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26

Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory

Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism

Daniel Abrams

with a foreword by

David Greetham

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For Michael Schneider

'And on His right is Michael, the archon over all the holy forms'

– *The Book Bahir*, §77

Foreword

When I received by e-mail a letter from Daniel Abrams describing his book on *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory* I was both surprised and intrigued. Surprised by a book on kabbalistic manuscripts having been sent to me at all, for I could claim no genuine expertise in the first element of the title; and intrigued by seeing these manuscripts linked to 'textual theory', a topic with which I certainly felt more comfortable and for whose enlargement and understanding I had been arguing (perhaps with more than a touch of messianic conviction) over several decades. Given that my agenda had been that some form of textual theory lay behind the practice of the critical study of manuscripts and printed books (and then electronic texts), Abrams' having linked kabbalistic manuscripts to textual theory might be seen as evidence that my long project was indeed reaching fruition. In fact, as I began to read into the text, I saw that Abrams had indeed insisted on embedding the complex bibliographical and textual study of these manuscripts into the various discussions of 'theory' that I and other scholars (Jerome McGann, D. F. McKenzie, Peter L. Shillingsburg, G. Thomas Tanselle, for example) had laid out as what I had called a 'matrix'[1] for the practice of bibliographical and textual analysis.

The collocation of 'textual theory' and 'manuscripts' (kabbalistic or otherwise) therefore posed a particularly complex challenge for a scholar working primarily, though not exclusively, in the Anglo-American tradition. Having laid out one of the principles to which Abrams' book was a response, how effectively and accurately could I return the favour by assessing not only the final section on 'Theorizing Textual Scholarship in Kabbalah Research' but also by using the opportunity presented by earlier parts of the book to educate myself in a manuscript tradition with which I ought to have been more familiar,

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[1] D. C. Greetham, 'Textual and Literary Theory: Redrawing the Matrix', *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), pp. 1-24. Repr. *Anglo-American Scholarly Editing, 1980-2005*, ed. Paul Eggert and Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Ecdotica* 6 (2009), pp. 174-197. The use of the term *matrix* is, of course, a reference to the printer's 'mould' for casting type.

as well as mining these sections of the book for examples that could prove apt and salutary to any forthcoming work I might later undertake? Abrams' book therefore arrived at a particularly significant moment: it allowed this Anglo-American reader to reflect on the 'theory' of editing and textuality and to scour the rich materials presented on kabbalistic manuscripts for illuminating that 'theory'.

How did this expectation work out? It should first be emphasized that, as I take it, Abrams' purpose in that final section on 'Theorizing Textual Scholarship' is not to present a comprehensive view of developments in this field as a whole, but rather, working under specifically problematic or even contentious rubrics ('Textual Idealism', the 'Urtext', 'Intention and the Subject', 'Hypertext and the Material Book'), to select from arguments addressing these topics those that might help to bring a theoretical 'matrix' to bear on the particular historical, documentary, and transmissional problems of the Kabbalah.

For example, while numerous examples of the role of intention (authorial, scribal, social) occur throughout the book, it is in that part of the final section devoted to 'Authorial Intention and Textual Idealism' that Abrams can integrate the earlier documentary study with several of the basic principles invoked by contemporary intentionalist critics, for example, that '[t]he meeting of authorial intent and textual idealism is based on a presumption of a single personality who produces a unified work that reflects a uniform system of thought' (651). While several of the terms of this formula ('unified', 'system of thought') would require a good deal of unpacking to do justice to the enormous critical literature in this area, I would doubt that any faction in the idealist/intentionalist controversy would quarrel with this deftly worded summation of the 'presumption' that underlies the debate. To do this effectively, Abrams must adopt a sort of rhetorical ventriloquism, creating locutionary space for a position that he neither adopts nor rejects. Thus, he can go on to propose (or rather state, in a fairly neutral tone) that '[i]t could be argued that the starting point of such an inquiry is the cognitive experience of the reader who imposes expectations on the work by fashioning the text through acts of interpretation' (526), where the introductory disclaimer ('it could be argued') allows Abrams' ventriloquism to present what is again a complex of critical stances ('cognitive experience', 'expectations', 'acts of interpretation'), each one of which might be the focus of what has often been a highly contentious debate, but which taken cumulatively in Abrams' apparently neutral rhetoric, can be seen as an eminently fair and even-handed presentation of the problem.

It is true that, in his development of the principles of this debate, Abrams can introduce demurrals that seem to question some of the 'presumptions' that he has already described. After an examination of the working out of some instances in intention and idealism in kabbalistic texts, he quietly observes: 'In such cases, I wonder to what extent authorial intent over-determines the results of the textual analysis. Put differently, what are the implications of research that grounds the understanding of the work?' (528), going on to examine the problems posed by an author writing at different periods and then choosing to revise earlier work in the light of these later developments. Such issues have been raised by several Anglo-American textual critics (for example, Hershel Parker on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American authors like Twain or Mailer),[2] and is particularly instructive to see how Abrams now adopts the principles behind such critiques in the editing of Moses de León's *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, in which the editor Jochanan Wijnhoven decided to omit some materials that 'break down the literary form or plan under any assessment' (529). It might be objected that 'any assessment' casts too wide a net given the arguments about the socialization of text advanced by such critics as Jerome McGann and D. F. McKenzie,[3] but Abrams returns to his more open critical stance when he insists: 'we must ask what is the purpose of *scholarly* editing? Is it to restore the author's first (complete) execution of his literary plan, his final product, or the 'received' and commonly known form of the text as transmitted in manuscript and print' (529). When Abrams then goes on to place Wijnhoven's edition in the ongoing argument 'to test or further confirm at that time Scholem's conclusion that De León was the sole author of the *Zohar*' (529), we can see that Abrams has perhaps strategically retreated from his earlier citing of 'any assessment' in placing the edition within a very particularized critical argument.

This method appears throughout the later section on textual theory, where Abrams will take up a *potential* argument familiar to, if not necessarily derived from, contemporary Anglo-American debate, and will then test various aspects of this argument, using his extensive and detailed knowledge of kabbalistic manuscripts to find an appropriate way he can set the implications of the

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[2] Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction*, Evanston 1985.

[3] Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, Charlottesville 1992; D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, London, The Panizzi Lectures, 1985.

theory within the tradition of transmission and editing with which he is clearly such an expert. And is not this technique exactly what I have been advocating for many years? Well, of course, and how refreshing it is to be introduced into a very different and complex textual tradition via those critical tools that have been so familiar to textuists in the milieu of Anglo-American textuality.

To see the relationship in this way is doubtless historically myopic, for the critical editing and textual scholarship of vernacular European-language texts is a comparatively recent phenomenon, whereas, like the textual criticism and editing of ancient Greek and Latin texts, the tradition of biblical (and particularly Hebrew) textual scholarship extends over a couple of millennia and more. But it is more than just an act of cultural courtesy (I suspect) that has driven Abrams to embrace work (particularly theoretical work) done by these latterday vernacular critics. He has realized, with an openness to other dispensations, that much of the more provocative and critically sophisticated intellectual work has of late been done within these more recent vernacular tradition.

Thus, when we turn to the earlier parts of his book, those sections not specifically labelled with terminology comfortable to the vernacular critic, we nonetheless find that much of his exposition of the manuscript tradition of Kabbalah is, if not entirely grounded in, then at least parallel to, these vernacular critiques. In a seven-hundred page book, trying to isolate the most pertinent examples of this technique can be both very fruitful and yet frustrating. Abrams' text is so rich with exemplary moments that the mere recitation of them would become a heavy task, and yet one of the more delightful responsibilities of the Foreword is precisely to give some sense of the sort of riches to be encountered. So, when Abrams informs this hitherto ignorant reader that 'the basis of the Jewish mystical tradition about the textual condition' (542) is to be found in the *Midrash Konen*'s 'concrete. . . transferring the material site of the written Torah to God's skin, so that He studies Himself when He reads' (542), and then links this perspective to both Tanselle's *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* and to McGann's *The Textual Conditon*, we may find ourselves given some security in the anchoring of such a provocative idea in two of the most influential of contemporary Anglo-American critical texts. The effect is still doubtless shocking, or at least surprising, for I doubt that Messrs Tanselle and McGann had anticipated that their theoretical work could be applied to reading God's skin; but the collocation is typical of Abrams' yoking his detailed historical knowledge of Kabbalah to critical perspectives developed in a very different textual tradition.

Abrams is fully aware, however, that much of the recent editorial and textual work in vernacular literatures is not fully compatible with the documentary circumstances of Kabbalah, and that Kabbalah itself has a very different documentary history from rabbinic literature, in that 'Rabbinic texts are often edited in order to reproduce the text of the edited document that became stabilized in antiquity out of the process that transformed oral traditions into a written record, only to be corrupted by later copyists and uses of the work' (546) the familiar *textus receptus* of much of classical scholarship. But both kabbalistic works and modern vernaculars are different from this method of transmission. As Abrams notes, kabbalistic manuscripts 'often preserve the literary form(s) of a work that existed *prior* to the editing of the document that was printed' (546), while vernacular textual scholarship has often been confronted with the embarrassment of riches in authorial material (multiple surviving draft, marked-up proofs, authorial correspondence with publishers). It is precisely this difference in documentary circumstances (between the paucity of authorial manuscripts in the Renaissance and Medieval periods as compared to the abundance from the mid-eighteenth century on) that led McGann to reject the 'copy-text' eclectic editing proposed by W. W. Greg, espoused by Fredson Bowers, and promulgated by G. Thomas Tanselle.

Given these enormous differences among these several documentary traditions, what can the editing of kabbalistic manuscripts gain or learn from what has been going on elsewhere? And conversely, and perhaps more importantly, what can the editing of modern vernacular literatures learn from the long history of kabbalistic editing?

While Abrams' account demonstrates that the cumulative history of kabbalistic editing can, at several points, be considered within some of the theoretical position associated with the modern vernaculars, most often this resituating is largely a matter of citing simply the context of the vernacular arguments than of detailing the different ways that these vernacular theories would (or would not) change in practical ways the actual production of editions of the Kabbalah. Thus, in discussing the Hekhalot works and their survival in many witnesses (including Geniza fragments), Abrams characterizes the variant forms of the Hekhalot corpus as a series of 'different configurations' which 'resemble each other only to a degree' (41). In such circumstances, he claims that 'upon comparing these manuscripts ... we can no longer speak of the specific *works* but only of specific *texts* or clusters of traditions and their similarities' a redefinition of those perennially problematic terms that Peter Schäfer has modified still further, 'arguing that in the case of the Hekhalot

literature we can speak at best about a *corpus* of literature defined *only* by its transmissional history in the manuscripts' (41). This is a familiar enough assertion and can be paralleled for much vernacular literature, perhaps particularly in medieval texts and in the gradual acceptance of the concept of *mouvance*, associated with the work of Bernard Cerquiglini.[4] That Abrams links this textual phenomenon not with Cerquiglini and medieval literature but with Harold Bloom[5] (and his temporary flirtation with deconstruction before his later repudiation of the 'hermeneutical mafia' of New Haven) is probably more a concession to his desire to incorporate the later two critiques[6] of Bloom et al. than a demonstration that Bloom is central (or at least parallel) to his argument about Hekhalot literature. I say 'probably' because, while Abrams does occasionally invoke deconstruction in other parts of his book,[7] it is usually in the non-academic sense of a general 'critique' rather than in the poststructuralist (i.e., anti-structuralist) interrogation of such bipolarities as 'early/late', 'writing/speech', 'original/derived' (and the continued deferral of a foundational position) that characterizes the early work of Derrida, De Man, and their followers.

It therefore seems to me that Abrams uses contemporary textual and literary theory largely as a means of providing a series of provocative incursions

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4 Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philology*, Paris 1989; trans. Betsy Wing, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, Baltimore 1999.

5 Specifically, 'The Breaking of Form', in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, New York 1979, pp. 1-37.

6 G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Textual Criticism and Deconstruction', *Studies in Biblliography* 43 (1990), pp. 1-33; D. C. Greetham, '[Textual] Criticism and Deconstruction', *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991), pp. 1-30.

7 See, for example, his recognition that the desire for 'theological consistency in Jewish thought and belief' (375), especially in Israel, can create a 'suspicion' of a postmodernist 'deconstruction of the canon of Jewish books, sacred literature and the accepted course of study'; or his argument that the two-volume edition of *Ra'aya Meheimna* (Jerusalem, 1983) is especially important because 'it shows an example, outside of university criticism, [of] the deconstruction of the literary form imposed by the printers and a return to a more natural or early form of its composition or transmission' (421 n. 420). To perceive a 'a return to ... a more natural or early form' is itself surely a 'deconstruction' of deconstruction, in which the desire for such origins would usually be seen as chimerical, if not a downright Romantic espousal of that 'originary moment' that McGann, in his promotion of the socialization of text, has regarded as an illusion.

into the history of kabbalistic manuscripts rather than as a group of completely parallel (or even complementary) and informed mutual positions. This is a perfectly appropriate rhetorical mode, but it does mean that trying to use Abrams' book as if it is intended to provide a critical (postmodernist?) gloss on his study of kabbalistic manuscripts is to impose a responsibility on his work that I do not think recognizes his purpose. To put it another way: students of kabbalistic manuscripts ought not to expect that the conflation of this manuscript history with contemporary textuality is going to mean that Abrams has done all their work for them: he provides them with the appropriate points of reference, and thus encourages them to investigate the possible codependencies; but his mapping is still *scriptible* in Barthes' sense, in that it encourages further (re)writings of the textual terrain, but does not close down the critical options.

This method means that there are comparatively few direct citations (especially lengthy ones) from the contemporary textuists invoked by Abrams. When these do occur, as in the commentary on Tanselle's concept of the 'corporeal reality of literary works' (qtd Abrams 539), the elucidation is both authoritative and judicious, and can often restate or reconfigure the sources in startlingly original ways, as when he suggests that '[f]or Tanselle, a textual artifact deserves our respect if for no other reason than it has survived' (540), a bold and illuminating way of formulating Tanselle's position.

More typical is Abrams' situating the problem of authorship (or lack of same) for the *Zohar* in terms of Foucault's concept of the 'transdiscursive' author, which he then aligns with Wittgenstein's use of 'family resemblances' to characterize 'overlap and criss-cross' (371), a collocation that, like his reconfiguration of Tanselle's comments on a textual 'artifact' is at once startling and, yes, illuminating, even though family resemblances have been a feature of genealogical textual argument for several centuries.[8]

The attentive reader will already have been alerted to the aims of Abrams' book in his laying out of the project: 'Textual scholarship of Jewish mysticism is not in the service of theory as such, offering a new tool that advances the study of hermeneutics, even when it is reconfigured historically, culturally or socially. Kabbalistic manuscripts meet textual theory within the discipline of editorial practice where methods of evaluating and presenting difference in the text allow the scholar to negotiate meaning from within the various contexts

[8] See Abrams' comments on Lachmannian genealogy, p. 519.

without idealizing such constructions as the author, the work or the intended meaning ... This study will stop short of theorizing the theory behind the academic's hermeneutic negotiation with the kabbalistic text' (4).

