards righteousness as conducive to angelification.<sup>1</sup> This is part of a more comprehensive process involving the ascent of apotheosis in Jewish mysticism, mentioned in the Introduction. However in some Jewish groups, the status of Metatron as an elevated mortal, namely Enoch, was precarious. Talmudic treatments of the great angel obliterated the ascent–explanation found in earlier Jewish tradition and in the Heikhalot literature, while allowing this angel the status of a theophoric mediator involved in creation and revelation. In fact, I would say that the *Book of Jubilee's* emphasis on the importance of the angel of the face and the Magharian tradition about the Great Angel are not so alien to rabbinic views. However, the Rabbis refused to allow the angel a role as an object of cultic activity. Two out of three episodes in the Talmud in which Metatron is mentioned are attempts to counteract any form of worship. Furthermore, I have found nothing suggesting an explicit cult of Metatron or Enoch in Heikhalot literature.

Yet the situation changed significantly in the Ashkenazi traditions related to R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet. As seen previously in Chapter 2, the High Priest is described as addressing Metatron, himself a High Priest, thus the Son described by two divine names. No negative reaction against this tradition exists in Jewish literatures with which I am acquainted until the early sixteenth century. The explanation may be that the Ashkenazi tradition dealt not with present worship but with an ancient and perhaps obsolete cult. However, it may well be that while speaking about the past the Ashkenazi tradition tells us something about the present. The importance of R. Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* is that it reflects not only various exegetical exercises dealing with traditional material and the names of the archangel, but also that it reflects a propensity to approach him. This is obvious in the descriptions of the magical aspects of the names, and one example of this is adduced in the variant [b] of the commentary at the beginning of Chapter 2 above. Thus, the names were commented on not only as a matter of religious curiosity, but for much more practical reasons. Nevertheless it may be claimed that while some form of veneration may be reflected in that tradition, worship is

another issue, and indeed throughout the small treatise efforts are made not to allow an independent status to the Prince of the Face.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the complex attitude of the Rabbis in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the Ashkenazi tradition does not ignore Enoch's image as a mortal who was angelified. And unlike the earlier Rabbis, they do emphasize his righteousness. It is important to elaborate upon the affinity between Enoch/Metatron and righteousness. In one paragraph we find:

[a] Midrash, [b1] in gematria is 'the name of righteous'<sup>3</sup> [c1] because his name is like that of the righteous of the world.<sup>4</sup> And it is written: 'Let the memory of the righteous be blessed' that is Metatron and he is very righteous. [b2] And in gematria 'that it was rebellious'<sup>5</sup> [c2] because he was in the generation of the flood, and his generation was rebellious, and the Holy One took him as a witness ['ed] because he was righteous, as it is written in *Genesis Rabba*'.<sup>6, 7</sup>

Three righteous figures are mentioned in this passage: Enoch, Metatron<sup>8</sup> and God. In the vein of the use of permutations of the consonants of *We-'Elohiy – Yaho'el – 'Eliyahu* a certain continuum between the three important factors is forged.<sup>9</sup> However what is more important for our discussion is the insistence on Enoch as righteous, which recurs several times in this small treatise. This epithet returns elsewhere in the text, where it is written: 'Enoch the righteous became an angel . . . and this is the reason why it is written: "The righteous are greater than the servant angels."<sup>10, 11</sup> Elsewhere, R. Nehemiah offers an even stronger formulation:

[a] *Gveriyah*<sup>12</sup> [b] in gematria *YeHiY Tzaddiq*, [c] because Enoch was a righteous and a man of the Lord, [*Ish 'Elohim*]<sup>13</sup> and God has seen that he was very righteous and did not believe in his righteousness,<sup>14</sup> because the bad instinct rules over all flesh and blood . . . because there is no righteous but God, the Holy One blessed be He, took him and made him into a holy angel.<sup>15</sup>

In a short sentence in the same treatise, the commentator compresses a view that appears several times in his writings:

[a] *Tahsasiyah* . . . [b] in gematria 'a righteous comes to me' that is the righteous<sup>16</sup> that is the foundation of the world'<sup>17</sup> [c] because he sustains the pillar<sup>18</sup> which is called righteous and the entire world is suffering<sup>19</sup> with him.<sup>20</sup>

These texts point to the stable and recurring view of Enoch as righteous, having acquired some form of angelic status because of this righteousness. We will survey more of these traditions in a moment. However it should be

pointed out that this affinity between righteousness and angelification is an ancient nexus found in late antiquity Jewish and early Christian texts, and hinted at in some rabbinic statements adduced and analyzed in the Introduction.<sup>21</sup> It should also be pointed out that the above discussions follow the same threefold structure as we have seen in Chapter 2.

A statement found in a collection of kabbalistic traditions presumably formulated in the thirteenth century and independent of the Ashkenazi material, reveals a similar vision of Enoch as righteous, and again as a pillar:

I heard that on him it is hinted at [in the verse] 'Righteous the foundation of the world', 'because for one righteous the world stands'<sup>22</sup>, and it is Enoch ben Yared.<sup>23</sup>

The affinity between the last two quotes, both medieval, is remarkable and it points, in my opinion, to a common tradition dealing not only with the vision of Enoch as righteous, an issue that is well documented in late antiquity,<sup>24</sup> but also to an ontic interpretation of Enoch as a form of Atlas that sustains the world. This view is reminiscent of a view reported by Eusebius in the name of pseudo-Eupolemos, according to which 'the Greeks say that Atlas invented astrology, and that Atlas is the same as Enoch'.<sup>25</sup>

Let us now turn to a third source, which may corroborate this suggestion. According to two medieval sources, a ninth-century Midrash entitled *Pitron Torah* and a thirteenth-century Yemenite Midrash known as *ha-Midrash ha-Gadol*, when dealing with Gen. 5.24, the verse that reports Enoch's fate, three persons are imagined as ascending on high – Enoch, Moses and Elijah – and in this context it is said that 'all the righteous ascend and serve on high'.<sup>26</sup> In the Yemenite version this statement is introduced by resorting to the formula *Ta'anna'*, an opening that is characteristic of Tannaitic statements.<sup>27</sup> Thus, again Enoch is described as righteous. Enoch's inclusion in a short list, which includes only the other figures of Moses and Elijah, demonstrates that Enoch has been promoted to a very central role. Furthermore, the verse adduced in order to serve as a proof-text, Zech. 3.7, is 'I shall give you access among these who stand by [*ha-'omedim*]' – namely the angels, according to the rabbinic tradition.<sup>28</sup> The affinity between angelic powers and the concept of standing – from which the noun '*amud*' 'pillar' stems – is well known in rabbinic sources, and could have allowed for the development of the view of angels as pillars which is essential for understanding writings from the circle of R. Nehemiah.<sup>29</sup>

The material above stems from sources written by European authors since the twelfth century.<sup>30</sup> However, it seems that they represent a somewhat earlier development, which is manifest in two Midrashic texts.

One is the early medieval *Midrash Tanhuma*' and its reverberation in the late eleventh-century *Midrash Numbers Rabba*:

The ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, are not like those of mortals. A mortal king against whom a country rebels punishes indiscriminately and kills the good with the bad. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. When a generation acts provocatively against Him He rescues the righteous and destroys the wicked. When the generation of Enosh sinned He destroyed them and saved Enoch, as is proved by the text: 'And Enoch walked with God'<sup>31</sup> Why? In the day of trouble He knoweth them that take refuge in Him.<sup>32</sup>

Enoch is expressly identified as righteous, as someone rescued and taken by God. This stand seems to be paralleled by the so-called Targum Jonathan, an Aramaic translation of rather obscure origin, where the translation of Gen. 5.24 is as follows: 'And Enoch served before the Lord in uprightness [*be-qushṭa*]<sup>33</sup> and behold he was not with the dwellers on earth, for he was withdrawn and went up to the firmament by the word before the Lord, and his name was called Metatron the great scribe.'<sup>34</sup> It seems that this is an amplification of another Aramaic translation, known as *Targum Yerushalmi*, where Enoch is also described as worshipping in truth, though mention of his translation on high and evolution into Metatron is not found.