This is a carefully constructed mediation between the documentary subject and the critical method, and explains much of what I have been discussing in Abrams' text, and especially in the use of contemporary textuality as a thread through a book which is primarily concerned not (as he insists) with 'theorizing the theory' but with showing kabbalistic scholars how their work can be related to, even be informed by, some current arguments on textuality. And this extract answers my two earlier questions about one party learning from another: scholars of kabbalistic manuscripts will find Abrams' book (particularly the later parts) enormously helpful in providing a series of conceptual frameworks for the wide array of documentary conditions and editorial practices that Abrams knows so well. And, while the book may occasionally prove hard going and a challenging intellectual investment (requiring a good deal of careful and measured negotiation with a very complex history), current critics of textuality will find in the accounts of the creation, transmission, and reception of kabbalistic manuscripts a new world of fascinating evidence which until now has been all-too-unknown to most modern vernacular textuists.

So, this book is certainly monumental, offering in its seven hundred pages a wealth of documentation and distilled argument that manages to be both comprehensive in its materials and transparent in its critical insights. It is rare indeed that a work of such formidable scholarship can actually be a pleasure to read and convincing in its elucidation of what are often extremely complex documentary circumstances and editorial traditions. The book joins a very small number of authoritative accounts of non-anglophone literature (I am reminded of E. J. Kenney's *The Classical Text* or of Bruce Metzger's *The New Testament*)[9] that are essential reading for textual scholars in any period or field, especially those who can appreciate the skills of a masterful critic subduing and rendering comprehensible a widely divergent and historically complex documentary tradition.

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[9] E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the Age of the Printed Book*, Berkeley 1974: Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*, New York 1995.

Preface

The pleasure [of the text] can be spoken; whence criticism.
– Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 61

I have been blessed with the opportunity to devote my creative energies to the subjects that interest me most and have had the honor and privilege to share my work with the most erudite and intellectually compelling scholars I could imagine. The study of kabbalistic manuscripts and books has been the central passion of my life, ever since I first pursued a doctorate in Jewish Mysticism with Elliot Wolfson at New York University. In those years, I would spend my days in the stacks and Rare Book Room of the Jewish Theological Seminary, reading kabbalistic manuscripts from the original codices to which they so graciously gave me direct access.

Ever since those formative years, I have had the pleasure of reading kabbalistic manuscripts and books in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts and in the Gershom Scholem Library, both housed in the National Library of Israel, which contains the single greatest collection of Jewish sources in the world and serves as the meeting place of experts in various disciplines of Jewish studies from around the world. I would like to thank the staff of these libraries, who, over the years, have assisted me, shared their knowledge and given me access to all that I have needed to complete my research.

This book emerges out of research that extends back many years and culminates in conclusions that have been reached in response to the latest developments in scholarship. I have enjoyed the opportunity to share my thoughts and be critically challenged by a number of trusted colleagues who, without reserve, offered their direct criticism, insights, and reflections to my thoughts and research.

I would like to begin by first acknowledging Elliot Wolfson who has profoundly impacted my work and thinking since my graduate training. It is with him that I first read the *Book Bahir*, the *Zohar* and so many other texts that find their expression here. He remains a steadfast example of devotion to bibliophilia, textual scholarship, religious studies and the integration of critical theory within the study of kabbalistic books and manuscripts.

Moshe Idel first taught me to read manuscripts without a map of any kind in mind, to randomly choose kabbalistic manuscripts from the card drawer each day so that I would construct my own impressions of kabbalistic texts out of all that has survived, instead of limiting myself to what others have published or deemed important. He has encouraged me to appreciate all things that have been presented as marginal or which exist in variation and to celebrate their multiple forms. He has consistently advised me to ignore all political and institutional pressures in order to pursue the projects that I enjoy and find interesting, and to realize in print my vision of what I understand from reading primary sources.

Philip Wexler has shared with me his keen wit and intimate knowledge of critical theory in the humanities and social sciences and has refined my thinking and presentation for a wider and more sophisticated audience than I would have otherwise considered.

I would like to offer my special thanks to David Greetham, whom I hope to meet one day. His work has guided my research in textual scholarship for many years. His book, *Theories of the Text*, opened my eyes and transformed my thinking, exposing me to an ideal of how to think and write about texts and textual scholarship. I did not dare contact him until completing this manuscript and I am glad I had the courage to do so as he has helped me see this book to print and has honored me with his preface and critical reflections on my work.

Finally, I wish to thank Michael Schneider, a friend, colleague and teacher, who has taught me a greater degree of patience when confronting texts and has shared with me how he reads in context and across various traditions. He is a scholar in the deepest sense I know, seeing past all boundaries, whether they be linguistic, historical, ideological or textual. I turn to him when I reach the limits of my abilities in deciphering a text. And for all who know him, in whatever field they share with him, he shies away from the glories of success, seeking only the pleasures of learning. I dedicate this study to him as a small token of the recognition he deserves as a master of so many subjects and fields: *he-ḥakham ha-shalem*.

Introduction

> I am certain that there is no hope or foundation for Kabbalah research until these manuscripts are investigated. [...] One should know that what has been printed and what has not been printed was not the result of their importance, but by a matter of chance. That is, these were random events and we must correct the incidental damage that has been done.
>
> – Gershom Scholem, 'Letter to H.N. Bialik', p. 60

In the serious study of Jewish mysticism, textual scholarship concerns every stage of research, from assessing the character and context of the appropriate sources to be studied for a given project to adjudicating meaning about the most theoretical and abstract discussions for a thematic survey or history of ideas of a given topic. As understood for some time now in the field of textual scholarship, theory resides within all uses of textual sources and there is no need to oppose, or to argue, for the need to combine textuality and theory as if they were mutually exclusive disciplines. This study thus takes for granted the necessary interface between the two and explores the particular forms of their application in the study of Jewish mysticism.

The academic study of Jewish mysticism has witnessed great strides since its inception nearly a century ago, but unfortunately it has been engaged in little self-reflection on its methodologies of research in textual scholarship. Social and intellectual history, hermeneutics, and the various theoretical aspects of speculative (and theosophic) kabbalistic traditions have been privileged over textual scholarship which has been seen as the theoretically neutral groundwork intended to serve the higher aims of these other types of research. The needed corrective is not to reverse this hierarchy, but to expose the unspoken theoretical assumptions within textual scholarship and editorial practice and thus rehabilitate these methods for many, and in the eyes of some, even legitimate editorial practice within the academy. This volume is decidedly not aimed at offering such an education, but to advance the understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of past editorial practice and to forward a new theory for textual scholarship within the study of Jewish mysticism.

A central assumption of this study is that scholars serve the texts of Jewish mysticism in order to advance its understanding within the academy. Textual

scholarship as the primary engine for advancing the various forms of scholarship within the field is constructed around the effort to adduce meaning from within the raw data and surviving materials, which should be studied in order to better appreciate the phenomena that produced and resulted in this textual body. The strong thesis of this study is therefore that the versions of the texts that we now possess are not reflections on the religious and cultural life that once existed, transforming the text into the medium, or kabbalistically the speculum, through which the modern scholar can reflect on the religious and mystical life behind and beyond the text. Kabbalah as the main period and interest of the study of Jewish mysticism as a whole, is in itself textual and as such the textual work, editions and interpretive studies are part of a composite whole of understanding its life throughout the ages, including the very editions which are produced from its manuscript resources.

Textual scholarship of Jewish mysticism is not in the service of theory as such, offering a new tool that advances the study of hermeneutics, even when it is reconfigured historically, culturally or socially. Kabbalistic manuscripts meet textual theory within the discipline of editorial practice where methods of evaluating and presenting difference in the text allow the scholar to negotiate meaning from within the various contexts without idealizing such constructions as the author, the work or the intended meaning. This study will expose the theory behind editorial practice in Kabbalah research and present these findings as a contribution to the general theory of textual scholarship. This study, nevertheless, will stop short of theorizing the theory behind the academic's hermeneutic negotiation with the kabbalistic text, a project worthy in its own right, but will instead isolate the unique features of interpretation within the textual work with kabbalistic manuscripts.

The aims of this project thus depart from those mapped out in D.C. Greetham's masterful *Theories of the Text*, even where it builds on many of his conclusions, foremost amongst them being the implication of theory in all aspects of textual editing.[1] In many other studies, Greetham has demonstrated the underlying theoretical moves behind text work as replete with ideological assumptions that shape the edition and convey a particular set of ideas to the reader. As he writes in the introduction to the collection of some of his earlier studies, *Textual Transgressions*, 'As I have argued for some time, Althusser's definition of ideology ('ideology represents the imaginary relationship of

[1] David Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, Oxford 1999, esp. pp. 1-25.

individuals to their real conditions of existence') as a cognitive system applied just as much to textual and editorial work as to any other intellectual activity. Philology, either old or new, was not exempt from the cultural *données* of its time'.[2]

The history of the academic scholarship of Jewish mysticism is quite complex. Despite Scholem's philologically grounded inquiries and the *volumes* he published in the early years of the field of kabbalistic bibliography – the history of printing and annotated manuscript listings – his efforts were culturally motivated as catalysts for change in a community of readers in and outside of the university.[3] The importance of this claim is that with voiced self-awareness, Scholem saw his engagement with this spurned body of literature as a corrective to a given situation in his generation. Much has changed since Scholem's time and scholarship has emerged as *more* culturally invested in its self-understanding, both in how it evaluates the intentions and achievements of past scholarship and how its self-perception informs and shapes the questions and interests of contemporary research.

This fundamental shift in orientation has been deleterious to textual scholarship in the study of Jewish mysticism. Countless studies about Scholem have misinterpreted his methods and aims by assimilating the two when in fact he was able to appreciate that culture and ideology could offer the initial impetus and ultimately benefit from the fruits of textual scholarship, but that the methods of research were derived from within its study. That is to say, that Scholem quite clearly believed that the texts themselves offered the keys to decoding this body of esoteric literature. And while some of his scholarly writing lent itself to a history of ideas with particular assumptions about its relationship to social history, his devotion to bibliography and texts remained uncompromised by his other interests which were nevertheless present.

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[2] David Greetham, *Textual Transgressions Essays Toward the Construction of a Bibliography*, New York 1998, p. 21, citing Louis Althusser's, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, New York 1971, p. 162.

[3] Daniel Abrams, 'Defining Modern Academic Scholarship: Gershom Scholem and the Establishment of a New (?) Discipline', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 9 (2000), pp. 267-302.; idem, 'Presenting and Representing Gershom Scholem: A Review Essay', *Modern Judaism* 20 (2000), pp. 226-243; idem, 'The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar* – An Unknown Lecture by Gershom Scholem from 1940 (Study, Edition and English Translation)', *Kabbalah* 19 (2009), pp. 279-315.

It is my understanding that textual scholarship of Jewish mystical literature in the academy grew out of the methods developed by those who produced and preserved these materials beginning in the middle ages. My claim is thus two-fold, that even when the claimed difference between the medieval/traditional and modern/academic forms the basis of what critical methods seek to achieve, a closer look at the categories of textual engagements that interrogate the text and establish its quality through interpretation, emendations and editing prove that the above-stated dichotomy is overstated. The importance of this claim underlies the very ethos of what the present study seeks to describe and advance. A turn to theory is not a turn away from textual scholarship. All serious research of Jewish mysticism begins and returns to its texts ultimately dissolving any difference. The opening up of the field to critical theory enriches such work, while the danger is that textual skills and sources are used instrumentally to feed other ends, namely forms of identity politics, and thinly-guised statements of political and cultural positions. Kabbalah scholarship has been immune until recently of much of the ideological motivations that have affected other areas of Jewish studies. As a grounding force, text research offers legitimacy and authority to most any claim and as such is a double-edged sword. My charge is therefore not only to enrich the methodologies of editorial practice in the field of Jewish mysticism and rehabilitate the place of textual scholarship in Kabbalah research, but to restore the once privileged place of the text scholar in the academy and his or her appreciation as an agent of (academic) culture for advancing the study of texts in a society which shares these values.[4]

Research of Jewish mysticism is arguably the most source-intensive field within Jewish studies, where the burden on scholars of the field is confounded by the fact that most of the written material that has survived remains unpublished in any form. The manuscripts of Jewish mystical texts from ancient times, no less than those of the medieval kabbalists, were often guarded within the fraternities and scholastic circles of Jewish esotericists. Manuscript copies of these mystical works further bear witness to the free hand of the later students of these texts, who would often, and without hesitation, add their glosses, revisions and reconstructions to the works which they received, all without any pretense of respecting the integrity of the particular textual version produced and intended by the initial composer. As will be shown, these

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[4] Gerald Graff, 'The Scholar in Society', *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. J. Gibaldi, New York 1992, second edition, pp. 343-362.

assumptions are modern conventions that are all too often projected by scholars back on to the medieval texts and so distort the form and meaning of how they were produced, transmitted and read.

In this volume, I consider the status of the hermeneutic emphases of serious, modern scholarship of Jewish mysticism as a continuation of the interpretive tradition that read and commented on its own literature. In many cases, however, new methods did not relay the form and content of the author's intention(s) or the cultural world from within which these texts were produced, but instead constructed a new discourse and arguably produced what may be considered new 'works' from the literary data at their disposal. With such practices, many forms of a given work were concealed from the histories created in our day and discarded as unfortunate contaminations due to the vicissitudes of history and human intervention during its transmission. The expectations and ideologies of modern scholars will be shown to have significantly shaped the order and focus of the material discussed, creating constructs that often emerge from texts by relying on newly founded beliefs. As a series of case studies, these chapters will highlight and challenge the assumptions scholars in the field have possessed regarding their approaches to written materials. Ultimately, this volume is a study in methodological self-awareness of the scholarly enterprise.

From my work on central concepts and texts, I have come to appreciate the role of the academic editor of Jewish mystical texts as someone who actively renders meaning through the choices of presentation. The interpretation imbedded in the presentation relates to a text's form no less than its content, as the specific wording is chosen and understood within the frame of its appreciation as a work, shaped and intended by the presumed author. The history of editorial practice in the study of Jewish mysticism is as telling of the mindset, ideology and understanding of the object of study of the scholars as it is of the sources being studied.

This volume thus provides a history of editorial practice of the study of Jewish mysticism and theorizes those methods. The theorization of editorial practice provided here seeks to uncover the presumptions that lie behind the presentation of a library of texts and extends them to issues that go beyond the editions themselves. Four of the five chapters contained in this volume emerged from studies published in academic journals and are presented here in the historical order of the compositions discussed, namely, the *Book Bahir*, the Kabbalah of Nahmanides and his interpreters, and zoharic literature. These studies tackle the main questions of textual scholarship in the field of Jewish

mysticism, namely, glosses and revisions of texts, orality and reception, form criticism and the invention of kabbalistic books. Collectively, these studies offer a consistent and developing argument about textual scholarship in the field, one that culminates in the theoretical summation and thesis statement in the final chapter. All have been revised and updated in order to better serve the aim of this volume as an overview of the past and a programmatic proposition for the future of the field.

An early version of the first chapter was published under the title, 'Critical and Post-Critical Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature', in the aim of taking the historical development of editorial practice to its next methodological stage in which the scholarly edition could be open to, and sustain, *various* questions and methodologies. I removed the main title out of fear that the term 'post-critical' may suggest to many that I am advocating a radical relativism that usurps philological-historical criticism and is akin to the most negative aspects of post-modernism, at least to the ear of the historically oriented philologist. Instead, my aim is to revitalize textual scholarship and reinvest textual criticism with all the theoretical tools currently available. The second chapter highlights textual idealism, a major theme and method that has characterized much of textual scholarship in the field of Jewish mysticism. Through a case study of the *Book Bahir*, glosses have been shown to be interpolated into even the earliest dated manuscript, calling for a correction to the evaluation of the text and its history which significantly changes the assessment of the subject and character of its meaning. The third chapter grapples with one of the earliest cases of the transfer of kabbalistic lore from orality to literacy as the primary means of the transmission of esoteric traditions. Editorial practice, I argue through this example, needs to adapt to the particular problem of these sources and provide for the appreciation of reception and interpretation in re/presenting the way the students of the revered teacher heard, recorded and chose to understand their master's teachings. The fourth chapter, on the *Zohar*, began as a conference lecture in Hebrew under the title, 'The *Zohar* is Not a Book'. Having traversed through a translation and substantial expansion, this lengthy chapter demonstrates the hermeneutic consequences of presumptions about the literary form of a (group of) text(s), in this case demonstrating that scholars in the university setting can be more deeply invested in cultural or faith-based expectations than their kabbalist predecessors. The final chapter, written especially for this volume, seeks to flesh out the theoretical structures which have come into play in textual scholarship of Jewish mystical literature.

This volume as a whole therefore seeks to assess the character, identity and status of texts (and works) in the thinking and editorial practice of those who first composed, transmitted and refashioned the writings of Jewish mysticism and to measure the gap between these views and those of modern scholarship. While this study emphasizes the attitudes and assumptions of academics in our time, one cannot forget that even with an array of newly developed critical approaches, modern scholarship continues to strive to reproduce the text or work that once was. Instead, we might better profit from asking how fluid were the works as texts of the Middle Ages? As argued in this book, the later study of the texts and ideas related to these documents was incorporated into the sculpting of *various* forms and versions of texts, such that scholarship needs to reinvent itself in order to acknowledge that changes resulting from the study and reaction to the initial versions were incorporated into their transmission history, and not that all differences are the product of the corruption of the text. What emerges from this analysis is a strong impression of the status of the text in the mind and in the textual practices of the medieval kabbalists who preserved, transmitted and used Jewish mystical texts, defining the integrity of these works as such and manipulating texts in what to them were the appropriate uses of these sources.

One of the central aims of this volume is to reorient the field of Jewish mysticism to engage kabbalistic manuscripts as literary artifacts of material culture. Manuscripts should not be viewed as the raw data that scholars process in order to produce critical editions, dipping into the disordered fragments of works that have survived the vicissitudes of history precisely because human hands, not trained in the ways of the academy, copied and transmitted them imperfectly. Manuscripts *are* processed data, signposts of the particular stages of composition, editing and textual reactions accomplished by readers, copyists and assorted other commentators who did not share the modern sensibility of 'what is an author' and the literary integrity of a work. These differences constitute the medieval textual process where a manuscript is a living document and thus serves as the material site of opening up a text as an open book for discussion on the page, replete with corrections, glosses and alternative readings which may be seamlessly interpolated into a clean-text in the next generation copy of its transmission.

This volume additionally offers a typology of editorial practices of past scholarship of Jewish mystical literature, critiques its various conventions, theorizes its assumptions and unstated goals, and forwards a more sophisticated theory of editorial practice for the field. The unique situation of

the academic study of Jewish mysticism is thus taken into account. This study benefits from the advances made in the relevant disciplines of textual theory and editorial practice, even if its contribution is not situated necessarily within all aspects and discourses of such studies.

The vast majority of Jewish mystical texts remains unpublished in medieval manuscript witnesses. Rarely do we have a case of a surviving autograph or a printed edition published during the lifetime of an author, and most kabbalistic texts were composed anonymously. As will be shown in the chapters which comprise this volume, the pursuit of authorial intent in preparing editions of Jewish mystical texts has misled a century of scholars who have discarded the rich reception history of texts. Instead, scholarship has directed all textual data back to the static moment of composition within a history created as a construct of scholarship in order to reconstruct the ideal text and afford the writing of a history. Such editions have (re)constructed a text that does not exist in extant sources and at the expense of other readings which were discarded as contaminations, variations from the original which no scholar ever viewed. In other words, the 'tyranny' of a history of ideas has displaced the life of a text across time as multiple images were collapsed into the imagined originary conception and textual formulation of *the author*.

This volume thus serves a critical need in Jewish studies and in the field of Jewish mysticism, where textual scholarship has been in a steady decline over the last century. Not only have textual skills and editorial practice been marginalized in graduate training and scholarship for a variety of reasons (despite defensive claims to the contrary), but the text as such has been abandoned in many cases in the most accomplished circles for reasons that are grounded in particular conceptions of what scholarship aims to achieve. A separate volume would be required to map out the full methodological and hermeneutical underpinnings of the shifts that have taken place in the cultural aspirations of scholarship of Jewish mysticism. Instead, the present study assesses and theorizes the textual methods that have been implemented in the past and suggests a series of methodologies that grow out of the nature of the textual life of manuscripts and printed editions as it embraces the fruits of other disciplines that offer the opportunity for a richer reading of meaning in texts. A few words are nevertheless in order to frame the present discussion in terms of the scholarly methods that have been in currency for many years in the study of Kabbalah. Although any such summary offers an inadequate picture of the many contributions of each scholar to be named, my immediate intent here is to flag the main points of departure between my argument and the particular moves made in past scholarship.

With his grounding work in bibliography and manuscript study of kabbalistic literature, Gershom Scholem offered a history of ideas, mining the kabbalistic books and manuscripts for the doctrines and traditions they housed. And although Scholem broke from past methods which relegated kabbalistic literature and thought to the footnotes of studies of Jewish philosophy and Jewish social history, the independence that he crafted for the study of Jewish mysticism as a discipline, nevertheless suffered from his casting his survey along parallel lines of past efforts. A structured periodization brought with itself a textual idealism that compromised much of the textual processes that well be described in this volume. Scholem's program was, to be sure, a return to texts, but was additionally part of a cultural program that would revitalize Jewish life as it entered into a new age of the social and political arena.[5] Scholem focused on kabbalistic texts and devoted his life to this body of Jewish literature over any other because he believed that the kabbalists 'had found something that we lack'.[6] The modern study of the ancient text served, according to Scholem, as a bridge and correction to the much ailing perspectives that troubled his generation.

Moshe Idel has subsequently offered a much celebrated corrective to Scholem's methodology, arguing that the kabbalistic text could better be

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[5] I have departed here from the standard questions which have framed the discussion of Scholem's cultural stand and the methods he adopted and rejected from his contemporaries in his research of kabbalistic texts. I recognize that these issues, especially the greater context of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the scholastic culture from which it emerged, loom in the background. For important discussions of these topics see David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, Cambridge, Mass. and London England 1979; David Myers, 'The Scholem-Kurzweil Debate and Modern Jewish Historiography', *Modern Judaism* 6 (1986), pp. 261-86; Noam Zadoff, 'The Debate between Baruch Kurzweil and Gershom Scholem on the Research of Sabbateanism', *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 299-360 [Hebrew].

[6] From the 1974 interview with Muki Tsur, printed in Gershom Scholem, *Explication and Implications of Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Tel Aviv 1975, [volume 1], p. 28 [Hebrew] היה בהם משהו החסר לנו, and translated as 'They had a certain something that we lack', in idem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. W. Dannhauser, New York 1976, p. 20. See the discussion and miscitations of Scholem's remark in Martin Ritter, 'Scholarship as a Priestly Craft: Harry A. Wolfson on Tradition in a Secular Age', *Jewish Studies between the Disciplines = Judaistik zwischen den Disziplinen; Papers in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Klaus Herrmann, Margarete Schlüter, Giuseppe Veltri, Leiden 2003, pp. 437-438 n. 7.

appreciated as an 'invitation to action' within the performative religious norms, which were infused with theurgic meaning and other anomian mystical techniques, some leading to individual experiences. The kabbalistic text, for Idel, primarily serves his program of appreciating the *phenomena* of Jewish mysticism, an object of study which lies outside of the texts and its editions, even if they are appreciated as the ground for such inquiries. Elsewhere, I have termed much of what constitutes Idel's methodology structuralist, even if his phenomenology is foremost ahistorical in contradistinction to Scholem's historicist program.[7] Both interests position the kabbalistic text instrumentally within the academic program of constructing histories or narratives of what kabbalists thought and intended in their historically and socially situated writing, words that reflected or prescribed Jewish life. No one would deny that kabbalists held fast to particular ideas and traditions (and possibly even doctrines), nor would one question that an invested relationship exists between text and ritual life. Yet, it is my belief that both Idel's and Scholem's attempts to assess the kabbalistic text to such ends amounts to tangential engagements with the text on its own terms and thus deprives the text of its function as surmised from the internal criteria with which it defines itself.

Another major and distinct voice to emerge, in no small part due to Scholem's groundwork, is that of Yehuda Liebes. He is best known perhaps for his exploration of myth, drawing connections and showing the hidden developments across the various periods of Jewish literary activity and their relations to other cultures and corpora. While Liebes' research is textual at its core, displaying tremendous sensitivity to the linguistic aspects that conceal meaning, his main interest has not been in the life of texts and transformations of works across their ideational and textual developments. In its stead, Liebes offers much to an appreciation of its aesthetic, creative and poetic character, studies in the *ars poetica* of Jewish mystical literature. The kabbalistic work seems to capture in his analyses the undercurrent of myths which are voiced in his analysis as *mythopoesis*, the linguistic formulation of the narrative which directly conveys the events that take place on High and amongst men. While the fruits of such a method are well known, the consequences of this methodology include the privileging of myth over text, so that developments in the former mask those of the latter. The developments of critical theory in the past few generations are of little interest to Liebes, as he himself states quite

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7 Daniel Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism – Moshe Idel's Methodology in Perspective', *Kabbalah* 20 (2009), pp. 7-146.

openly, unless they emerge from within the empathic attachment of the scholar to the world of its particular(istic) culture.[8]

In another vein, Elliot Wolfson has offered a different engagement with language, eros and being, terms that title one of his recent monographs. Wolfson's approach to mythopoesis explores such major topics as gender and ontology, entering into dialogue with studies and concepts from philosophy, religious studies (and comparative religions), theology and feminist theory. My project does not take issue with Wolfson's approach in any direct way, and not by the fact that I began my graduate training at New York University under his tutelage. To be sure, under his direction I edited the lost 'Book of Illumination' composed by the first known kabbalist in thirteenth-century Castile. This history and the various text editions and major studies Wolfson has published in recent years have unfolded into a very complex matrix of methodologies which are unique to his writing and which build upon various disciplines to which few have sufficient access.

In my reading of these recent monographs by Wolfson, I understand the underlying program to be a theoretical exploration of the tensions that should be disclosed between ethics, in the modern philosophical sense, and the cultural template of the rabbinic world from within which these texts were composed. From rabbinic and kabbalistic anthropology to the ontological and symbolic status of the feminine, Wolfson has shown the tacit assumptions that define the hermeneutic horizons of kabbalistic literature. My study departs from his methods in the object of study, refocusing the inquiry to the assumptions of the modern editor in his craft of constructing editions of medieval texts and revealing those sensitivities which produced variation in its textual history. My interest is therefore more invested in the textual materials themselves than in the emphasis Wolfson has chosen in offering meaning that is mediated through the various tools of critical theory that explicate the central issues of his inquiries.

One could take issue, rightfully, with the selection of studies and scholars that I have offered here as a representation of the field of Jewish mysticism.

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[8] Yehuda Liebes, 'Some Thoughts about the Religious Significance of Kabbalah Research', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 18 = *The Path of the Spirit: The Eliezer Schweid Jubilee Volume*, ed. Y. Amir, Jerusalem 2005, volume 1, pp. 197-208 [Hebrew]; reprinted in his *God's Story: Collected Essays on the Jewish Myth*, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 325-341. On the centrality of the Hebrew language as the medium of the academic discourse of Jewish studies and Kabbalah research see p. 330.

Even if the list of contributions over the last few generations discussed in this study extends far beyond this sampling, it nevertheless represents the main voices that have informed my thinking and with whom I have been in dialogue in my research over the last two decades. The main thesis of this study is thus cast in contradistinction to the major moves offered in their work. More broadly, I have been deeply influenced by the theoretical work of scholarship on Hebrew manuscripts and printing history. Based on such contributions, I have attempted to integrate the two interests, showing the fluidity and instability of texts through their full life, blurring the boundaries between manuscript and print to show that the textual dynamics of texts described in this volume continue even after the printing of a work. Here, I am indebted to such seminal studies as those of Israel Ta-Shma's work on Ashkenazi writing and the 'open book', Malachi Beit-Arié's appreciation of the 'interferences' of scribes in a manuscript's transmission history and Zeev Greis' work on the role of printers and print as agents of cultural change.

Against these methodologies, this study promotes methodologies of textual scholarship that are not geared at constructing a history of ideas, manuscript duplication or printing, nor are they placed in the service of culling from texts meanings which would serve philosophic or cultural projects. Moreover, the deep contextualization of each source should not be confused with a return to history, layering the documents along the time line of their progression within a history of Jewish mysticism. The methods forwarded in this volume demonstrate that such histories fold back upon themselves as late witnesses of works composed centuries earlier reveal alterations and additions that reflect upon various stages in the life of the text. Neat histories cannot be seriously constructed from these materials and the research and effort that a scholar must invest in studying texts has thus been multiplied many times over.

I expect that if properly understood, these methodologies will meet much resistance in the field of Jewish mysticism, or possibly admiration from afar, affirmation of a method that *others* should undertake, further intensifying the imagined divide between text and theory. My reading of manuscripts steps back from a positivist and realist claim, that the work and all its manuscript witnesses, present what was once was conceived and formulated by its author. Instead, manuscripts should be read dialogically, as texts that interact with each other. If my claim is sound, however, the layering that is contained within the documents themselves presents itself as a methodological imperative for all serious scholars who read, not to mention edit, the texts of Jewish mysticism.

Behind the methodology of this study is a passion for the sources that stirs

up an immediate sense of significance for everything ancient, rare and recorded in writing. It is in this scholarly tradition that I began to read kabbalistic manuscripts since they hold the key to all serious scholarship, or to put it stronger, that no scholar is worthy of such a title without having first faced the unidentified riches of the sources as they are and defined his or her expertise by navigating one's way from within. From my first years of reading manuscripts, I have found that in every case that I checked a kabbalistic manuscript to a printed version of a text, I discovered important differences. Textual scholarship as the grouping of methods that are used to engage various sources and which allow for their comparison is based on a very deep sense of a hermeneutics of suspicion, one that opens the text up to even more possibilities of meaning than suggested by Ricoeur's use of the expression.[9] Textual scholarship *opens* up the text to a negotiation of various material sources – manuscripts and printed editions – as to what constitutes the text to be interpreted. The methodologies developed in this volume thus emerged out of my own experience in reading and comparing manuscripts.