Last but not least: in *Midrash 'Aggadah* whose time and place of composition is not known, it is said about Enoch:

It is only that God took him; since he was a righteous one, the Holy One, Blessed be He, took him from humans and transformed him into an angel, who is Metatron. There is a disagreement between Rabbi Akivah and his colleagues on this matter.<sup>35</sup> And the Sages say<sup>36</sup>: 'Enoch was righteous at times and wicked at times'.<sup>37</sup>

It is not only the ascent on high that is attributed here to Enoch, but also the reason for such an attainment: his righteousness. In a Midrash on the Psalms, Enoch is described as one of the few paragons of the Bible who was born circumcised.<sup>38</sup> The consonance between these disparate sources is remarkable and together with the Arabic traditions mentioned above in the Introduction, they demonstrate that these traditions cannot be attributed to a common source, nor to a kabbalistic orientation<sup>39</sup> responsible for the 'rehabilitation' of the patriarch.

A positive portrait of Enoch is obvious in the writings of R. Abraham ibn Ezra, who adopted some traditions of this figure that have no connection with the late Midrashim.<sup>40</sup> Important passages marking this

rehabilitation are found in the significant integration of Heikhalot material in R. Moshe of Narbone's late *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*.<sup>41</sup> In one of these instances he describes Enoch as the 'absolute righteous' – *Tzaddiq gamur* – and cites this as the reason why he becomes similar to the servant angels.<sup>42</sup> By doing so he capitalizes on an earlier source, the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, likely stemming from the ninth or tenth century somewhere in the Near East.<sup>43</sup> In a much longer discussion, the Provençal author describes Enoch as follows:

[a] [a1] The rabbis [*Rabbanin*]<sup>44</sup> said: 'Enoch was the beginning of the [series of] the righteous ones'.<sup>45</sup> [a2] The Holy One said: 'His entire generation was wicked, and this one was perfect with Me, and I too will make him an example [*dugmah*].'<sup>46</sup> What did the Holy One do? He took him from among men and He recreated him in a body of fire and put his name Metatron, and made for him a throne of fire *vis-à-vis* His throne ... and he gave him wisdom and understanding more than all the angels and He made him a Grandeur greater from all the servant angels. [b] R. Aqivah said: 'When the Holy One looked to the deeds of the generation and saw that they are sinful and evil he lifted Himself and His *Shekhinah* from among them and ascended by the sound of the Shofar and festal acclamations to the heights ... and He took Enoch ben Yared from among them and He elevated him to the heights by the sound of the Shofar and festal acclamations, so that he will be a witness together with the four beasts of the Merkavah, to the World-to-come.'<sup>47</sup>

Passage [b] is closely related to '*Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah*'.<sup>48</sup> However the precise source of [a] is not known, and it seems to differ from the formulation found in the source of [b], despite Albeck's remark;<sup>49</sup> [a1] may stem from the medieval *Tales of Ben Sira*<sup>50</sup> though no precise parallel formulation is found there. However [a2] does not have a clear source. Enoch's being an example may reflect the view of the ancient book *Ben Sira* (Eccles.) 44.19, where Enoch is described as 'A sign – [in Hebrew *'ot*] – of knowledge for generations.'<sup>51</sup> According to David Flusser, this ancient passage had an impact on the verses in Lk. 11.29–30 where the son of man is described as a sign.<sup>52</sup> Thus if Flusser is correct, Enoch is one of the figures that impacted on an early view of 'the Son of Man', in a sentence attributed to Jesus, and he perhaps even contributed to the self-understanding of Jesus himself.<sup>53</sup> However, this view presumably remained part of the Jewish tradition, and was committed to writing much later.

Let me turn to an anonymous commentary on the Pentateuch probably

written in the thirteenth century somewhere in the Ashkenazi provinces and known by the title *Moshav Zeqenim*:

It is a wonder why did He take Enoch more than any of the other righteous: Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? And it should be understood that it is because He is fond of the heptads, and Enoch was the seventh from the creation of the world: Adam, Set, Enosh, Cain, Mahal'el, Yared, Enoch. And so too it is in the case of Elijah, he was the seventh. And also Moses was the seventh from Abraham, and it is written 'and Moses ascended to God'.<sup>54</sup> And provided that his days were shorter than that of the others' it is written 'he was not' because it seemed that he was not in the world. And no one should think and say that he died while he was a wicked and this is the reason why his days were shortened, because look, it is written that 'Enoch walked with God' and he is an absolute righteous. But the Holy One blessed be He, has removed him from the wicked, and this is what is written 'He did not trust even in his angels'.<sup>55, 56</sup>

The emphasis on the righteousness and the warning against conceiving Enoch as wicked are quite evident, and show that the positive attitude toward this figure is independent of the approach of kabbalistic attitude. We may therefore speak about a revival of the positive portrait of Enoch by several medieval Midrashic writers. In this context, there is an interesting discussion preserved in a Byzantine commentary on the Pentateuch entitled *Leqah Tov*, also known as *Pesiqta' Zutta'*, authored by R. Tuviah ben Eliezer of Castoria, Byzantium, at the end of the eleventh century.

'And Enoch walked with God.' There are three modes of behavior [*middot*] attributed to the righteous. [a] With God, [b] ' [And he blessed Joseph, and said, God], before whom my fathers [Abraham and Isaac] did walk'<sup>57</sup> [c] 'after the Lord your God You shall walk.'<sup>58</sup> A parable for someone who had three sons: The older one goes before him, and this is the reason why it is said that the forefathers walked before Him, since they were great in their commandments. The middle one goes after him and this is the reason why it is said on Israel that 'After the Lord your God shall you walk'<sup>59</sup> after his modesty, after his mercy, after his piety. And the young one walks beside his father in order not to err on the way. This is the reason why in the first generations it is said 'with God': 'And Enoch walked with God' and 'With God Noah walked.'<sup>60</sup>

This passage capitalizes on a similar discussion found in *Genesis Rabba'* where two types of righteous individuals are mentioned, a small and a great one, the former being Noah, with no mention of Enoch.<sup>61</sup> In this version the father is a king, and the small son is represented in quite negative terms.

What seems to me to be of special importance in the *Leqah Tov* passage is not only the inclusion of Enoch among the righteous men in a treatise that is independent of developments in the Western European contemporary texts cited above, but also the unparalleled version of the parable of the three sons. In it Enoch belongs to the category of the young son, who walks alongside God. The term used is '*qatan*', the same term that appears repeatedly in the answer Metatron gives to the angels in *3 Enoch*: 'because I was the smallest of them'.<sup>62</sup> To be sure, the father here is indubitably God and the small son is Enoch. Therefore at least implicitly, we have an example in which Enoch is portrayed both as the Son of God and as a righteous figure, though this double perception is found only implicitly in the literary form of a parable, and not in a systematic description.

It should be emphasized that this is not a new development, but a return to a view well known in sources related to Enoch in late antiquity and the Middle Ages since *Ben Sira* and *1 Enoch*, where Enoch is described as a positive figure. For example, in the writings of the sixth-century Byzantine historian John Malalas we find:

In the middle of their<sup>63</sup> time Enoch the just, the son of Jared, was taken away and did not die. He was taken away after 1287 years. Enoch was the seventh from Adam, according to the interpretation Aquila the Jew gave of the Hebrew Scriptures written by Moses.<sup>64</sup>

We should understand the increased importance of Enoch in a variety of speculative medieval Jewish views against the backdrop of this positive attitude toward Enoch. Some of these views are discussed above while others are not relevant for our point here.