Alongside its other aims, the present study serves as a meditation on the function of the text in the hands of the scholar of Jewish mysticism, who at times becomes an editor, but is always engaged in textual scholarship. Within these pages is a call to appreciate anew the need for teaching and theorizing editorial practice and reclaiming both as the main effort of the discipline. The kabbalistic text, in my view, offers itself up to be read, and its meanings negotiated, by the reader who is drawn into its particular texture and linguistic world. It resists any instrumental approach that reduces it to an arena outside of the transcribed page, whether that be in manuscript or print. Kabbalistic literature may indeed be an intertextual matrix of linguistic codes, a transdiscursive rabbinic discourse that records the interpretive life of the kabbalists as experiential interpreters of the divine, reflected in the written word. But each text, nevertheless, is part of an ongoing chain of writing that draws the reader, commentator and ostensibly also the next kabbalistic writer into this very same textual world. The kabbalistic text has never been intended, nor should it be so configured, within the academy as a means to some greater end of a meta-narrative, one that would displace and surpass the text as such.

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[9] D.C. Greetham, 'Textual Scholarship', *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. J. Gibaldi, New York 1992, p. 103. See further Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, New York-London 2009, pp. 59-77.

Such projects are fruitful, but should be seen for what they are, namely, theoretical structures constructed in the academy. This study therefore uncovers aspects of the traditional and literary assumptions of the editors, past and present, pointing to the psychological forces that seduce editors into fashioning the text in their own image.

Chapter 1

The History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques of Jewish Mystical Literature[1]

> Thus, [Kabbalah] research is today situated at its beginning and before a difficult, but fruitful task. In such a situation, bibliographic research is of particular importance; it is almost entirely overlooked today, and we are at the beginning of a new period of research, we are still only approaching the literature of this field. An adequate bibliographical account has not yet been provided, neither of the available mystical sources and texts, nor of the interpretations and speculative investigations concerning them. These are the two tasks which naturally present themselves and whose completion will someday provide basic assistance to the future researcher.
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> – Gershom Scholem, 'Vorrede', *Bibliographica Kabbalistica*, S. x

1. *The Illusion of Distance: Editorial Practice in the Academy*

Modern Kabbalah scholarship was forged out of a complex interaction between Jewish tradition and the negotiated entrance of Jews into modernity. These forces are too often seen as mutually exclusive, but are bound up with questions of self-fashioning and identity, particularly with respect to scholars of Jewish studies, including their legitimacy and authority in the academy. A study of editorial practice and the theories which inform them is thus a study about the scholars no less than the texts and editions they define as the object and product of their study. Ultimately, the assumptions and conceptions of the editor are transformed by the acts of editing different manuscript sources, no less than the text is transformed in the construction of an edition. Editing is

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was published as 'Critical and Post-Critical Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature: Notes on the History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques', *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 17-71.

therefore a transformative process for the editor and the text, in which both emerge as more complex subjects, reconfigured as they are made aware of the differences that brought them out of a naïve state that recognized only one version or intention. Simplistic reviews of the field have been too comfortable with the sharp distinction between the surviving manuscript witnesses and the printed editions produced from *within* the kabbalistic world, and the modern scholarly editions which are seen to be the synthetic product of engagements with the texts based on methods that are seen to be foreign to those who transmitted and corrupted its versions and who would have little understanding or appreciation of the fruits of such efforts.

While much of modern scholarship presumes and needs the demarcation of difference in order to justify its existence and define itself as a professional vocation and even ethic, Kabbalah scholarship was consciously crafted by Gershom Scholem as a continuation of the ongoing cultural and textual processes that produced the library of texts which would serve as its object of study. To be sure, Scholem adopted many of the philological methods of his scholarly contemporaries, applied them in his research and wrote about historical categories that informed his project, which was mainly received as a social and intellectual history of Jewish mysticism. His grounding studies in bibliography, manuscripts and printed works, and the editions of otherwise lost texts that he prepared fell to the wayside of historiography as incidental or the preparatory work that permitted the main work.

This book is nonetheless not about Gershom Scholem's work, but the methods of editorial practice that reach back to the Middle Ages and were formalized in the last century of scholarship according to new principles that can be theorized in a manner that clarifies the assumptions, aims and limitations of the editorial practice of Jewish mystical literature. Editorial practice of the academic study of Jewish mysticism is thus imaged in this study as the continuation of textual practices that were first adopted and developed by the kabbalists and scribes of the Middle Ages on through the modern period. Clearly, the most serious scholarship is marked by self-awareness of its methods and goals and implements the lessons learned from its theoretical work in the methodology of how it engages textual resources. Some of the recent developments have been rather mechanical and many have been implemented without any discussion of the full ramifications, theoretical and textual of the choices made, and the options that were excluded from the view of the project and its readership. This chapter will seek to unpack the initial history of modern editing in the academy and flesh out the unspoken agendas and assumptions.

The History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques

Nearly a century after the formal establishment of the field within the university setting, the modern study of the history and literature of Jewish mysticism is unquestionably *still* in its early stages. By this I mean that numerous major figures have never been studied in any depth, central texts remain in manuscript, where they have been read by only a handful of people, and major questions regarding the origins and development of major trends in Jewish mysticism have yet to be answered satisfactorily. In short, the study of Jewish mysticism is far from the point where a full evaluation of all the textual resources produced over the centuries may be undertaken.

Various historical appraisals of the nature and development of Jewish mysticism were nevertheless made at various points in the history of its scholarship, beginning with the historical comments of mystical figures and continuing on through the more detailed studies of nineteenth-century German Jewish scholarship and the pioneering work of Gershom Scholem.[2] Already in 1941, Scholem published his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, which established the historical outline of Jewish mysticism, defined it as a discipline independent from (Jewish) philosophy,[3] and to a large extent set the agenda of issues to be explored by later researchers. Scholem's masterful work is nonetheless one link in a much older chain of continuing research that has taken on many new directions since Scholem. This point has not been appreciated by many who return to the contributions of Scholem as the

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[2] See Meyer Heinrich Landauer, 'Vorläufiger Bericht über mein Studium der Münchener Handschriften', *Literaturblatt des Orients: Schriften der Landesbibliothek Oldenburg* 6 (1845), pp. 178-185, 194-196, 212-215, 226-229, 322-327, 341-345, 380-384, 417-422, 471-475, 488-492, 507-510, 525-528, 542-544, 556-558, 570-574, 587-592, 709-713, 748-750.

[3] Scholem was responding to a much older tradition of scholarship adapted from Christian attitudes toward Jewish mysticism as the theology or philosophy of the Jews. More immediately Scholem was responding to the works of Jellinek and Neumark (see Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah*, tr. A. Arkush, ed. R. J. Z. Werblowsky, Princeton-Philadelphia 1987, pp. 1-12). Most interesting is the place accorded to Jewish mysticism in the university today, whether it be in a department of philosophy, Judaic studies or history (e.g. Bar Ilan University, New York University and Ben Gurion University respectively). See further Charles Mopsik, 'Philosophie et souci philosophique: Les deux grands courants de la pensée juive', *Archivio di Filosofia (La storia della filosofia ebraica)* 61 (1993), pp. 247-254.

definitive statement on every subject of inquiry.[4] Scholem himself seems to have de-emphasized the contributions of his predecessors, emphasizing instead the difference in method he brought to the field, which marks his work as the true beginning of the (modern) study of Jewish mysticism.[5] So for example, Scholem's review of previous scholarship amounts to less than three columns in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.[6]

In the years following Scholem's death in 1982, a series of conferences were held approximately every two years devoted to the various periods of Jewish mysticism. These conferences, most of which were held in Jerusalem and have in recent years ceased to convene, were comprised of detailed articles that

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[4] See the collection of articles edited by Harold Bloom, *Gershom Scholem (Modern Critical Views)*, New York, New Haven and Philadelphia 1987. See also Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History*, New York and London 1987; idem, 'The Historical Perception of the Late Professor Gershom Scholem', *Zion* 47 (1982), pp. 165-172 [Hebrew]. See more recently Philip Alexander's discussion of the 'Scholemenian Paradigm' in his article 'Mysticism', *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. M. Goodman, J. Cohen and D. Sorkin, Oxford 2002, pp. 705-732.

[5] See Scholem's sharp remarks in the 'Preface to the First Edition' of his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem 1941 (included in subsequent reprints) and p.1 of the first lecture. See also the 'Author's Preface to the First (German) Edition' of his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. xvi. See also the preface to Scholem's *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, Jerusalem 1930, p. viii [Hebrew]. I have explored Scholem's scholarly self-perception in depth in my study, 'Defining Modern Academic Scholarship'. For other assessments of Kabbalah scholarship see Peter Schäfer, 'Jewish Mysticism in the Twentieth Century', *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century; Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1998*, ed. J. Targarona Borrás, A.Sáenz-Badillosm Leiden 1999, vol. 1, pp. 3-18; Paul Fenton, 'La cabale et l'académie: l'étude historique de l'ésotérisme juif en France', *Pardès* 19-20 (1994), pp. 216-238; Charles Mopsik, 'Quelques remarques sur Adolphe Franck, philosophe français et pionnier de l'étude de la cabale au XXe siècle', *Pardès* 19-20 (1994), pp. 239-244; Paul Fenton, 'Qabbalah and Academia: The Critical Study of Jewish Mysticism in France', *Shofar* 18 (2000), pp. 45-69; Jonathan Garb, 'Kabbalah in the Late 20th Century', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, Detroit 2007, vol. 11, pp. 677-681; Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah Studies', Ibid., pp. 681-692, and see his other studies cited in note 19.

[6] Jerusalem 1971, volume 10, cols. 646-648; reprinted in *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 201-203. For Scholem's review of the pre-modern scholars of the history of Kabbalah see his 'Die Erforschung der Kabbala von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart', *Judaica III: Studien zur jüdischen Mystik*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 247-264.

advanced the discussion of the texts and figures of each period.[7] These studies demonstrate that the study of Jewish mysticism as a whole has been fragmented into specialized disciplines. In a conference held in Berlin, various scholars attempted to address the state of the field in light of fifty years since the publication of *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.[8] This volume returns to Scholem's contributions as the basis for an evaluation of the field as a whole.[9] Unfortunately, an evaluation of *Major Trends* fifty years later did not take place at this conference, not to mention an independent appraisal of the subjects of Jewish mysticism. The volume contains many specialized studies which treat selective aspects of only some of the periods covered in the chapters of *Major Trends*.[10]

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[7] The proceedings of the first four of these conferences were published in the journal *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* (henceforth *JSJT*): *Early Jewish Mysticism* = *JSJT* VI, 1-2 (1987); *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe* = *JSJT* VI, 3-4 (1987); *The Age of the Zohar* = *JSJT* 8 (1989); *Lurianic Kabbalah* = *JSJT* X (1992). The fifth conference was held in Frankfurt and published by Walter de Gruyter: *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium Held in Frankfurt a.M. 1991*, ed. Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan, Berlin-New York 1995. These volumes were followed by a collected studies volume not based on a conference: *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 15 = *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. D. Assaf, J. Dan and I. Etkes, Jerusalem 1999 [Hebrew].

[8] *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After, Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, ed. P. Schäfer and J. Dan, Tübingen 1993.

[9] See the editors' introduction, p. 10: 'It is our hope that this collection of studies, together with the other volumes of the *Proceedings of the International Conferences on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, will demonstrate on the one hand, the great scholarly achievement of Gershom Scholem in this field, and on the other, the vitality of the on-going scholarly study of Jewish mysticism. This field of Jewish studies continues to flourish and to discover new vistas and dimensions in the vast heritage of spirituality which Scholem laid open before contemporary scholarship and which scores of researchers are now deciphering and illuminating'.

[10] Indeed some studies address the question of Scholem's contribution while others forward new theories on specific subjects. Only Joseph Dan's study provides a rather thorough bibliography of studies and texts published in the period discussed. The most comprehensive advances have been made in what does not constitute a period of thought, that is defining what is mysticism, particularly from the vantage point of Jewish sources. These advances have been made in various publications which cannot be cited here (e.g. Gruenwald, Idel, Katz and most recently Wolfson). Finally, it should be

It is safe to say that this volume marked a turning point in evaluating Scholem, perhaps even offering closure to an era that saw Scholem's work as the single measure of erudition and direction. The field has since, for better and worse, been fragmented across various geographic centers, periods, select texts, interests, and methodologies. To be sure, even throughout much of Scholem's lifetime there were three geographical centers of the academic study of Kabbalah, with Georges Vajda in France and Alexander Altmann in the United States.[11] As will be outlined below, Altmann, more than any other figure trained graduate students in editorial practice of kabbalistic texts, producing a school of students who edited critical editions of kabbalistic texts for their doctoral dissertations. Today, these academic values are no longer the main currency as universities and the committees which offer appointments to new faculty are not interested in such work and from the onset students are often discouraged from such research as an academic goal, even if these tools are appreciated as a means to a 'higher' end of historical narrative or the history of ideas.

In so far as the grounding work and the principles of the field have been deconstructed, one might imagine that an assessment of their textual underpinnings and the various directions they have since undertaken would be a simpler task. Nevertheless, to date, no true evaluation of the field exists.[12] To

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recalled that Scholem excluded from *Major Trends* a discussion of the *Origins of the Kabbalah* which he published separately. Mark Verman's article (pp. 163-17) discuss the *'Iyyun* works which were treated by Scholem in the chapter on Provençal Kabbalah in his *Origins of the Kabbalah*. See further the review of the volume by Boaz Huss, '*Compte Rendu*: Peter Schafer et Joseph Dan (edite par) *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*', *Annales* 49 (1994), pp. 1265-1267.

[11] Some of the textual scholarship produced by these figures were issued in the presses of the Israeli academy. See for example Georges Vajda. 'R. Elḥanan ben Yiṣḥaq ben Yaqar of London's First Commentary to *Sefer Yeṣira*', *Qoveṣ 'al yad* 16 (1966), pp. 145-197 [Hebrew]; idem, *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhokhim*, Jerusalem 1968; Alexander Altmann, 'R. Moses de León's *Sefer Or Zaru'a:* Introduction, Critical Text and Commentary', *Qoveṣ 'al yad* n.s. 9 [19] (1980), pp. 219-293 [Hebrew].

[12] Yehudah Liebes' article, 'New Directions in the Study of Kabbalah', *Pe'amim* 50 (1992), pp. 150-170 [Hebrew], presents a methodological criticism of the Scholem's research in light of new historical/phenomenological approaches, such as that outlined by Moshe Idel. Liebes additionally describes some implications of his own research regarding the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah. Various other studies published in recent years have added to an appreciation of the field as a whole. Despite their importance, I have chosen to limit the discussion here and exclude thematic studies, which although

be sure, a number of bibliographic surveys have been written for the more general reader,[13] including a bibliography volume of all secondary studies written in English and the 1994 catalog of much of the holdings of the Gershom Scholem Library.[14] The first substantive discussions of the history of historical criticism following Scholem's lead can be found in Isaiah Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar*,[15] Moshe Idel's *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*,[16] and a study by Rivka Schatz.[17] Although each of these discussions is limited to a certain theme or period, they correctly place nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship, including that of Scholem, within a long line of critical remarks concerning the

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based on texts and requiring the critical skills of the author, do not directly deal with textual scholarship as defined below.