I would like to turn now to a thirteenth-century anonymous kabbalistic text that exists in two manuscripts. One of them has been referred to briefly by Odeberg,<sup>65</sup> and printed by Scholem from a codex found in the British Library in London, cf. Catalogue Margoloth, no. 746, fols 108b–109a.<sup>66</sup> The other is found in a private library in Jerusalem, and will be the basis of the translation below. The part that concerns us here consists of three major segments:

[a1] It is a tradition from our masters<sup>67</sup> that Metatron the prince of the face, his name is like the name of his master, he is Enoch ben Yered, and also they said [so], blessed be their memory,<sup>68</sup> in the

Heikhalot and in many places.<sup>69</sup> And he was the seventh generation from Adam the first, because the Holy One, blessed be He, is fond of the seventh generation,<sup>70</sup> like the Sabbath and the World-to-Come and so too the other heptades. [a2] Because those<sup>71</sup> seven *sefirot* that are united<sup>72</sup> in this world<sup>73</sup>. [a3] And we have received [a tradition] that<sup>74</sup> he merited because he annulated the deed<sup>75</sup> of the generation<sup>76</sup> of Enosh the wicked, and his generation, who were denying the supernal *pamalia* by their sorceries<sup>77</sup> and manipulations.<sup>78</sup> And he was a great zealot for God<sup>79</sup> and annulated [them] by means of the pure names and by incantations. This is the reason why the Holy One, blessed be He, separated him from his companions and caused that his soul will master over his body, and his flesh become fire, and he became an angel, and this is the reason why he caused him to be the ruler over the supernal and mundane *pamalia*,<sup>80</sup> and it is written: 'And he is no more, because God took him.'<sup>81</sup> And he is the prince of the world<sup>82</sup> and he is comprised<sup>83</sup> from the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He; and his name is like his master, H<sup>84</sup> the small.<sup>85</sup> <sup>86</sup> [b] And there are some who err regarding his existence [*hawwayato*],<sup>87</sup> and they pray, saying that because we are impure and mean how it is possible in our mind to pray to the *Causa Causarum*. But provided that this prince is permitted to [deal with] all the matters of this world, we shall pray to him.<sup>88</sup> [c] [c1] And the words are phantasms, and the spirit of those who do so should expire. It is clear to us that there is a providence of the Holy One, blessed be He, over particulars and universals related to men, And He, blessed be He, is plentiful of mercy, and why should those cursed ones say that we should not pray to Him? But He, blessed be He, listens to prayer and is pleased by implorations and does not judge according to the stern judgment. [c2] And the Bible is crying: 'Do not turn to the idols'<sup>89</sup> [namely] the servants on high that are called idols, from the form 'El, as against those who pray to them who are vain and useless. This is the reason why it is said that one should not turn to them in prayer at all, as they do not do anything but in accordance with His knowledge. [c3] There is not His will to separate between him and the one who prays to Him. And the good path and the path of life is not to pray but to the Master of All, may He be elevated, that is *Causa Causarum*.<sup>90</sup>

Paragraph [a] reflects the growth of the positive attitude toward Enoch within early kabbalistic sources. It is based upon a clear theosophical structure which assumes on the one hand the positive descriptions found in

pre-kabbalistic literatures, [a1,3] and a description that reflects a kabbalistic approach in [a2] on the other hand. This short sentence should be understood as dealing with the correspondence between the heptades below and the supernal structure that informs them, the seven lower *sefirot*. This correspondence is found in the writings of the early Kabbalists in Provence, who wrote under the impact of R. Isaac the Blind.<sup>91</sup>

However, despite the positive attitude toward the patriarch, the anonymous Kabbalist protests in [b] against individuals he does not identify who not only adopt a positive vision of Enoch, but who also draw cultic conclusions from their more comprehensive theology. Adopting an apophatic vision of the highest realm within the divine world, which is described as *Causa Causarum*, these persons have decided that it is impossible to refer to the sublime divinity in their prayer, and that in lieu it would be appropriate to refer to Enoch, who is understood as appointed over this ordinary world. In other words, we have here some form of binitarianism, of a theological, not a cultic form. Two different powers are conceived of as superior, but only one can be approached during prayer. Thus the lower being, not creator of the world but appointed over it, is accessible to human concerns. The vice-regent, who is now addressed in prayer, fills the distance created by the sublimity of the highest divine principle and the impure condition of humans.

The group of people who adopted this vision are described in a concise manner leaving insufficient material in order to identify them. However, from the succinct description it seems that no kabbalistic terminology is involved. On the contrary, it seems that it is the philosophical term of *Illat ha-Ilot* that is conspicuous here. If the term is part of their original nomenclature, it is part of a present attitude that is evident here. The language used is quite telling: the verbs are in the present, and it seems that the Kabbalist who is reporting about the group is acquainted with them. To be sure, the Kabbalist does not agree with the theory or practice of the group. He uses strong terms in order to reject their approach. However, this rejection should be investigated cautiously.

The main point of the critique is found in [c1] and [c3] where the argument is that prayer can bridge the chasm between the highest realm in divinity and the worshipper. In addition, the Kabbalist sees an interdiction to address lower entities, servant angels, in prayer. Interestingly enough while in [b] Enoch is mentioned explicitly, in [c] his name does not appear at all. Given the content of [a], the absence of a direct critique of Enoch is not so surprising. It is obvious that the Kabbalist assumes that the group or the individuals misunderstand the nature of Enoch, while his own understanding of this figure is positive and expressed as such in the context of the sharp critique he addresses to the views of the group.

The sharpness of this critique precludes, in my opinion, an assumption that the ideas criticized are just an invention ad hoc. It seems to me that this passage preserves an interesting and unique testimony as to an actual development that took place in medieval Judaism, presumably in Spain no later than mid-thirteenth century. We see here the increased importance of a philosophical theology that emphasized the apophatic element, and also the raising of Enoch to a higher status, from which he can organize some aspects of the ritual. Both developments were debated, but the Kabbalist and the group he criticizes still agree upon the righteousness and positive status of Enoch.

Let me turn now to a variant found only in MS. B, where *Genesis Rabba*' is mentioned together with the Heikhalot tradition of the ascent of Enoch. This version is not corroborated by any of the variants found in the numerous manuscripts of this Midrash, and might be considered a careless reference by a Kabbalist who wanted to amplify the positive approach toward Enoch beyond what is found in the sources. Indeed, such an absence corroborates the general understanding of rabbinic literature as reserved insofar as Enoch is concerned. However, this axiomatic view may be a little bit premature. Let me compare the mention of this Midrash to a similar instance in which the same Midrash appears again: a quotation from the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* in which the 'classical' Midrash is cited as supporting the righteousness of Enoch. Though the two instances differ in content and thus cannot be explained as dependent upon one another, they support the possibility that there were versions of the Midrash that supported the Enochic tradition regarding the patriarch's righteousness found in the Heikhalot literature. What seems interesting is the fact that the two different though complementary traditions are found together in the passage from *Midrash 'Aggadah* adduced above. One may assume that the two separate traditions each depend upon the *Midrash 'Aggadah*, but it seems highly improbable that two different authors living in different countries would make the same mistake. I would opt for another alternative. Like in other cases that were not deemed acceptable by some Rabbis, the Midrashic passages may have been doctored by eliminating what was conceived of as confusing. Saul Liebermann has demonstrated in detail this practice concerning various Midrashim.<sup>92</sup>

In any event, let me address the possibility that at least part of the discussion in *Genesis Rabba*' regarding Enoch may be understood as less negative than scholars have assumed it. There we find the following statement:

R. Aibu said: Enoch was a hypocrite, acting sometimes as a

righteous, sometimes as a wicked man. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'While he is righteous I will remove him'.<sup>93</sup>

The assumption that a righteous individual is taken away while being righteous for fear that the wicked generation may impact on him is found much earlier in the *Wisdom of Solomon*:

But the righteous man, though he dies an untimely death, will be at rest. For it is not length of life that makes for an honorable old age, nor is it measured by numbers of years; but rather it is wisdom that constitutes man's silvery brow, and a spotless life the true ripeness of age. But well-pleasing to God<sup>94</sup> he was dearly loved and while yet living among sinful men he was translated. He was snatched away lest evil alter his intelligence, or will deceive his mind . . . For his soul was pleasing to the Lord, therefore he urgeth it forth out of the midst of wickedness . . . But the just man shall condemn the godless who are alive.<sup>95</sup>

The general tone of the book is quite positive toward the figure of Enoch, though his name is not mentioned. Nevertheless the vision of the early death of a righteous man is conceived of as part of his righteousness and even as something positive.<sup>96</sup> After all, the Midrash assumes that God took Enoch while he was righteous and this may be understood as having happened before he sinned. According to such an understanding, God, who is the last speaker, and I would say as authoritative as the two earlier Rabbis, prevents Enoch from erring.