[13] See the early remarks of David Blumenthal, 'Some Methodological Reflections on the Study of Jewish Mysticism', *Religion* 8 (1978), pp. 101-114. Individual overviews of secondary studies include: Zeev Gries, 'A Decade of Books on Kabbalah', *Jewish Book Annual* 47 (1989-90), pp. 60-72; idem, *The Book in Early Hasidism: Genres, Authors, Scribes, Managing editors and Its Review by Their Contemporaries*, Tel Aviv 1992, pp. 102-106 [Hebrew]. Other surveys include Jochanan Wijnhoven, 'Medieval Jewish Mysticism', *Bibliographic Essays in Medieval Jewish Studies*, New York 1976, pp. 269-330, and Lawrence Fine, 'Kabbalistic Texts', *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. B. Holtz, New York 1984, pp. 305-360, esp. the bibliographic notes on pages 352-360. See also the limited remarks in Ivan Marcus, 'Medieval Jewish Studies: Toward an Anthropological History of the Jews', *The State of Jewish Studies*, ed. S. Cohen and E. Greenstein, Detroit 1990, pp. 135-137. (This volume all but excludes the study of Jewish mysticism). Finally, see the overviews of Arthur Green and David Biale on the *Zohar* and Jewish mysticism in the sixteenth century in the volume: *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. P. Szarmach, Albany 1984.

[14] See below, chapter 5, section 10. For an English bibliography of many major studies see Sheila Spector, *Jewish Mysticism: An Annotated Bibliography on the Kabbalah in English*, New York and London 1984.

[15] Introduction to volume one, first printed in Hebrew, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, Jerusalem 1949; translated into English: *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, Oxford 1989, vol. 1, pp. 30-63.

[16] New Haven and London 1988, pp. 1-16. See also the discussion in Harvey Hames, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2000.

[17] Rivka Schatz, 'The Kabbalah – Tradition or Innovation: A Historical Discussion and Its Implications', *MASSU'OT: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 447-458 [Hebrew].

emergence and development of kabbalistic literature, beginning with Meir ben Simeon of Narbonne (ca. 1230) and continuing on through medieval Christian appreciations and later sixteenth- through eighteenth-century comparisons and critiques by Jewish figures.[18] Moshe Idel published historical and methodological surveys as well as discussions of the modern academic study of Jewish mysticism in the twentieth century,[19] and most recently I published an extensive study evaluating the development of Idel's methodological approaches, beginning with his use of phenomenology in *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*.[20]

A derivative subject of this larger enterprise, one which is in itself of great importance, is the history of textual scholarship of Jewish mystical literature. Here too, little or nothing has been written on the history and methods of scholarly editing of Jewish mystical texts. Despite the growing interest in Jewish mysticism and the rapid growth of scholarly publications produced each year, this aspect of the field remains far behind that found in other related disciplines of Jewish studies, a point which is made abundantly clear when compared to correlate studies and periodicals of non-Jewish literature.[21]

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[18] Aside from the critical remarks regarding the sources of Kabbalistic thought and the origins of the *Zohar*, in particular by such figures as Elijah del Medigo, Judah Messer Leon and Jaacob Emden, major bibliographic surveys were undertaken by Wolf, Burtalocci, Ḥayyim Azulai (ḤIDA) and Ben Jacob.

[19] Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah Research: From Monochromatism to Polymorphism', *Studia Judaica* 8 (1999), pp. 15-46; idem, 'Academic Studies of Kabbalah in Israel: 1923-1998: A Short Survey', *Studia Judaica* 8 (1999), pp. 91-114.

[20] Daniel Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism'.

[21] See for example the journals: *Text (Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship)*, New York, *Manuscripta: A Journal for Manuscript Research*, published by the Vatican Film Library, Saint Louis University; *Scriptorium: Revue Internationales des Études Relatives aux Manuscrits*, published by the Centre d'Étude des manuscrits, Bruxelles; *Codices Manuscripti: Zeitschrift für Handschriftenkunde*, published by Brüder Hollineck & Co., Wien. It is most unfortunate that the pages devoted to manuscript discoveries from the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in each volume of *Qiryat Sefer* is to be discontinued. The contributions previously published were issued in a new volume: *From the Collections of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. A. David, Jerusalem 1995 [Hebrew]. The articles discuss all types of Jewish literature. The two entries of Moshe Idel are dedicated to Kabbalistic works. Within the field of Jewish mysticism no one journal is devoted exclusively to Jewish mystical literature although there is a strong preference for such studies

The first chapter of this study will offer a short history of modern critical editing of Jewish mystical texts, beginning with significant nineteenth-century editions and proceeding through contemporary publications. This discussion will be followed by descriptions of the various methodologies employed in recent text editions. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the nature of multiple versions of early kabbalistic texts and will argue that the new methods of presenting these versions place textual scholarship in a new era.

2. *Early Text Editing: From the Middle Ages through the Nineteenth Century*

The study of Jewish mystical literature is by its very nature textual. Much of kabbalistic thought is based on a mystical theory of language, whether or not that is stated explicitly in the text.[22] Moreover, not only did the kabbalists seek to safeguard their writings from the non-initiates, they adhered to various methods of esoteric composition. Even today, after centuries of renewed and differing interests in all forms of Jewish mysticism, the vast majority of kabbalistic works remain in manuscript. One of the main goals of modern research is therefore to uncover these texts and evaluate the nature and character of Jewish mysticism based on a familiarity of the full range of sources which survived and not solely on the relatively few texts which found their way to the early and modern printing presses.

Sound textual scholarship is not based, however, on the comparison between manuscripts and printed texts. Printed texts bear the same markings and corruptions as do manuscripts. To be sure, a complete history of editing of texts begins with the medieval authors who molded and adapted their own works leaving behind various recensions, and continues on through the adaptations and corruptions introduced by their students, professional

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(including some text editions) in the journals, *Da'at* (Bar Ilan), *Jerusalem Studies of Jewish Thought* (The Hebrew University) and *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* (Harwood Press, and now by E.J. Brill).

[22] See G. Scholem, 'The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala', *Diogenes*, part 1, vol. 79 (1972), pp. 59-80; part 2, vol. 80 (1973), pp. 164-194. See now, Moshe Idel, 'Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven Katz, New York and Oxford 1992, pp. 42-79; Joseph Dan, 'The Language of the Mystics in Medieval Germany', *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan, Berlin and New York 1995, pp. 6-27.

copyists, and editors of the printed editions.[23] This subject lies beyond the limited scope of the present study which will concentrate on modern methods of text editing. Two examples of the editorial efforts of printers will suffice. The first shows the careful integration of various manuscript readings into a new text version in the printing of the short work, *Massekhet Hekhalot* in Venice, 1701.[24] The second, the editing of the *Zohar* as a mystical commentary to the entire Torah from various partial witnesses in the competing printing houses in Mantua and Cremona, 1558, a truly enormous project.[25]

As important as these textual efforts are to the full understanding of the text and its history, modern textual scholarship is characterized by a comparison of manuscript sources, an appreciation of the textual and recensional variants, and the contextualization of the history of transmission of the work within the ideational context of a particular period or system of thought. Part of these

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[23] The modern scholar *must* grapple, however, with the complex history of the sources which survived, including any printings, and consider the history of the text when choosing from editing methods. On the medieval editing of biblical texts and their printings see Jordan Penkower, 'Jacob ben Ḥayyim and the Rise of the *Biblia Rabbinica*', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University 1982 [Hebrew]. See now Ya'aqov Spiegel, *Chapters in the History of the Jewish Book: Scholars and their Annotations*, Ramat Gan 1996 [Hebrew].

[24] See Klaus Herrmann, *Massekhet Hekhalot: Traktat von den himmlischen Palästen, Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 1994.

[25] Daniel Abrams, 'When Was the "Introduction" to the *Zohar* Written and Changes within Differing Copies of the Mantua Printing', *Asufot* 8 (1994), pp. 211-226 [Hebrew]. Another important area of text study which is still in its beginning stages is the relationship between the history of printing and the proliferation of Jewish mystical texts. Meir Benayahu's two complimentary volumes on the printing history in Venice and Cremona (*Copyright, Authorization and Imprimatur for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice*, Jerusalem 1971 [Hebrew]; *Hebrew Printing at Cremona: Its History and Bibliography*, Jerusalem 1971 [Hebrew]) explain much of the interest in preparing these texts. In a different vein, Zeev Gries has explored the relationship between the printings of Kabbalistic works and the popularization or canonization of the texts. See for example his studies, 'Print as an Agent of Communication between the Jewish Communities after the Expulsion from Spain', *Da'at* 28 (1992), pp. 5-18 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Copying and Printing of Kabbalistic Books as a Source for the Study of Kabbalah', *Maḥanaim* 6 (1993), pp. 204-211 [Hebrew]. A comprehensive study about who printed which Kabbalistic texts, when and why, is certainly a major *desideratum* of the study of Jewish mysticism.

conditions were met by the nineteenth-century scholars who edited various Jewish mystical texts from manuscript(s). These include such scholars as Adolph Jellinek,[26] Yequtiel Qamelhar,[27] Solomon Mussayef,[28] Abraham Wertheimer,[29] Avraham Epstein,[30] A. W. Greenup,[31] and Hugo Odeberg.[32] While some of these figures published selected manuscript sources for no other reason than they seemed relevant and were not yet available in print, some of their efforts were quite critical, comparing and recording the variants found in various witnesses to the same work.[33] The systematic comparison of kabbalistic

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[26] A. Jellinek, *Philosophie und Kabbala*, Leipzig 1854; *Auswahl Kabbalistischer Mystik* (גנזי חכמת הקבלה), Leipzig 1853, (Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte der Kabbala*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York 1988.) See also his *Beit ha-Midrash*, Leipzig 1853-57, six volumes (facsimile reprint in two volumes, Jerusalem 1967).

[27] See his edition of Eleazar of Worms' *Sodei Razaya*, Bilgoraj 1936. Among his other works include studies such as a biography of Eleazar of Worms and Judah the Pious, *Rabenu Eleazar ben Yehudah mi-Gemaiza ha-Roqeah*, Resha 1930.

[28] Mussayef had his on press and produced many volumes based on manuscripts he had acquired. See his *Merkavah Shelema*, Jerusalem 1921 and Isaac ha-Kohen's *Ṭa'amei Ṭe'amim*, n.d. which Scholem would later republish from the *same* manuscript not knowing of this earlier printing. See now the (very limited edition) catalog of the Mussayef manuscript collection, prepared by Joseph Avivi: *Ohel Shem*, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew]. This volume, like Scholem's catalog, includes appendixes of texts.

[29] *Batei Midrashot*, Jerusalem 1950. Much of this two volume work was issued in smaller books or pamphlets in the 1920s through 1940s.

[30] See his collected studies (which include editions of short texts): *Kitvei R. Avraham Epstein*, ed. A. M. Habermann, Jerusalem 1950 [Hebrew]; *Mi-Qadmoniyot ha-Yehudim*, ed. A. M. Habermann, Jerusalem 1957 [Hebrew].

[31] *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, London 1911; *Iggereth Ḥamudoth of Elijah Ḥayyim ben Benjamin of Genazzano*, London 1912.

[32] Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, Cambridge 1928 (Reprinted New York 1973 with a Prolegomenon by Jonas Greenfield). See Scholem's review in *Qiryat Sefer* 6 (1929), pp. 62-64 [Hebrew]. Odeberg's study exemplifies the most developed framework for treating a text in the years prior to Scholem. Odeberg's study includes chapters on the wider history of terms and ideas found in *3 Enoch*.

[33] For an overview of this period as well as a discussion of other scholars who did not edit Hebrew texts, see Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, pp. 25-32. See further the more detailed studies of Paul Fenton, 'La cabale et l'académie: l'étude historique de l'ésoterisme juif en France', *Pardes* 19-20 (1994), pp. 216-238 and Charles Mopsik, 'Quelques remarques sur Adolphe Frank, philosophe français et pionnier de l'étude de la cabale au xxe siècle', Ibid., pp. 239-244.

manuscripts from the rich holdings of the libraries of Europe was first undertaken by Moritz Steinschneider in a series of articles published in *Hebraïsche Bibliographie* and a number of catalogs of Hebrew manuscripts and printed works.[34] Despite Steinschneider's deep and expansive knowledge of the sources, he did not edit any kabbalistic works, nor did he compose any historical analysis about kabbalistic literature.[35] Steinschneider's investigative methods, based on a philological comparison of the widest range of sources and historical contextualization (based primarily on source-critical research), set an example for the future work of Gershom Scholem. Nevertheless, Scholem harbored a deep ambivalence toward his predecessors and their reasons for so meticulously cataloging and documenting the history of Jewish literature. Philological methods became entangled with ideological strategies, a matter about which Scholem was self-conscious.[36]

3. *Gershom Scholem and Textual Scholarship in the University Setting*

Scholem's academic biography begins with his doctoral thesis, an annotated German translation of the first known kabbalistic work, *The Book Bahir*.[37]

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[34] See for example Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräische Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München*, Munchen 1895. This volume served Scholem as a practical guide in his readings. His copy, now in the Gershom Scholem Library, #14393, is replete with annotations. On particular Kabbalistic figures, see the following studies by Steinschneider: 'Ascher b. David b. Abraham b. David', *Hebräische Bibliographie* 7 (1864), pp. 68-69; 12 (1872), pp. 79-85; 'Zur kabbalistischen Literatur: Moses de Leon', *Hebräische Bibliographie* 10 (1870), pp. 156-161; 'Zur kabbalistischen Literatur: Jakob und Isak Kohen', *Hebräische Bibliographie* 17 (1877), pp. 36-38; 18 (1878), pp. 18-22. For a more complete listing of Steinschneider's contributions see Gershom Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, Berlin 1930, pp. 148-151.

[35] See the relatively few remarks regarding the Kabbalah in Steinschneider's *Jewish Literature from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century with an Introduction of the Talmud and Midrash*, London 1857.

[36] See my 'Defining Modern Academic Scholarship'; Charles Manekin, 'Steinschneider's "Decent Burial": A Reappraisal', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 239-251.

[37] *Das Buch Bahir, ein Schriftdenkmal aus der Frühzeit der Kabbala auf Grund der kritischen Neuausgabe* von Gerhard Scholem. This volume was printed in a number of formats including printings of an identical format by different publishers. In 1923, Scholem's father, Arthur Scholem, published the book in Berlin in his own printing

Scholem then refocused his efforts to produce his major bibliographic accomplishments which include a listing of some one hundred and thirty commentaries to the ten sefirot in manuscript,[38] reviews of the kabbalistic manuscript holdings in Munich,[39] Milan[40] and Paris[41] and above all his *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, which in 1930 presented for the interested reader of that day all the known works and studies related to Jewish mystical literature.[42] During this time, Scholem edited numerous short texts in the early volumes of *Tarbiz*, *Qiryat Sefer* and *Maddaei ha-Yahadut*.[43]

In these studies, that is, of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Scholem encountered the phenomenon of reworked kabbalistic texts, that is, texts which he found in two significantly different versions. Scholem published some of these texts in parallel columns, editions which, to the best of my knowledge, are the first of their kind in the scholarship of Jewish mystical literature.[44]

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house, while at the same time Robert Eisler issued the volume in Leipzig in a short-lived series dedicated to Jewish mysticism. See my edition published by *Cherub Press* which includes an edition of the Hebrew text based on the Munich manuscript, which formed the basis of Scholem's work: *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts*, with an introduction by Moshe Idel, Los Angeles 1994 [Hebrew] (figure 1.8).