As mentioned above, this book, or at least some parts of it, was known in medieval Catalonia, where Nahmanides quoted two passages from it.<sup>97</sup> It may be that a visitor in the town in which this book has been quoted, Gerona, adopted the idea discussed above in some form. According to R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*

There is a [kind of] death that is mercy, in order to honor him in the world-to-come, [and] so that the attribute of calamity which is prone to spread in the world, will not hold strength over him. The attribute of peace draws him, as it is written<sup>98</sup> 'From the evil to come the righteous is taken away,' and it is written that<sup>99</sup> 'The death of the pious ones is precious in the eye of God'.<sup>100</sup>

Though the righteous has not been identified, as is the case in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, it seems that Enoch is so defined in the school of R. Isaac. For example, we read in R. Jacob ben Sheshet's writings, a Kabbalist active in Gerona, that Enoch and Elijah underwent a process of spiritualization while alive, the meaning of the statement that they 'did not die', and furthermore

that they are perhaps the 'souls of the righteous' with whom God consulted when he created Adam.<sup>101</sup>

Let us turn to the question of cultic binitarianism, for which the above passage is a testimony in the Middle Ages. It seems that the anonymous 'errants' active in southern Spain and the theory of R. Nehemiah in his *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* in Ashkenaz were not such isolated and exceptional phenomena. Long before, no later than the mid-eleventh century, Ibn Hāzīm, a major Muslim thinker in Cordova, described the custom of Jews in the city of praying during ten days of October, presumably the ten days between the high holidays of Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, and addressing their prayers to the angel Sandalfon.<sup>102</sup> This angel is described as a lesser authority, apparently a vestige of the Lesser 'Adonai' attributed in other sources to Metatron. Furthermore, the angel is described as appointed on the crown found upon the head of the creator.<sup>103</sup> My assumption is that the difference between the regular and special versions of the 'Amidah prayer, the latter being recited during those ten days, was understood as referring to the angel.

Yet, this mid-eleventh-century testimony is certainly not the earliest binitarian cult related to Metatron. In a passage preserved from an earlier period the Jews are described as worshipping the 'Adonai Qaṭan, an appellation that certainly points to Metatron.<sup>104</sup> Against the background of these descriptions, the evidence of the anonymous Kabbalist regarding those who prayed to Enoch seems to be much more reliable. In this context, a passage written by a Karaite author in the mid-fourteenth century attributes to the rabbinic Jews the following theory of prayer:

This is the doctrine of the masters of the tradition [*ba'alei ha-Qabbalah*] as expressed in the liturgy they instituted. When they assess that there are two causes, one close the other distant, it is reflecting their belief in two principles [*shetei reshuyyiot*]. This is the secret of Metatron, whom they designate as Lesser YHWH, the ruler of the world, which governs the lower world, which is called the Agent Intellect, which gives the forms to all the beings in this world of generation and corruption.<sup>105</sup>

This explanation of prayer issues – namely the oscillation between the second- and third-person forms in the same prayer – is based upon the metaphysical bifurcation that is reminiscent of the anonymous kabbalistic passage translated above. What is important for our purpose in this Appendix is the clear cultic framework evident in the passage. In another passage of the same book, the oscillation between second and third person in the formulation of the Jewish liturgy is expressly related to the two causes.<sup>106</sup>

Indeed, such a bifurcation can be detected in some forms of Jewish interpretations of prayer both in Ashkenazi and kabbalistic sources.<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, as Daniel Boyarin recently argued, some form of cultic binitarianism is present even earlier than indicated by the testimonies I have adduced above, though the material he cites from late antiquity does not refer to Enoch or Metatron.<sup>108</sup> As to a possible ancient cult related to the angel Michael, there are some instances in late antiquity rabbinic circles.<sup>109</sup>

Last but not least, in some traditions stemming from the earliest kabbalistic documents, the intention during the 'Amidah-prayer is divided between different couples: according to some traditions stemming from the school of Rabad the two powers are the *sefirot* of *Binah* and *Tiferet*;<sup>110</sup> another tradition, authored by R. Jacob the Nazirite of Lunel, deals with the reference to the 'Illat ha-'Illot and *Yotzer Bereshit*,<sup>111</sup> while Nahmanides and his school preferred to concentrate upon another couple of *sefirot*: *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>112</sup> In some Ashkenazi circles, even the Special Cherub is addressed in prayer.<sup>113</sup> Later in the thirteenth century, a view is attributed to R. Ezra of Gerona, in my opinion by R. Joseph of Hamadan, according to which the intention in prayer should be addressed to Metatron.<sup>114</sup> The emergence of these different binitarian traditions in roughly the same period and relatively small geographical area, points in my opinion to some earlier common denominators, which have been interpreted by early Kabbalists in more theosophical terms. Whether the binitarian elements related to the special status of Enoch or Metatron were the major impetus for the emergence of these traditions or merely contributed something to their formulation is an issue that requires further study, but I would say tentatively that they played a certain role in this process.

As seen above, the book of the *Zohar* was fond of Enoch's figure in almost all its major layers. No doubt this fact contributed much to the elevated status of this patriarch in Jewish mysticism since the late thirteenth century. In this book we read:

There is a certain 'breath' [*hevel*] emanating from those supernal 'breaths' upon which the world is sustained, closely connected with the earth and fed from it. It depends, in fact, on the souls of the righteous who have been gathered from the earth while still pure before they have committed any sin, and while their savor is still sweet: for instance, Enoch, of whom it is written, 'And he was not, for God took him'<sup>115</sup> God took him away before his time and had delight<sup>116</sup> in him. And so it is with all the righteous, for we have been taught that the righteous are removed from this world before their time for one of two reasons: one for the sins of their generation, for when there is much sin in the world the

righteous men are punished for its guilt; the second is that when the Holy One, blessed be He, is aware that they would commit a sin if they lived longer, He removes them before their time. And this is the meaning of the verse quoted above: 'there are righteous to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked',<sup>117</sup> as was the case with R. 'Aqivah and his companions;<sup>118</sup> the judgment from above came upon them, as if they had committed the sins and actions of the wicked. On the other hand, 'there are wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous'<sup>119</sup>: they live in peace and comfort in this world, and the judgment does not come upon them, as if they performed the deeds of the righteous.<sup>120</sup>

As in various earlier discussions found in Provençal and Catalan forms of Kabbalah, the soul of the righteous is described as drawn upward by a power descending from above.<sup>121</sup> As evident in the ancient texts adduced above, Enoch is a righteous individual who died before his time, in fact while still young, in comparison to other antediluvian figures, not to mention his son Metuselah.

In a note to *Genesis Rabba*' by R. Shlomo Molkho we find an interesting case of the application of the two different evaluations of Enoch as righteous and as wicked to Metatron as the Prince of the Face:

The rationale for his being called the Prince of the face[s]<sup>122</sup> because he has two faces: a face of mercy and a face of anger. And it is a witness concerning the righteous just as it is a witness concerning the wicked. And this is what we say: 'The Lord will enlighten His face to you and will have mercy on you [*ve-Yehunekh*].'<sup>123</sup> The meaning is that he will do just as he [already] did. In the consonants of *Ve-Yehunekha* there are the consonants of *Hanokh*. And this is the reason why it is said afterwards 'and he will put peace on you', namely that he will give you an eternal peace, just as he gave to Enoch, and this is why he was called Metatron, whose meaning is guard, because the translation of guard is Metron, and he was given the role to see those that entered to the World-to-come, in order to judge them. Enoch is: eight times *Nun*, fifty times *Vav*, six times *Kaph*, and the gematria is *Metatron ha-Sar*,<sup>124</sup> as it is said in Job: 'Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my testimony is on high.'<sup>125</sup> '*Ediy* in gematria is *Hanokh*<sup>126</sup>, *ve-Sahadiy* in gematria '*Hu*' *Metatron*'.<sup>127, 128</sup>

What is interesting in this passage is not only the Enochic exegesis that will concern us below, but the interpretation Molkho offers of the priestly

blessing, one of the verses of which is quoted here. If we substitute the verse *Ve-Yehunekha* for Enoch, we see the following view: 'The Lord will enlighten His face to you and Enoch'. Thus Enoch, together with the Lord, represents one of the two faces. Since the Tetragrammaton, translated here as the Lord, is also a name of Metatron, we may read the passage as regarding the two faces of the Prince of the Face, with Enoch corresponding to this double structure by virtue of his righteousness and wickedness. In one way or another, Enoch and the Prince of the Face serve as part of the priestly ritual of blessing. In a collection of traditions related to Molkho found in a manuscript, the last *sefirah*, *Knesset Israel* is described as Metatron, which incorporates the mundane being Enoch ben Yared, who ascended on high.<sup>129</sup> I wonder to what extent the renewed Renaissance interest in Hermes created an additional positive predisposition toward Enoch, sometimes identified with Hermes.<sup>130</sup> What is equally important from the point of view of the process of ascent of apotheosis in Jewish thought is the appearance of a new instance of Enochic exegesis in a sixteenth-century passage. The interest in the figure of Enoch is recorded by other important sixteenth-century Kabbalists like R. Shimeon ben Lavi in Northern Africa,<sup>131</sup> R. Joseph Qaro, Moshe Cordovero, and the various Lurianic Kabbalists active mainly in Safed.<sup>132</sup> In their writings, to a great extent following the path opened by the book of the *Zohar*, the Enochic movement reached the very core of kabbalistic classics that would have a strong impact on later phases of Jewish thought, including Hasidism.

On the basis of the premise of the superiority of man over the angels adopted by rabbinic masters, the great achievements of Enoch and Elijah as mystics were described as their having undergone a process of angelification. However as pointed out above, in the context of the ascent of the importance of 'higher' types of theologies, namely the various kabbalistic theosophies dealing with supra-angelic systems, the event of becoming an angel was not too sublime an achievement, since the sefirotic realm was conceived of as more sublime. Thus, the older heroes were left with a modest attainment when compared to rabbinic axiology. This matter had been implicitly addressed already in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century by R. Isaac of Acre, who asked why Enoch reached a status higher than Abraham by becoming Metatron, and received the answer that Abraham in fact achieved a more sublime attainment by being connected with the *sefirah* of *Hesed*.<sup>133</sup> Much more blatant is an example from R. Moshe Cordovero, who wonders:

Since we have agreed that man is more excellent than angels by his righteousness, and this is determined in the words of Rashbiy [R. Shime'on bar Yoḥai], blessed be his memory, thus, what is the

rank of Elijah and Enoch, who did not gain but the rank of angels despite the fact that they were more righteous than their generation. And they have explained in the book of Heikhalot<sup>134</sup> ... this shows that it was Enoch ben Yared the righteous ... and this is also the matter of Elijah who is an angel.<sup>135</sup>

In a similar manner we read in a passage authored by R. Isaac Luria, the most important student of Cordovero:

The part of the soul of Emanation<sup>136</sup> was taken by Enoch ben Yared, and this is the reason why he is an angel on high called Metatron as it is known. This is why he did not die like mortals. Know that this aspect [that is] the soul of Emanation, is called the angel of the world, since it is emanated from the world of emanation, and it governs over all the worlds. In such a way the well-known quandary is related to the matter of Enoch/Metatron. If the two are one, then the world of Formation is called the world of Metatron, who was then the angel of the world, when Enoch was still here below on earth, in this world?<sup>137</sup> But the issue may be understood in accordance with what is written in the *Zohar* at the beginning of the pericope of Noah, in the *Tossefia*<sup>138</sup> on the verse Noah Noah,<sup>139</sup> 'since every righteous has two spirits, one on the earth, the other on high etc.' And you should understand it. And this is the sign: 'Behold my witness is in heaven', this is Enoch, that amounts in gematria 'ediy, 'and my testimony is on high heights'<sup>140</sup> this is Elijah, blessed be his memory. Both are angels on high, as mentioned above. And this is the meaning of 'A testimony that his name is Yehoseph'<sup>141</sup> and the matter is that Joseph the righteous merited this soul of Enoch, that is called 'ediy as mentioned, and this is the reason why Joseph was so beautiful,<sup>142</sup> as he merited the beauty of the First Adam that is derived from that supernal soul of emanation. And Joseph did not merit it [previously] but [only] on that night.<sup>143</sup>

Luria obviously follows the view of the *Zohar* when he attributes to Adam and then Enoch the special soul stemming from the world of Emanation. However, he is also interested in some form of external superiority, here being the extraordinary beauty related to the highest soul. However, in the vein of R. Yehudah ha-Levi's 'Amr 'Ilahi, this soul and beauty are transmitted beyond the antediluvian patriarch.

Let me summarize some of the main points emerging from the survey above. The sources explored demonstrate that sometime between the late

eleventh and late thirteenth century, in Western Europe and especially Spain, Provence and the Rhinlands, Enoch became quite a positive figure in Jewish culture: a righteous individual expert in various bodies of knowledge, who underwent a transformation and became an angel. No doubt these positive appreciations of the patriarch have earlier sources in Heikhalot literature and various late Midrashic texts stemming from the Near East. Each speculative school interpreted the nature of the transformation of this patriarch and the meaning of the angel in its own terms, and such interpretations naturally differ from each other. However, what is beyond doubt is the fact that a deep transformation of the figure of Enoch predates the emergence of both the Ashkenazi material and the earliest kabbalistic documents. In some cases like the testimony of ibn Hāzām, and in some Ashkenazi texts, in the anonymous kabbalistic document translated above, as well as in the passage of Shlomo Molkho, this transformation is further related to forms of cultic activities. Though not necessarily binitarian, it seems that the cultic instances have some ditheistic elements. The existence of parallel binitarian approaches in distinct parts of Jewish diaspora may point to a shared practice that has earlier sources, and they are presumably related to a continuous role played by Enoch during the period of the 'by-pass', when he was marginalized in the rabbinic tradition.<sup>144</sup> The ascent of Enoch/Metatron in R. Nehemiah, and in the anonymous kabbalistic text translated above, bear witness to a vibrant interest in two different areas of Jewish European culture in the Middle Ages. Though a decline in what can be called Enochic Judaism is evident in rabbinic Judaism, there is no reason to neglect the possibility that in other circles such an interest remained alive and surfaced powerfully and concomitantly in the different circles discussed above. Since the thirteenth century however, it seems that this interest remained stable in many forms of Jewish mysticism.

Last but not least, the movement from the angelic status of the exalted mystic in ancient Jewish literature, to the claim that an even higher spiritual universe is attainable, namely the sefirotic realm (sometimes conceived of as divine according to Kabbalists), or the intellectual realm (also conceived of as divine in ecstatic Kabbalah), constitutes an interesting parallel to the trajectory of the status of Jesus found in ancient Christianity. Jesus who has been described as an angel in the earliest Christian documents, namely in the Greek Bible, afterwards becomes fully divinized.<sup>145</sup> The apotheotic move that generated this elevation of the accomplished *perfectus* was active therefore in both Judaism and Christianity, though much less in Islam. Sonship, a category that consists in both hierarchy and consubstantiality, becomes the best symbol for reflecting this shift, which created binitarian religious possibilities. By resorting to metaphors of sonship, mysticism as a mode of thinking and apparently also as an experience, has benefited from

the new possibilities of imagining and expressing feelings of intimacy and even unitive moments. Unlike the Freudian move in which antagonism is imagined as the key for understanding the dynamics of relationships in both family and religion, it seems that the category of cooperative sonship as described above proves that more than a single vector can inform the *imaginaire* of religious people. Someone could imagine that s/he arrives at a divine status without even dreaming of dislocating much less annihilating the father-figure. The will to be in the presence of a mode of being and share with it the highest attainable level of reality nurtures the imagination much more than any alleged Oedipus complex or agonic type of sonship. I would say, repeating some of the observations made previously in this study, that the Oedipus complex is too simple an explanation to encompass the many different thinkers who strove to operate with the category of son. There can be no doubt that Enoch constitutes a major example of the search for a cooperative apotheosis that does not fit the psychoanalytical agonic narratives, which are indeed much closer to Gnostic types of sonship.<sup>146</sup>