38 Gershom Scholem, 'An Index to the Commentaries on the Ten Sefirot', *Qiryat Sefer* 10 (1933), pp. 498-515 [Hebrew].

39 idem, 'Notes and Corrections to the Manuscript Listing in Munich', *Qiryat Sefer* 1 (1925), pp. 206-207 [Hebrew].

40 idem, 'Review of: C. Bernheimer, *Codices Hebraici Bibliothecae Amrbosiane*, Florentiae 1993', *Qiryat Sefer* 11 (1935), pp. 184-190 [Hebrew].

41 idem, 'Corrections and Notes to the Hebrew Manuscript Listing in Paris', *Qiryat Sefer* 24 (1948), pp. 250-257.

42 Berlin 1930. Scholem collected these studies and built the single most complete collection of works and studies related to Jewish mystical literature. The collection is now housed in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem. See further, Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Gershom Scholem as Bibliophile', *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work*, Albany 1994, pp. 120-127; Alexander Altmann, 'Gershom Scholem (1897-1982)', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 51 (1984), pp. 1-14.

43 A complete listing of Scholem's publications through 1977 can be found in the *Bibliography of the Writings of Gershom G. Scholem*, Jerusalem 1977.

44 Of note is A. Jellinek's comparison in columns of passages from the Hebrew writings of Moses de León and the text of the *Zohar*. See his *Moses Ben Schem-Tob De Leon und sein Verhältnis*, Leipzig 1851, pp. 24-36. See also Wertheimer's volume cited

Examples of such are the *Commentary to the Ten Sefirot* published in the 1927 volume of *Maddaei ha-Yahadut*[45] (see figure 1.1) and R. Isaac ha-Kohen's *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot* published in the second volume of *Tarbiz*, issued in 1931 (see figure 1.2).[46] This method of comparison continued to appear in later work, such as *'Sod 'Ilan ha-Aṣilut'* in 1950 (see figure 1.3), amongst other examples.[47]

This complex presentation of sources does not unfortunately characterize all of Scholem's textual scholarship. Scholem often tried to 'restore' the original version of a text, at times in uncritical presentations. In Scholem's first major textual project, *Das Buch Bahir*, he began his research with a Hebrew transcription of the famous Munich manuscript, but never published it for reasons which remain unclear. Scholem's unpublished Hebrew edition was very faulty from a textual point of view and his translation suffered as a result.[48] Scholem at times also amended his translation so that it would accord with various citations of the *Bahir* in early kabbalistic literature. His assumption, therefore, was that there is a *single text* which can and should be reconstructed from the manuscript witnesses and the external evidence of quotations from the *Bahir* found in the works of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Kabbalists.

Scholem, however, changed his view about the composition of the *Bahir* and included many references to this view in the later reworkings (in various languages) of his *Origins of the Kabbalah*. Among his published and unpublished papers now housed in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, I found the beginning of an unpublished Hebrew essay entitled 'Toward the

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above where two versions of *Midrash Otiyot de Rabbi Akiva* were edited. On the non-critical methods of Wertheimer and his censoring of the text, see Deborah F. Sawyer, 'Heterodoxy and Censorship: Some Critical Remarks on Wertheimer's Edition of *Midrash Aleph Beth*', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991), pp. 115-121.

45 'Qabbalot R. Yiṣḥaq ve-R. Ya'aqov, Benei R. Ya'aqov ha-Kohen', *Maddaei ha-Yahaduth* 2 (1927), pp. 227-230.

46 Gershom Scholem, 'R. Isaac ha-Kohen's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot', *Tarbiz* 2 (1931), pp. 197-199.

47 Idem, *'Sod 'Ilan ha-Aṣilut* le-Rabbi Yishaq', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* 15 (1950), pp. 65-102 [Hebrew].

48 Instead of copying the manuscript, Scholem modified a printed edition with numerous additions and cross-outs so that the end product would match the Munich manuscript. This method has its obvious faults, the original copy of which can be found today amongst his books. See the discussion in my edition, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 2-3.

Origins of the *Bahir*'. In this unfinished essay, Scholem speaks of the stages and authors involved in the writing of the *Bahir*: 'The book [*Bahir*] does not reflect any one of the known stages in the development of the Kabbalah, as known to us through other kabbalistic works, but rather it testifies without a doubt to a stage prior to them, or more correctly, to the *stages* prior to them'.[49] From such comments, it is clear that Scholem moved from a monolithic view of the text to a fluid one.

This is no small point to be relegated to a footnote of the biography of Gershom Scholem. Indeed, most scholars in Jewish studies who know something about the *Bahir* and the kabbalistic thought expressed in its pages, gained their knowledge from Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah*.[50] Accepting the methodological shift in Scholem's research from a monolithic work to a dynamic process of editing and rewriting which engendered the *Bahir*, we are forced to reopen the question of the analysis of the kabbalistic thought expressed by the *Bahir*. If indeed each, or at least any specific passage was composed by a separate author, or alternatively, if various editors significantly modified certain passages, then we cannot engage in the type of analysis which characterized Scholem's work in which one passage is read through another.[51] In short, we cannot speak of the thought of the *Bahir* anymore than we can speak of the thought of the Talmud.[52]

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[49] Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, p. 24 (emphasis added).

[50] Philadelphia and Princeton 1987. Most readers of the text, including members of the scholarly community, consulted Reuven Margolioth's edition published by Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem 1951 (facsimile reprints 1978, 1994).

[51] More recent research by Haviva Pedaya has fleshed out examples of the influence of the teachings of R. Isaac the Blind on the text of the *Bahir*. See her study 'The Provençal Stratum in the Redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume = Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990), pp. 139-164 [Hebrew]. See further my comments in my edition of the *Book Bahir*, (pp. 17-19), where I discussed the manuscript readings of the fourteenth-century supercommentary of R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib to Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* which seemingly quotes R. Isaac the Blind citing the *Bahir*. I neglected there to cite two additional passages which display a possible knowledge of the *Bahir* by R. Isaac, passages which were already noted by Scholem (*Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 261, n.135). From their context alone, it can be argued that here too Isaac's words might be limited to the first sentence or two of each citation and do not contain a reference to the *Bahir*.

[52] See Peter Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des Rabbinischen Judentums*, Leiden 1978, p. 8; Jacob Neusner, 'The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism:

As the example of the *Bahir* demonstrates, the problems of critical editing have a direct effect on the most basic understanding of the thought of its author or authors. In these cases, the presentation of a single version of a text misinforms the scholarly audience, and erroneous characterizations result. These problems did not plague the early years of kabbalistic scholarship, as this point was not appreciated until most recently (if at all). Moreover, most subsequent research of kabbalistic manuscripts by academics concerned texts written by known figures, works which had clearly defined textual boundaries. These works were all edited following the assumption that the original version of the work as it was composed by its author could be restored through a comparison of the later manuscript witnesses. This text work was undertaken by scholars belonging to three schools located in Israel, France and the United States, namely the students of Gershom Scholem, Georges Vajda, and Alexander Altmann. Much of this program of research was outlined by Scholem in a letter he wrote to Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik in 1925.[53]

At the Hebrew University, a number of Scholem's students prepared critical editions of Jewish mystical works for their dissertation projects. The first such volume to be published was Isaiah Tishby's annotated edition of R. Azriel of

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Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70 to 100', *Aufsteig und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Berlin-New York 1979, vol. 19.2, pp. 4-16. I would like to thank Andreas Lehnardt for this reference. In as much as Urbach's systematization of Rabbinic thought as a whole has come into question, so too Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah* must be reinvestigated with this methodology in mind. See now Idel's introduction to my *Book Bahir* cited above, where he analyzes the *Bahir* from this new perspective. For a new interpretation of Bahiric symbolism see Elliot Wolfson, 'The Tree That is All: Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993), pp. 31-76; reprinted in his *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism and Hermeneutics*, Albany 1995, pp. 63-88.

53 Gershom Scholem, 'Letter to H. N. Bialik', *Explication and Implications of Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Tel Aviv 1975, [volume 1], pp. 59-63 [Hebrew]; See the annotated German edition printed in *Gershom Scholem, Judaica 6: Die Wissenschaft vom Judentum*, Herausgegeben, auf dem Hebräischen übersetzt und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Peter Schäfer in Zusammenarbeit mit Gerold Necker und Urlike Hirschfelder, Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 53-68. The full implications of Scholem's letter will be discussed below. For Bialik's initial correspondence see 'Letter to G. Scholem', *Iggerot Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik (1924-27)*, ed. F. Lachover, vol. 3, Tel Aviv 1938, pp. 48-49 [Hebrew].

Gerona's *Commentary to the Talmudic Aggadot*,[54] which was followed by the works of other students in both the Early Kabbalah and Hasidism.[55] In the following decades many short texts were published in the journal *Qoveṣ 'al Yad*,[56] which publishes Hebrew manuscript texts from all fields of Jewish studies. In the 1970s, Joseph Dan published through *Akademon*, the Hebrew University students' press, a series of typescript transcriptions of individual manuscripts of pre-kabbalistic mystical works from Germany. These include Elḥanan ben Yaqar's *Sod ha-Sodot*, his *Commentary to Sefer Yeṣira*, and the anonymous *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim*.[57] These transcriptions were prepared for study purposes in seminars held at the Hebrew University. Additional mimeographed volumes were prepared which included photocopies from earlier printed editions and selected folios from manuscripts.[58]

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54 Isaiah Tishby, *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadoth by R. Azriel of Gerona*, Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1943. This volume was reissued by *Miqezei Nirdamim* in Jerusalem 1945 and reprinted, Jerusalem 1983.

55 See Amos Goldreich's dissertation discussed below, as well as Moshe Hallamish, *A Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Yoseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah*, Jerusalem 1984 [Hebrew], and Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Maggid Devarav Le-Ya'aqov of The Maggid Dov Baer of Miedzyrzecz*, Jerusalem 1996 [Hebrew].

56 See Joseph Dan, '*Sefer ha-navon le-eḥad me-ḥaside ashkenaz*', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* 16 (1966), pp. 201-223 [Hebrew]; Gershom Scholem, 'Two Treatises of R. Moses De León', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* n.s 8 (1976), pp. 325-384 [Hebrew]; Daniel Abrams, '"The Unity of God" of R. Eleazar Ha-Darshan', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* n.s. 12 (1994), pp. 149-160 [Hebrew].

57 Joseph Dan, *Theological Texts of the German Pietists – Sefer ha-Ḥayyim, Sefer Sodot of R. Elḥanan ben Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1977; idem, *German Pietist Speculative Literature*, Jerusalem 1973; Idem, *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim Based on Ms. British Museum 1055*, fols. 141-178, Jerusalem 1973 [All in Hebrew].

58 See most prominently, *Qabbalat R. Asher ben David*, ed. J. Dan and R. Elior, Jerusalem 1980 [Hebrew]. This volume included facsimile pages from the typescript edition M. Ḥasidah published in *Ha-Segulah* in the 1930s as well as transcriptions of a few manuscript sources, facsimile pages of certain folios from manuscripts in Paris and London and a basic listing of the manuscripts to R. Asher's works. On Ḥasidah's relationship to Scholem and the mystical texts he published see my book on R. Asher: *R. Asher ben David: His Complete Works and Studies in his Kabbalistic Thought (Including The Commentaries to the Account of Creation by the Kabbalists of Provence and Gerona)*, Los Angeles 1996. (See also R. Elior and M. Oron, *Ha-Gilgul*, Jerusalem 1980 [Hebrew], which includes a transcription of a section of Joseph of Hamadan's *Ṭa'amei ha-Miṣwot* now included in Menachem Meier's edition cited below).

In France, Georges Vajda, Nicolas Séd and Gabrielle Sed-Rajna produced highly important editions in annotated French translation.[59] These include the texts *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, the *Book Bahir*, Azriel's *Commentary to the Prayers* and R. Ezra of Gerona's *Commentary to the Song of Songs*.[60]

In the United States, Alexander Altmann established a major center of study at Brandeis University. Altmann was a firm believer in the need to read and edit manuscript source, and encouraged his doctoral students to edit a central kabbalistic text.[61] As a result, today we have a number of editions which are readily available through University Microfilms International. These include such central figures as Moses de León,[62] David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid[63] and Joseph of Hamadan.[64]

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[59] On the earlier history of scholarship in France see Fenton's article, 'La Cabale et l'acadèmie', (cited above). On the character and goals of some of these new translations see my review essay, 'Recent Translations of Kabbalistic Texts', *Henoch* 18 (1996), pp. 151-158.

[60] Nicolas Séd, *La Mystique cosmologie Juive*, Paris 1981; Idem, *Le Livre Bahir (Sepher ha-Bahir)*, Introduction, traduction et notes, Milano 1987; Gabrielle Séd-Rajna, Azriel de Gérone. *Commentaire sur la liturgie quotidienne*. Introd., trad. annotée et glossaire, des termes techniques par Gabrielle Séd-Rajna, Leiden 1974 (see the reviews by Moshe Idel, *Qiryat Sefer* 50 (1975), pp. 284-287 [Hebrew]; David Blumenthal, *History of Religions* 15 (1975), pp. 100-103); Georges Vajda, *Le commentaire d'Ezra de Gérone sur le Cantique des cantiques*, Paris 1969. Vajda also edited a critical edition in Hebrew of *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhokhim*, Jerusalem 1968.

[61] See Lawrence Fine, 'Alexander Altmann's Contribution to the Study of Jewish Mysticism', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989), pp. 421-431.

[62] Jochanan Wijnhoven, '*Sefer Ha-Mishkal*: Text and Study', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University 1964. See also his master's thesis, Wijnhoven, Jochanan. '*Sefer Maskiot Kesef*: Text and Translation with Introduction and Notes', M.A. thesis, Brandeis University 1961. Elliot Wolfson, '*Sefer Ha-Rimmon*: Critical Edition and Introductory Study', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University 1986. A revised version of this volume was published as *The Book of the Pomegranate: Moses De León's Sefer Ha-Rimmon*, Atlanta 1988 [in Hebrew with an English introduction]. It should also be noted that Altmann himself edited one of the works of De León: 'Moses De León's *Sefer Or Zarua*', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* n.s. 9 (1980), pp. 217-293 [Hebrew].

[63] Daniel Matt, *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer Mar'ot Zove'ot [by] R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1978. This volume was later published by Scholars Press, Atlanta 1982.