## Notes

- 1 See James H. Charlesworth, 'The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel', in eds. J.J. Collins & G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Ideal Figures in Ancient Israel* (SBLSCS 12; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), pp. 135–51; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, pp. 4, 401, 424, 430, 477; and Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 54–6, 77–8. For more on righteousness in late antiquity Judaism see Ed Condra, *Salvation for the Righteous Revealed* (Brill, Leiden, 2002) as well as above, Chapter 1 note 23. For the inclusion of Enoch in an ancient list of righteous men see the text printed by Reimund Leicht, 'Qedushah and Prayer to Helios: A New Hebrew Version of an Apocryphal Prayer of Jacob', *JSQ* 6 (1999), pp. 173–4.
- 2 See e.g. *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 6, fol. 1b, par. 11, fol. 2b.
- 3 *Midrash* = 544 = *Shem Tzaddiq*. From another gematria of *Midrash* as 'niftehu', see the *Commentary on the Haftarah*, written by the same author, MS. Berlin Or. 942, fol. 149b, cf., Wolfson, *Through the Speculum*, pp. 328–9.
- 4 BT *Hagagah*, fol. 111a.
- 5 In Hebrew *she-marad* = 544 like the words in note 3 above.
- 6 On the claim that Enoch is conceived of as a righteous in the 'classical' *Midrash*, see our discussion below.
- 7 *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 18, fol. 3b.
- 8 Also elsewhere in the commentary we find a nexus between Metatron and the issue of justifying, *matzdiq*. See e.g. par. 8, fol. 2a, par. 14, fol. 3a.
- 9 This may be also the case of the concept of face: in the first paragraph of *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, it is written that the angel of the face radiates upon the face of the prophets so that they become luminous and the people become afraid of them. Since the face the angel is seeing is that of God, it seems that we have also here

- some form of continuum, as is the case with the enthronement of the prophet. God, Metatron and the prophet have thrones. See above, Chapter 1.
- 10 BT *Sanhedrin*, fol. 93a. See also above, Chapter 1.
  - 11 Par. 30, fol. 4b. It should be mentioned that in some late rabbinic sources Enoch has been portrayed as a performer of the entire Torah, meaning that he is righteous. See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, tr. Henrietta Szold (Jewish Publication Society, New York, 1937), vol. 5, pp. 187 note 51, 235 note 140.
  - 12 *Gveriyah* does not amount to *Yehiy Tzaddiq*, or 232.
  - 13 This is an appellation referring to Moses in e.g. Deut. 33.1.
  - 14 Cf. Job 4.18, 15.15. See also below, note 55.
  - 15 Par. 76, fol. 9b. On the tripartite structure of the discourse in this commentary on the various names in this book see above, Chapter 2.
  - 16 Prov. 10.25.
  - 17 *Tahsasyah* = 543 = *Tzaddiq ba' 'alay Yessod 'Olam*.
  - 18 See BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12b; *Midrash Tehilim*, on Psalm 136.5, ed. Shlomo Buber (Vilnius, 1891), p. 520. On a person – namely the apostles – as a pillar see Paul. Cf., the bibliography adduced in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 158 note 6.
  - 19 This is a pun on the Hebrew verb of *SBL*, which means both to sustain and to suffer.
  - 20 Par. 50, fol. 6b. Let me point out that this vision of Metatron as a pillar does not involve here, or elsewhere in the writings of R. Nehemiah, any phallic valences, as Wolfson claims several times. See his *Through the Speculum*, p. 259 note 304, and *Along the Path*, p. 129 note 121.
  - 21 See Charlesworth, 'The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel', note 1 above.
  - 22 BT *Hagigah*, fol. 12b.
  - 23 Printed by Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 253.
  - 24 See, especially, the various descriptions of Enoch by St Ephrem, where the root *TzDQ* recurs in the context of this patriarch. Cf. Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 In the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian* (CWK Gleerup, Lund, 1978), pp. 154–7.
  - 25 Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17. See also Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, pp. 115–16, 260–1. See also Idel, 'From Italy to Germany and Back', pp. 62, 68.
  - 26 See *Sefer Pitron Torah*, ed. E.E. Urbach (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1978), p. 167, and *Ha-Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis, ed. M. Margoliot (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1975), p. 132. Let me point out that given the Islamicate background of these two Midrashic compositions, it is hard to speak about 'back-borrowing' from Christian sources.
  - 27 See Himmelfarb, 'A Report on Enoch', p. 259.
  - 28 See the various traditions printed in ed. Gellis, *Tossafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 1, pp. 177–8. For more on Enoch in Midrashic literature see Daniel Sperber's note, *Massekhet Derekh 'Eretz Zuta* (Tzur Ot, Jerusalem, 1994), third edn, pp. 84–5 (Hebrew).
  - 29 For more on the importance of pillars for the earlier phases of Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages see Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, Chapter 2.
  - 30 I ignore in this context the quite positive and detailed description of Enoch in

- Sefer ha-Yashar*, since it is a very late medieval pseudo-midrash. In any case, I hope to return to the Enoch-material in this book elsewhere and compare it to 2 *Enoch*.
- 31 Gen. 5.24.
- 32 *Tanḥuma'*, Ba-Midbar, ch. 26, *Numbers Rabba'* 5.3 and *Yalqut Shime'oni*, Numbers, ch. 4, par. 695. See Hananel Mack, 'The Midrash Numbers Rabba and the Origins of Kabbalah in Provence', in ed., Haviva Pedaya, *Myth in Judaism* (*Eshel Beer-Sheva*, vol. 4) (University Ben Gurion, Beer Sheva, 1996), pp. 78–94 (Hebrew).
- 33 For *qushṭa'*, meaning truth as uprightness, see above, Chapter 4 note 125.
- 34 It seems that this Aramaic translation has been quoted especially by Kabbalists. See Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati, the Kabbalist*, vol. 1, pp. 78–9 and Avigdor Shinan, *The Embroidered Targum* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1992), p. 126 and note 113 (Hebrew).
- 35 Presumably, the late Midrash preserves a tradition that dealt with a dispute between two views within the rabbinic tradition.
- 36 *Genesis Rabba'* 25.1.
- 37 Ed. S. Buber (Vienna, 1894), p. 15. See Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 128.
- 38 See Ps. 9.
- 39 Cf. Kaplan, 'Adam', pp. 112–14.
- 40 See e.g. his commentary on Ps. 73.24; 101.2, and the material adduced in Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism'; Idel, 'Enoch, The Mystical Cobbler', p. 269; and Shlomo Sela, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in Abraham ibn Ezra's Thought* (*Bar Ilan* University, Ramat Gan, 1999), especially pp. 341–8 (Hebrew), where a famous passage that describes Enoch as a lawgiver, found in supercommentaries on *ibn Ezra*, is discussed. Also in his case, it seems that the Arabic Hermetic writings are the most important sources of inspiration, as many of the supercommentaries point out.
- 41 See especially pp. 27–8. As to the historical sources of some of the discussions, the opinion of scholars is divided. Alexander Altmann, 'The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends', *JQR* 35 (1945), pp. 371–91, assumed that some form of Muslim influence may be detected, while Fossum, 'The Adorable Adam', p. 538, surmises that the theme of the adoration of Adam is quite ancient.
- 42 Pp. 96–7.
- 43 See Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira*, p. 253.
- 44 This specific formula of attributing a statement to some authorities may point to a Palestinian source.
- 45 Namely he was the first righteous. This may have something to do with the tradition adduced elsewhere in this book, p. 96, where we find a list of beings that enter Paradise alive. In this list the first is a bird, some form of Phoenix, and the second is Enoch. The source of this list may be *Alpha Beta of Ben Sira*, as Albeck pointed out, *ibid.*, p. 96 note to line 17 and Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira*, pp. 104–16.
- 46 Compare to *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, p. 58 where a righteous is described as having a son in his likeness, *dugma'*.

- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7. For the view that Metatron and the four beasts are witnesses see 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Aqivah, in Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, p. 349.
- 48 *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, pp. 349–51.
- 49 *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, p. 26 note to line 25.
- 50 See Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira*, p. 253. See also *ibid.*, pp. 104–16.
- 51 See Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 528–9.
- 52 *Ibid.*, pp. 531–4, especially note 20. See especially the *Book of Jubilees* 4.24; Najman, *Second Sinai*, pp. 121–2.
- 53 Flusser, *ibid.*, pp. 533–4.
- 54 Exod. 19.3.
- 55 Cf. Job 4.18, 15.15. Compare also to the same explanation found in the text printed above beside note 14.
- 56 *Moshav Zeqenim on the Pentateuch*, ed. Suliman Sasson, second edn (Sifrei Rabbanei Babel, Jerusalem, 1982), p. 8, corrected according to the version in a passage extant in MS. Paris, BN 260, fols 15b–16a; Gelis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 1, p. 175, par 1, p. 178, par. 9. For the place of Enoch in another heptade of patriarchs see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums* (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1949), p. 105.
- 57 Gen. 48.15.
- 58 Deut. 13.5.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Leqah Tov*, ed. Shlomo Buber (Vilna, 1880), Genesis, fol. 16b; Himmelfarb, 'A Report on Enoch', p. 264. For Enoch as a Son of God see also above, Chapter 1.
- 61 *Genesis Rabba'* 30.10, p. 276.
- 62 On this issue see above, Chapter 1.
- 63 Of Seth's children.
- 64 Malalas, *Chronicle* 1.2–3; Cf. E.M. Jeffreys & R. Scott. *The Chronicle of John Malalas. A Translation. Byzantina Australiensia* 4 (Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, Melbourne, 1986), pp. 2–3. For Enoch as a revealer of books see above in Chapter 4 in the discussions related to the image of Enoch in the book of the *Zohar*.
- 65 See his introduction to 3 *Enoch*, p. 116.
- 66 See his *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 252–3. I shall refer to this version as B, while the private manuscript, which will serve as the basis of the translation, will be designated as A.
- 67 From our masters, not found in B.
- 68 Instead of 'Blessed be their memory' in B it is written 'in *Genesis Rabba'*'. We shall return below to this version. The A version seems to be deficient, since the subject of the formula is missing.
- 69 'And in many places' missing in B.
- 70 *Leviticus Rabba'* 29.11, *Pesiqta' de-Rabbi Kahana* 23.10.
- 71 In Hebrew 'Ottam, in B it is 'Or, namely light.
- 72 In Hebrew *daveq*, while in B Scholem printed *Tzedeq*, namely Jupiter, but he was not sure of his reading. Indeed Jupiter is not the seventh planet, and it seems that *daveq* is a better version.

- 73 The Hebrew is awkward: *daveq b'h'Z*, which I decipher following B, as 'in this word'.
- 74 From 'And to that' missing in B.
- 75 In B. *ma'asei*, namely deeds, which is a better version.
- 76 Missing in B.
- 77 Cf. 3 *En.*, ch. 3. It is possible that there is some impact of the view of Enoch as Hermes, as involved in astromagic. See also especially MS. London, British Library 752, fol. 45b – a manuscript that includes material by R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo – where magic is related expressly to 'the book of Enoch ben Yared' and Idel, 'Enoch, the Mystical Cobbler', pp. 266–8.
- 78 *Be-lahateihem*. Missing in B. For the efficacy of one of the names of Metatron to confuse the sorceries see the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron, Sefer ha-Hesheq*, par. 4, fol. 1b.
- 79 The formulation is reminiscent of Pinehas and Elijah; the latter was an apotheotic figure. The implicit assumption here is that zealotry is the reason for apotheosis. See also above, Chapter 2 note 133.
- 80 On the margin of the page it is written 'And he received from the mundane attribute', and this version is found also in B. Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, p. 253 note 4, identifies the lower attribute with Jupiter, which he identifies with the sefirah of *Malkhut*.
- 81 Gen. 5.24.
- 82 BT *Hullin*, fol. 60a.
- 83 *Kalul*. On this verb in the school of R. Isaac the Blind see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 118. Compare also the view we have analyzed above in Chapter 2, as found in the writings of the Ashkenazi author, R. Moses Azriel. See especially note 277 there.
- 84 Only in B, and it stands for the Tetragrammaton.
- 85 According to this version, it is not the name *Shadday* as the nominal identity that is hinted at here but the view that Enoch is called now by the Tetragrammaton, qualified as the 'small'. See above, Chapter 1.
- 86 Here in B we find a statement that I have translated above as a tradition that the Kabbalist heard.
- 87 Like *'Illat ha-'Illot*, which occurs immediately below. Also, this term points to philosophical terminology.
- 88 Paragraph [b] is found in B in a slightly different form: 'There is someone who directs his intention during prayer to him, and they gave a rationale for their words that being the fact that they are impure and mean, how it is possible in their mind to pray to the *Causa Causarum*, may be elevated. But provided that this prince is permitted to [deal with] all the matters of this world, we shall pray to him. But this is not our intention.'
- 89 Lev. 19.4. I translated '*Elilim*' as 'idols'.
- 90 Fol. 1b. See Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 272–3; Liebes, 'The Angels of the Shofar', p. 190 note 51; Abrams, 'The Boundaries', p. 314.
- 91 See Idel, 'Interpretations of the Secret of Incest', pp. 104–8.
- 92 See especially in his *Shkiin*, pp. 14–15, where he discusses a quote from Yehudah

- Hadassi's book '*Eshkol ha-Kofer*, where the view that Enoch is Metatron has been attributed to *Massekhet Bereshit Rabba*. Liebermann discards the authenticity of this attribution. See also above, Chapter 2 note 85.
- 93 *Genesis Rabba*' 25.1, pp. 228–9; *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, p. 36. See also Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 349–50, who on the basis of material that has been cited above reached the conclusion that according to the view of R. Akivah, Enoch ascended to heaven.
- 94 See below the quote from the book of the *Zohar*.
- 95 4.7–16; Clarke, p. 35; Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 136. For the affinity between this text and the *Midrash Genesis Rabba*' see Winston, *ibid.*, p. 140.
- 96 See Reese, *Hellenistic Influence*, p. 77 and note 197, where he points for the possibility that this view was influenced by a pagan source.
- 97 See above, Introduction note 171.
- 98 Isa. 57.1. On this verse see above, Chapter 2, beside note 126.
- 99 Ps. 116.15.
- 100 *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, ed. Gershom Scholem; *The Kabbalah in Provence*, ed. R. Shatz (Akademion, Jerusalem, 1963), Appendix, p. 6. For the larger context of this quote see also Idel, 'Some Remarks on Ritual', p. 120. See also the remarks of Mark Sendor, *The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah, R. Isaak the Blind's Commentary on Sefer Yezirah* (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 173–4.
- 101 See *Meshiv Devarim Nekho'im*, p. 73. Compare also to the similar passage we quoted from Nahmanides, R. Jacob's younger compatriot, in the Introduction, Section 5.
- 102 See Hava Lazarus-Yafe, *Intertwined Worlds* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992), pp. 31–2; Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', p. 276. For a somewhat similar role played by Sandalfon see the passages from the *Heikhalot* literature and one by the pseudo-R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, discussed in Green, *Keter*, pp. 55, 125. The question is whether we have here some form of Jewish Christian material. See Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 128–9.
- 103 Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*, pp. 1–2; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Enoch*, p. 229.
- 104 See Franz Cumont & Joseph Bidez, *Les Mages Hellenisés* (Les belles lettres, Paris, 1948), vol. 2, pp. 115–17; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 366 note 106. For more on the possibility of the worship of angels in late antiquity Judaism see Michael-Ives Perrin, 'Rendre un culte aux anges a la maniere des juifs', in eds, J.-P. Boudet, H. Bresc & B. Brevin, *Les anges et la magie aux Moyen Ages* (Ecole Francaise de Rome, Rome, 2002), pp. 669–700.
- 105 Aharon ben Elijah, *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* (Gloslow, 1866), fol. 72bc, analyzed by Vajda, 'Pour le dossier de Metatron', p. 345. Compare to our discussions of the philosophical views found in Abulafia's theory of sonship and in some later philosophers in Chapter 3 note 15 above.
- 106 See Vajda, *ibid.*, pp. 346–7.