[64] Menachem Meier, 'A Critical Edition of the *Sefer Ṭa'amei Ha-Mitzwoth* ("Book of Reasons of the Commandments") Attributed to Isaac Ibn Farhi, Section I – Positive

From the point of view of textual editing, the most elaborate edition of a single composition by a known author is certainly Amos Goldreich's *Me'irat Einayim* of R. Isaac of Acre.[65] This edition received great acclaim from experts of textual scholarship not connected to the study of Jewish mysticism.[66] A comparable accomplishment is the little-known and unpublished work of Martelle Gavarin whose in-depth and detailed work encompasses a critical edition and study of all the textual traditions related to Azriel's *Commentary to the Prayers*.[67] Azriel's commentary has survived in various witnesses, including partial copyings as well as kabbalistic collectanea which integrate external material into the body of Azriel's work.[68]

Today, graduate training rarely includes much experience using manuscript sources, not to mention the near total absence of critical editions as dissertation projects. Since my 1993 dissertation at NYU, directed by Elliot Wolfson, I know of only two works which in the United States, were based on a text edition and none in Israel.[69] The same can be said of the great centers of Kabbalah research

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Commandments With Introduction and Notes', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University 1974; Jeremy Zwelling, 'Joseph of Hamadan's *Sefer Tashak*: Critical Text Edition with Introduction [Hebrew Text]', Ph.d. Dissertation, Brandeis University 1975. For another dissertation completed at Brandies University, see: David Ariel, 'Shem Tob Ibn Shem Tob's Kabbalistic Critique of Jewish Philosophy in the "Commentary on the *Sefirot*": Study and Text', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University 1981.

[65] Amos Goldreich, *Sefer Me'irat Einayim by R. Isaac of Acre: A Critical Edition*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University, 1981 (printed in facsimile by the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984).

[66] See the review of Malachi Beit-Arié in *Qiryat Sefer* 59 (1984), pp. 599-602 [Hebrew]. See also the initial critical work of Ch. Wirszubski, 'Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Commentary to the *Book of Creation* by R. Isaac the Blind', *Gershom Scholem Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1968, pp. 131-138 [Hebrew] (reprinted in Wirszubski, *Between the Lines: Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah and Sabbatianism*, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 3-12).

[67] Master's thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984. A copy can found in the Gershom Scholem Library, #171.2. Although Jewish mysticism, and Judaic studies written in Hebrew, do not have a citation index, the lack of attention this work has received demonstrates that such an index is of limited value.

[68] See, for example, pp. 11-14.

[69] Yakov Travis, 'Kabbalistic Foundations of Jewish Spiritual Practice: Rabbi Ezra of Gerona. On the Kabbalistic Meaning of the Mizvot', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 2002; Israel Moshe Sandman, 'The MeŠŌBĒB NeTĪBŌT (משובב מתיבות) of

in the Israeli university system, including the Hebrew University.[70] The last stronghold of philology seems to be the Institut für Judaistik in Berlin, founded by Peter Schäfer where volumes of Hebrew texts continue to emerge from the students trained there.[71] Much praise should be offered for G. Busi and S. Campanini for issuing the major texts of the Christian Kabbalah and the Latin translations prepared for Pico by Flavius Mithridates.[72] Numerous translations for popular consumption have been issued outside of the academy. One of the early efforts was a series of texts by Abulafia published by Tree Press. More recently Providence University (Press) has issued a host of texts, including many by Abraham Abulafia,[73] and to this list should be added a couple of French translations.[74]

Samuel ibn Matut ("motot"): Introductory Excursus, Critical Edition, and Annotated Translation', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2006, two volumes.

[70] The last edition I can recall, and not related to Kabbalah proper is: Eliane Ketterer, *'Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva*, Versions A and B: The Character of the Midrash, Its Orientation, Ideas and Connections to Other Trends in Judaism and Christianity, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005, two volumes [Hebrew]. See further, Zeev Gries, 'The Printing of Kabbalistic Literature in the Twentieth Century', *Kabbalah* 18 (2008), pp. 113-132, esp. 122-123.

[71] Gerold Necker, *Das Buch des Lebens: Edition, Übersetzung und Studien*, Tübingen 2001; Hanna Liss, *El'azar ben Yehuda von Worms: Hikhot ha-Kavod. Die Lehrsätze von der Herrlichkeit Gottes, Edition, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Tübingen 1997.

[72] *The Great Parchment*, edited by Giulio Busi, with Simonetta M. Bondoni and Saverio Campanini, Torino 2004 [The Kabbalistic Library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola 1]; *The Book of Bahir: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, edited by Saverio Campanini with a Foreword by Giulio Busi, Torino 2005 [The Kabbalistic Library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola 2].

[73] Abraham Abulafia, *Sheva Netivot Ha-Torah – The Seven Paths of Torah by Abraham Abulafia* (1997); *Ner Elohim – Candle of God* (2007); Avraham Ben Yitzchak of Granada – *Brit Menucha – Covenant of Rest* (2007); Abraham Abulafia, *Get Ha-Shemot – Divorce of the Names* (2007); Chaim Vital – *Shaarei Kedusha – Gates of Holiness* (2007); Abraham Abulafia – *Sefer Ha-OT – The Book of the Sign* (2007); Chaim Vital – *Ktavim Chadashim – New Writings*; Shem Ṭov Sefardi – *Shaarei Tzedek – Gates of Righteousness* (2007); Yehuda Albotini – *Sulam Aliyah – Ladder of Ascent* (2007); Abraham Abulafia – *Ner Elohim – Candle of God* (2007); Fabrizio Lanza – *Shimmush Tehillim, Tehillim, Psalms 151-155 and Their Kabbalistic Use* (2007); Chaim Vital – *Sefer Ha-Goralot – The Book of Oracles* (2007); *Anonymous – Pirke Avot – Costumbres de Padres* (2007).

[74] Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, *L'epître des sept voies / Abraham Aboulafia*;

4. *New Methods of Critical Editing: From Scholem to Schäfer*

More complex editions were necessary for early Jewish mystical texts due to their long transmissional history which predates the mystical activity of medieval Europe. Numerous manuscripts to these works have survived, reflecting various textual traditions. In his 1960 monograph, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, Scholem edited the text known as *Ma'aseh Merkabah* (reissued in revised edition in 1965). In the appendix to this volume he presented an eclectic edition based on several manuscripts.[75] Despite the variety of sources, Scholem's edition is based on the assumption that he was restoring the original and best version of the text. This edition was indeed most problematic as the boundaries of the text, *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, were non-existent in the manuscripts he used. Scholem identified the existence of the independent work *Ma'aseh Merkabah* from citations of it in later German Pietist and Spanish kabbalistic sources. Scholem was therefore claiming to present an early work of Jewish mysticism, edited however, according to the late form known to its medieval editors and commentators.[76] In this instance at least, it seems that the methods of synoptic presentation which served Scholem earlier, when two recensions of text were found, failed him when more than two versions were identified in manuscripts.

Other early works of Jewish mysticism which are equally complex and were edited in the sixties and seventies include *Sefer Yeṣira* and *Sefer ha-Razim*.[77] *Sefer ha-Razim* was edited by Mordechai Margolioth in an edition which has been criticized for solving too many problems.[78] The edition restores a single

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traduction et notes par Jean-Christophe Attias; préface ... de Shmuel Trigano, Paris 1985; *Abraham Aboulafia, Le livre du Signe – Séfer haOth* ספר האות, Annoté et traduit de l'hébreu par Georges Lahy, Roquevaire 2007.

[75] New York 1960, reprinted in a revised version, New York 1965. See page 102, where Scholem writes that he 'restored' the text according to Ms. Oxford 1531 and Ms. New York, JTSA 828 = Mic 8128. See also the discussion and translation of the text in: Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, Albany 1989.

[76] See my studies: '*Ma'aseh Merkabah* as a Literary Work: The Reception of Hekhalot Traditions by the German Pietists and Kabbalistic Reinterpretation', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 5 (1998), pp. 329-345; idem, 'A Neglected Talmudic Reference to *Ma'aseh Merkavah*', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 26 (1999), pp. 1-5.

[77] ed. Mordechai Margolioth, Jerusalem 1967.

[78] See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden Köln 1980, pp.

work from numerous fragments, leaving the basic reader with the impression that such a work must exist in this form.[79] A new edition has recently been issued by Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer sorting out the manuscript evidence as a corrective to Margolioth's edition.[80]

The editing of *Sefer Yeṣira* by Ithamar Gruenwald in 1973 is similarly problematic. He described the three recensions of varying lengths and presented an integrated edition with variants from all the recensions (see figure 1.4).[81] Such difficulties can be found in Weinstock's integrated edition of the first chapter of the *Sefer Yezira*.[82] Weinstock used different point sizes and

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225-234; Ḥayyim Merḥavya 'Review of *Sefer ha-Razim*', *Qiryat Sefer* 42 (1967), pp. 297-303 [Hebrew]; Menaḥem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Jerusalem 1967, vol. 22, pp. 189-193 [Hebrew]; Philip Alexander, '*Sefer ha-Razim* and the problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism', *Magic in the Biblical World; from the Rod of Aron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. T. Klutz, London New York 2003, pp. 170-190.

79 Compare to Joseph Dan's review in *Tarbiz* 37 (1968), pp. 208-214 [Hebrew].

80 Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer, ed., *Sefer ha-Razim I und II – Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II: Band 2: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 2009. See Schäfer's earlier comments, calling for a new edition: 'Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature', *Hekhalot Studien*, Tübingen 1988, p. 15 and further studies cited there in note 58.

81 Ithamar Gruenwald, 'A Preliminary Critical Edition of *Sefer Yezria*', *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971), pp. 132-177. Gruenwald's edition along with other Hekhalot texts, both published and unpublished, was part of a larger project to prepare a historical dictionary of the Hebrew language. See further his 'New Fragments of Hekhalot Literature', *Tarbiz* 38 (1969), pp. 354-372 and additional comments in *Tarbiz* 39 (1970), p. 216 [Hebrew]. Compare the above methodology to that of Tishby's edition of Azriel's *Commentary to the Talmudic Aggadot* where he provided variant readings from Ezra's mostly parallel text. Regarding the need to view both of these works synoptically on the page, see my comments in *The Book Bahir*, p. 11 n.44

82 Israel Weinstock, '*Le-verur ha-Nosaḥ shel Sefer Yeṣira*', *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism* 1 (1972), pp. 9-62 [Hebrew]. See also Gruenwald's criticism of Weinstock's method of editing in his study, 'Some Critical Notes on the First Part of *Sefer Yezirah*', *Revue des Études Juives* 132 (1973), p. 475 n. 1. For another example of harmonization of various recensions see Altmann's edition of the 'Secret of the Nut', 'Eleazar of Worms' *Ḥokhmath ha-'Egoz*', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960), pp. 101-113, reprinted without the Hebrew text in his *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, London 1969, pp. 161-171. This work has possible connections to early Jewish mysticism. See Dan's article in response to that of Altmann, '*Ḥokhmath ha-'Egoz*, its Origin and Development', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 17 (1966), pp. 73-82, and his

fonts to indicate the different layers in what he believed to be the linear expansion of the text within the short recension and into the longer recension. So, for instance, *Frank Reuhl, 12 point*, in his edition displays the earliest layer while *Miriam, 12 point*, represents what Weinstock reasoned to be the later additions. Weinstock went on to display the elements found only in the manuscripts of the longer recension with another set of characters, *Frank Reuhl 10 point*. Although these two editions rely on manuscript sources and present variants from various witnesses, the reader is easily lost when trying to isolate and then compare the various recensions (see figure 1.5). The most recent edition by Peter Hayman departed from this method of manipulating the fonts in a unified text and presented them in parallel columns (see figure 1.6).

This method was more recently reproduced in a traditional edition of *Liqquṭei 'Amarim* (2009), the collection of sayings of R. Dov Baer, the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz. This edition relies on three manuscripts, constructing a text very different in its layout from the standard editions of *Liqquṭim Yeqarim*. The editor follows one manuscript but includes material from the second and third. In order to flag for the reader what material is exclusively in the second and third manuscripts he offers those passages in a smaller font of the base text and in a second font, respectively (see figure 1.7).[83]

A radical change in the methodology of presenting Jewish mystical texts can be noted with the publication of David Halperin's 1977 Ph.D. thesis in 1980, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*.[84] In this work, Halperin presented all the rabbinic sources about *merkabah* speculation in English. Although Halperin's work is not strictly speaking an edition, it is nevertheless a critical presentation of a *corpus* according to manuscript sources; at times Halperin presents parallel sources in three columns (figure 1.8).[85] Halperin's work broke new ground in freeing textual scholarship from the presentation of any one work or document and ushered in a comparative and intertextual approach to

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later study which edited another text version: 'Toward a History of the Text of *Ḥokhmat ha-Egoz*', *'Alei Sefer* 5 (1978), pp. 49-52 [Hebrew].

[83] *Liqquṭei 'Amarim*, Jerusalem 2009, p. 102.

[84] New Haven 1980.

[85] See C.R.A Morray-Jones, 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate', *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993), pp. 177-217, 265-292. On pages 210-215, Morray-Jones presents sections of the various rabbinic passages in parallel columns.

ancient texts.[86] Halperin's work is even more significant in the development of critical scholarship of Jewish mystical texts when viewed in the hindsight of the accomplishments of Peter Schäfer and his school. Schäfer is of course the senior editor of the massive project to edit all of the Hekhalot literature, a project which includes a synoptic edition of the most inclusive manuscripts,[87] various other studies,[88] editions,[89] concordances[90] and translations[91] and is only now

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[86] A comparable project from late sources is Meir Benayahu's *Toledot ha-Ari*, Jerusalem 1967 (initially prepared as his dissertation under the direction of Gershom Scholem). Notwithstanding the critical remarks of David Tamar (*Studies in the History of the Jewish People in Eretz Israel and in Italy*, Jerusalem 1970, pp. 166-193 [Hebrew]) and R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, (*Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, Philadelphia 1977, pp. 294-296), Benayahu's work displays great erudition and comparative analysis. This rich edition, which includes various recensions of the *Toledot ha-Ari*, omits the materials that Tamar claimed were the earliest Lurianic hagiographical documents. These texts, the letters of R. Shlumiel of Droznitz, were reissued in an uncritical edition by Ya'aqov Hillel, *Ha-Ari ve-Gurav*, Jerusalem 1992 (see further below). See also Gedalyahu Nigal's collection, *Sippurei Dibbuq be-Sifrut Yisrael*, Jerusalem 1994 (second edition). See the review of J. H. Chajes in *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 288-293. On the layered edition of *Shi'ur Qomah* by Martin Cohen see below. Mention should also be made of the very important collection of texts surrounding a historical period: Mordecai Wilesnky, *Ḥasidim and Mitnagdim: A Study of the Controversy between Them in the Years 1772-1815*, Jerusalem 1970, two volumes [Hebrew]. On other collections of primary sources and the need for such tools see below.

[87] Peter Schäfer, (ed.). *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1981.

[88] See for example Michael Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah*, Tübingen 1992.

[89] *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, Tübingen 1984. Klaus Herrmann, *Massekhet Hekhalot: Traktat von den himmlischen Palästen, Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 1994. See also Reeg's edition of the Account of the Ten Martyrs, cited below.