- 107 See the material adduced in Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati, the Kabbalist*, vol. 1, pp. 118–19; Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers*, pp. 136–51.
- 108 See his ‘The Gospel of Memra’, and see also Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, p. 119.
- 109 See Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, pp. 104–10.
- 110 See Idel, ‘On R. Isaac Sagi Nahor’s Mystical Intention’, pp. 31–6, 42.
- 111 Idel, ‘Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah’, p. 267.
- 112 See Idel, ‘On the Kavvanah of Shmoneh ‘Esreh’, pp. 42–3; Abrams, ‘The Boundaries’, pp. 311–16. See also Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati, the Kabbalist*, vol. 1, pp. 156–9. Compare also to the material adduced by Dan, *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle*, p. 228. Unaware of the binitarian theories or of early kabbalistic binitarianism, his paraphrase of the material does not fathom the problems faced by the texts he addresses. Especially disturbing for the quality of scholarship is the total ignorance, not quite limited to this case alone, of Abrams’ pertinent study, ‘The Boundaries’, which deals exactly with the material Dan discusses. He could also have learned much from Abrams’, ‘The Evolution of Intention of the Prayer to the “Special Cherub”: From the Earliest Works to a Late Unknown Treatise’, *Frankfurter Judaistische Beitrage* 22 (1995), pp. 1–26.
- 113 See Abrams, ‘The Boundaries’, pp. 298–311.
- 114 See Idel, ‘Additional Remnants’, p. 49; Abrams, *ibid.*, p. 314.
- 115 Gen. 5.24.
- 116 For the view that God delighted in Enoch – a transposition of the biblical view of God’s attitude to Noah – see above in the quote from the *Wisdom of Solomon*. This stand is well represented also in St Ephrem the Syrian.
- 117 Eccles. 8.14.
- 118 Namely the group known as the ten martyrs.
- 119 Eccles. 8.14.
- 120 *Zohar*, vol. 2, fol. 10b. See BT *Mo’ed Qatan*, fol. 25b. See also Liebes, ‘De Natura Dei’, p. 262.
- 121 See Idel, ‘Light of Life’.
- 122 In Hebrew the word *Panim*, face, is a plural form.
- 123 Num. 6.25.
- 124 Each of the consonants of *Hanokh* is multiplied by the following consonant, and the sum is 820, while *Metatron ha-Sar*, amounts to 819, which is considered as equal to 820. For the expression ‘*Sar Metatron*’ see R. Nehemiah’s passage, dealt with in Asulin, ‘Another Glimpse’, p. 454 note 70.
- 125 Job 16.19.
- 126 Both amount to 84.
- 127 See above, Chapter 2 note 131.
- 128 *Sefer ha-Mefo’ar* (Levin-Epstein, Jerusalem, 1962), p. 52, found also in MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1748, as a round note to 3 *Enoch*. I prefer the varia of the MS. version. See also the preface of R. Abraham Hamoi to R. Nehemiah’s *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, printed in his *Seder Beit Din* (Livorno, 1858).
- 129 Eccles. 8.14.
- 130 See e.g. the appellation Enoch assumed by Giovanni Mercurio da Coreggio for himself, cf. above, Chapter 5 note 19 and *Epistola Enoch* by his follower, the other eccentric figure active in Northern Italy, Ludovico Lazzarelli, mentioned above in Chapter 5 note 19.
- 131 See Boaz Huss, *Sockets of Fine Gold* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 177–9 (Hebrew), where Enoch is described as righteous, a view not found in his immediate source, the fourteenth-century Kabbalist R. Reuven Tzarfati. See above, Chapter 3 note 16.
- 132 See Idel, ‘Enoch, the Mystical Cobbler’. In a late sixteenth-century commentary on the book of the *Zohar* written by the famous scholar active in Poland – R. Moshe ‘Isserless, - ha-Rema’ – and redacted by R. Elijah Loantz, Enoch is described as the son of the lower mother, *Malkhut*, just as *Tiferet* is described as the son of the supernal mother, namely *Binah*. See ‘*Aderet ‘Eliahu*’, ed. Aharon D. Shatland (Makhon Sha’arei Ziv, Jerusalem, 1998), vol. 2, p. 206. See also *ibid.*, p. 208. Thus Enoch is conceived of as a son of a divine power.
- 133 On this text see *ibid.*, pp. 226–7. It should be mentioned that in a mid-fourteenth-century kabbalistic book written in the Byzantine Empire, *Sefer ha-Temunah*, Enoch is conceived of as stemming from the *shemittah*, namely the cosmic cycle of *Hesed*, mercy, which means that he is totally superior to all the people mentioned in the Bible, with the exception of Moses, who are from the cosmic cycle of judgment. This view has been accepted also in *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, written in the same area. See e.g. vol. 2, fol. 66c.
- 134 Cordovero quotes here a long passage from 3 *En.*, ch. 15, dealing with the bodily transformation undergone by Enoch.
- 135 *Pardes Rimmonim* 24.12, vol. 2, fol. 51c.
- 136 This view is reminiscent of the Zoharic discussion of *Zihara’ ‘Ila’ah*, adduced in Chapter 4 above. It should be pointed out that according to R. Isaac Aiziq Yehudah Yehiel Safran of Komarno, a mid-nineteenth century Hasidic figure who was also a great expert in Kabbalah, Enoch is conceived of as being superior to Moses, as the former received the *Yehidah* from the world of emanation, while the latter received only the soul – *Neshamah* – from the world of emanation. In that context Metatron is mentioned as the angel that informed Moses. See his *Sefer Netiv Mitzvotekhah* (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 20. *Yehidah* is a spiritual faculty higher than *Neshamah* but lower than *Zihara’ ‘Ila’ah*.
- 137 This issue reflects the problem posed by the thirteenth-century authors active in the Franco-Ashkenazi culture, known as *Ba’alei ha-Tossafot* to BT *Yebbamot*, fol. 16b and BT *Hullin*, fol. 60a; and Kanarfogel, ‘*Peering through the Lattices*’, p. 170.
- 138 This is the title of one of the compositions of the *Zohar*.
- 139 See the *Zohar*, vol. 1, fols. 59b–60a.
- 140 Job 16.19.
- 141 Ps. 81.6.
- 142 For an interpretation of Joseph as connected to Enoch see above, Chapter 1 note 176. The concept of beauty as reverberating from one paradigmatic figure, God, to another, Metatron or other, is found in the Heikhalot literature, as described in Chapter 1.
- 143 *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim* (Research Center for Kabbalah, Jerusalem, 1974), p. 87. For

- another important discussion of Joseph as youth, in the context of Metatron, see the Lurianic text, from *Sefer ha-Liqqutim*, translated and analyzed in Pachter, *Roots of Faith and Devekut*, pp. 215–17. For the view that Enoch was the angel Zagzagel, who informed Moses and was thus equal to him see *Liqqutei Torah* (Vilnius, 1889), fol. 19a, and Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, p. 523.
- 144 My view differs from the assumptions that guide both Yoshiko Reed, *Thee Fallen Angels*, and Jackson, *Enochic Judaism*, p. 221, who speaks about the interest in Enochic literature after 70 CE as ‘socially disembodied relics of an extinct religious movement’. See, however, above, Chapter 3 note 263, on the possibility of the continuation of Judeo-Christian communities in the Byzantine Empire.
- 145 See e.g. Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma*, tr. S.G.F. Brandon (Beacon, Boston, 1957), pp. 120–30 and above, Chapter 5 note 3. Compare the Philonic understanding of the ascent of Enoch as a spiritual elevation of the soul of the patriarch. Cf. Winston, *Logos*, p. 38.
- 146 See Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996); Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, pp. 145–60.

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