[90] *Konkordanz zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, in Zusammenarbeit mit Gottfried Reeg, und unter Mitwirkung von Klaus Herrmann, Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, Guido Weyer und Rina Otterbach, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, vols. 1 and 2, Tübingen 1986 and 1988.

[91] *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur II, §§ 81-334*, Zusammenarbeit mit Hans-Jürgen Becker, Klaus Herrmann, Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker und Stefan Siebers, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, Tübingen 1987. Idem, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot Literatur IV, §§ 598-985*, Zusammenarbeit mit Klaus Herrmann, Lucie Renner, Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker und Stefan Siebers, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, Tübingen 1991. Idem, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur III §§ 335-597* in Zusammenarbeit mit Klaus Herrmann, Lucie

coming to a close. He is also the editor of a parallel project to issue a synoptic edition of the Palestinian Talmud.[92]

The Hekhalot works have survived in numerous manuscripts, which contain a variety of recensions, including Geniza fragments which pre-date any European reworking. The 'full' copyings of the Hekhalot corpus resemble each other only to a degree, each displaying a different configuration of the passages, and dividing these clusters of pericopae into different titled sections. It would seem that upon comparing these manuscripts, we can no longer speak of the specific *works* but only of specific *texts* or clusters of traditions and their similarities.[93] Peter Schäfer has challenged even this assumption, arguing that in the case of the Hekhalot literature we can speak at best about a *corpus* of literature defined *only* by its transmissional history in the manuscripts.

Schäfer's new methodology, which includes a synoptic presentation of what he views to be the most important manuscripts, has been praised by many scholars who reviewed the new edition.[94] Schäfer's methodology, however, has *de facto* not been accepted by anyone in recent years including foremost Schäfer himself who divides his latest book, *On the Hidden and Manifest God*,[95]

Renner, Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker und Stefan Siebers, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, Tübingen 1989; Idem, *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur I §§ 1-80*, in Zusammenarbeit mit Ulrike Hirschfelder und Gerold Necker, Herausgegeben von Peter Schäfer und Klaus Herrmann, Tübingen 1995. The final page of the last volume includes a listing of all the volumes in this series.

92 *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer, Tübingen: vol. 1, 1991, vols. 2-3, 1992.

93 Harold Bloom, 'The Breaking of Form' in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, New York 1979, pp. 1-37. See as well the later studies related to this theme: G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Textual Criticism and Deconstruction', *Studies in Bibliography* 43 (1990), pp. 1-33. D. C. Greetham, '[Textual] Criticism and Deconstructionism', *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991), pp. 1-30.

94 See Halperin's review cited below; Schiffman, 'Review of: *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur II, §§ 81-334*, Tübingen 1987; *Konkordanz zur Hekhalot-Literatur II, Tübingen 1988 and Hekhalot Studien*, Tübingen 1988', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110.3 (1990), pp. 580-582. Joseph Dan's Review of the *Synopsis*: 'Manuscripts of Heikhalot and Merkavah Literature', *Tarbiz* 53 (1984), pp. 313-317 [Hebrew]; idem, '*Hekhaloth Genuzim*' (Review of: P. Schäfer, *Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot Literatur*), *Tarbiz* 56 (1987), pp. 433-437 [Hebrew].

95 Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, tr. Aubrey Pomerance, Albany 1992. See especially pages 16-17.

according to the 'books' or 'works' of the Hekhalot literature, a division which follows the late reception of the works in medieval Europe and the early descriptions of modern scholars in this century. Therefore, despite his repeated use of the terms 'macroform' and 'microform' to describe the fluid and collective presentation of the manuscript traditions he chose to edit, recent scholarship is highly dependent on the medieval reception of the texts, their overall structure and internal divisions.[96]

Despite widespread impressions, Schäfer's project of editing the Hekhalot corpus began with what is certainly no more than a working draft placed in the public domain. It was not intended to be the final product of the critical text project. This bold move, which should be praised, allowed other scholars, internationally, to begin modern reappraisals of Hekhalot texts as he and his team began to understand and correct their edition in various studies and translations.[97] Schäfer's edition, which was said to present the manuscript texts without any (significant) intervention of the editors,[98] was nevertheless based on a very definite set of assumptions which second guessed the outcome of their

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[96] So, for example, Schäfer dedicates a chapter to the 'macroform' *Ma'aseh Merkavah* which he notes 'is not be found in any one of the manuscripts' (p. 77). Compare to the theses put forward by Schäfer in his earlier study, 'Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature', *Hekhalot Studien*, pp. 15-16. See further Schäfer's own critique of Gruenwald's similar division of the texts into books in Schäfer's of Gruenwald's monograph, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden Köln 1980 (Schäfer. 'Merkavah Mysticism and Rabbinic Judaism', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 [1984], pp. 537-541, esp. p. 538). See also Ithamar Gruenwald, 'Literary and Redactional Issues in the Study of Hekhalot Literature', *From Apocalyptism to Gnosticism*, Frankfurt Am main – Bern – New York – Paris 1988, pp. 175-190. Joseph Dan has suggested that all the European manuscripts may have originated in a single early manuscript which reached the German Pietists. See his 'The Ancient Heikhalot Mystical Texts in the Middle Ages: Tradition, Source, Inspiration', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), pp. 83-96.

[97] While Schäfer's project has been compared by Halperin, with stated exaggeration, to the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in this context it might better be compared to the publication of the 'Nag Hammadi Library'. This project took a course similar in presenting the sources first, although in reverse order of translation to manuscript sources: *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden 1977 (and reprints). Later volumes included facsimiles of the manuscripts and more detailed critical work.

[98] See the introduction to the *Synopsis*, p. v.

research, a point which was missed by every one of the volume's reviewers.[99]

Schäfer assumed that individual works did not exist and so chose manuscripts from within a pool of manuscripts which contained the whole corpus.[100] This assumption was forced on the text in the removal and de-emphasis of the copyists' divisions of the text.[101] Anyone who consults the manuscripts or microfilm copies will receive a different impression of the texts. Not only are Schäfer's new passage divisions absent in the manuscripts, but the reader now misses the spacing of the chapter divisions and the large block letters which mark the beginning of the different sections.[102] Finally, Schäfer's edition includes all texts found on the page of a given manuscript, including additions in later or different script.

Schäfer's apparatus records all additions in the margins, marked only by a small inverted square bracket.[103] The reader is therefore unaware whether the addition is a correction by the first scribe or a later comment. This has serious implications for the theory of how the Hekhalot literature was edited and arranged. For example, in Ms. Vatican 228, a lengthy section was penned in the margin by a later hand (see figure 1.9).[104] This later scribe viewed another

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[99] See the reviews of David Halperin, 'A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984), pp. 543-551, and Rachel Elior, 'Schäfer's Synopse zur Hekhalot Literature', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 (1986), pp. 213-217; Idem, 'Schäfer's *Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 80 (1989), pp. 142-145.

[100] Schäfer seems to have been influenced in part by the form- and source-critical methods of Joseph Heinemann. See in particular the chapter entitled, 'The Genres of Prayer and their Formal Characteristics' from his book, *Prayer in the Talmud*, Berlin-New York 1977, pp. 276-287.

[101] See the review of the *Synopsis* by P.S. Alexander in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 102-106, esp. p. 103.

[102] Shlomo Mussayef accurately reproduced these graphic divisions of one very important manuscript in his edition of some of the central Hekhalot texts: *Merkavah Shelemah*, Jerusalem 1921.

[103] See the introduction to the *Synopsis*, p. xviii.

[104] *Synopsis*, §§ 74, 178-181: Ms. Vatican 228, fol. 76a. One can see the break in the seven column layout as on pages 76-77 of the *Synopsis* and again on pages 82-83. On this page for example another reading, cited as *nosaḥ aḥer* in the margin, was added by the original copyist whereas the added block of text which lacks this identification was copied by a much later hand. A facsimile of the folios of the Hekhalot texts from the Vatican manuscript was published by Michal Oron in a pamphlet which also contains

manuscript and tried to mold the Vatican text to accord with the other recension. The *Synopsis* for all purposes reproduces this modified text as if it were one manuscript, reconfiguring the text of two hands into a single flowing text with minimal notations to note their separate sources (see figure 1.10).[105] Considering the stated goals of the synoptic edition, glosses of the same hand should be appropriately marked and additions of a later hand should be treated as a second manuscript, reproduced separately in an appendix or footnote.[106] It is unfortunate that the *Synopsis* did not include photographic reproductions of the manuscripts used in the volume. The case of Ms. Vatican 228 is a powerful example.

But beyond this instance of the folio discussed, Ms. Vatican's importance, like that of many other Hekhalot manuscripts, is lost, in fact concealed, by its presentation in *Synopsis*. The methodology of the *Synopsis* preconceived the conclusion that the lack of structure in the flow of the corpus was original. A study of Ms. Vatican 228 shows that discrete works were copied into a notebook by the German Pietists who created a library of sorts of Hekhalot material and various other midrashic and mystical texts. Some of the *works* were further subdivided into chapters, and large headings were attached to many of them. Schäfer's edition does transcribe every word of the sections selected for the *Synopsis*, but the graphic divisions, which construct their own meaning and leave a particular impression on the reader, were obviously omitted in the parallel and equal presentation of the text alongside other manuscripts. The effect of this omission can be seen in the misrecognition of the nature of the works in modern scholarship, which relied on the *Synopsis* without consulting this or other manuscripts not presented in print.

In the case of Hekhalot literature, the point is mute as a new *Synopsis* will in all likelihood will not be prepared even though we know its current failings.

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fols. 6b-8b of Mussayef's *Merkavah Shelemah*: M. Oron, *'Qeṭ'aim me-sifrut yordei merkavah'*, Tel Aviv [student press of Tel Aviv University], n.d.

[105] What is lacking from this complex presentation is sample pages of the manuscripts or even the use of many different fonts, possibly constructed to imitate the different medieval scripts. In my edition of the *Book Bahir* I provided both a facsimile of the manuscript as well as a separate critical edition which included a separate apparatus for the (later) glosses (see illustrations). On the publication of facsimile editions of Jewish mystical works see below.

[106] So too, one would not consider all documents bound together and which receive a single shelf-mark in a library's holdings as belonging to the same manuscript witness.

Today we understand that these particular manuscripts do not contain the somewhat amorphous collection of what once was the early collection of Hekhalot traditions, but rather, these manuscripts preserve the various medieval attempts to edit the separate works. Schäfer's project has now come full circle: a new edition of the *book* '3 Enoch' is soon to be reissued separately based on manuscripts which preserve the text as a separate work.[107]

Schäfer's edition has taught us much about critical editing in the last fifteen years, for while it was previously considered to be the best method for uncovering what was the earliest state of complex texts, it now can be seen as a statement of their later reception. Moreover, by making an argument about the early form of these collections, Schäfer has unwittingly created a textual canon, leading other scholars to believe that it is unnecessary to use or consult the other manuscript witnesses which have not been published. I have spoken to many non-specialists within the wider study of Jewish mysticism who were left with the impression that the *Synopsis* was based on *all* of the Hekhalot manuscripts which are known to exist. In short, a return to the Hekhalot manuscripts with a new appreciation of what has been learned from Schäfer's project would yield important results.

Other contemporary efforts to edit Hekhalot include the editions of Rachel Elior and Martin Cohen. In 1982, Elior published the text known as *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* from Ms. New York, JTSA, Mic 8128.[108] She chose this witness as her base text since it was clearly the longest recension, providing the most expansive frame for an edition of the text. Similarly, Ms. 8128 provides the frame and structure for the paragraph-by-paragraph presentation of Schäfer's *Synopsis*.[109] Later research has shown, however, that Ms. 8128 is decidedly an

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[107] Compare Schäfer's remarks in *Hekhalot Studien*, p. 14 n. 52 to the introduction to the recent translation volume: *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur I §§ 1-80*, in Zusammenarbeit mit Ulrike Hirschfelder und Gerold Necker, Herausgegeben von Peter Schäfer und Klaus Herrmann, Tübingen 1995. See also his 'Research of Hekhalot Literature: Where Do We Stand Now', *Rashi 1040-1990, Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach*, ed. G. Séd-Rajna, Paris 1993, pp. 229-236 where he speaks of both the European editing of older Oriental text-traditions as well as the need to evaluate the Ashkenazi reception of the Hekhalot texts.

[108] See also Carl Waldman, '*Hekhalot Zutarti*: A Critical Edition Based on a Geniza Manuscript', M.A. Thesis, Yeshiva University, 1978 (unseen).

[109] Schäfer's review of Elior's *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* in *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 153-157 and Halperin's comments in his *The Faces of the Chariot*, Tübingen 1988, p. 365.

anonymous medieval figure's late redaction of the corpus into a single document.[110] In short, due to the tendency to accept the longest form as the earliest version of a text, the redaction of the Hekhalot works found in Ms. 8128 has influenced modern scholars and their readers more than any other witness or text.[111]

This is not the case with the work of Martin Cohen who edited critical editions of each of the recensions of the work known as *Shi'ur Qomah*.[112] Although Cohen presents one of the versions as an Urtext, a point which is disputed by Schäfer,[113] it is to Cohen's credit that he does not discard the other versions but layers his book with the various traditions of the text throughout its history of reception. About the same time, two additional volumes were issued in related literature which presented various versions of a given work. The first is Gottfried Reeg's masterful presentation of the *Account of the Ten Martyrs*, which he edited in a synoptic edition comprised of critical editions of each recension.[114] The second is Mark Verman's study and edition of the *Books*

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[110] Klaus Herrmann and Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, 'Magische Traditionen der New Yorker Hekhalot-Handschriften JTS 8128 im Kontext ihrer Gesamtredaktion', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 17 (1989), pp. 101-149.

[111] Many scholars assume a longer recension of a given text is *prima facie* the later document, having been expanded linearly by the author (or others). I have been convinced through a number of discussions with my colleague, Aaron Geffen, that a better working hypothesis is the opposite, that a rewritten work is usually more precise and therefore more condensed. For examples of rewriting of philosophical works see Yoḥanan Silman, *Philosopher and Prophet: Judah Halevi the Kuzari and the Evolution of his Thought*, Albany 1995; Ari Ackerman, 'The Composition of the Section on Divine Providence in Hasdai Crescas' *Or ha-Shem*', *Da'at* 32-33 (1994), pp. xxxvii-xlv. In the case of Crescas' work we possess different versions of the text. See also Hannah Kasher, 'Is There an Early Stratum in the Guide of the Perplexed', *Maimonidean Studies* 3, ed. A Hyman, New York 1992-1993, pp. 105-130.

[112] Michael Swartz, Review of: Martin Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, Tübingen 1985, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110.3 (1990), pp. 582-584. Klaus Herrmann's edition of *Massekhet Hekhalot* is similarly layered with the various recensions.

[113] Schäfer, *Hekhalot Studien*, pp. 75-83.

[114] Gottfried Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyren: Synoptische Edition mit Übersetzung und Einleitung*, Tübingen 1985. See further the review of Myron Lerner, 'Reed's Geschichte von den Zehen Martyren', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 80 (1990), pp. 391-395. See also, Michal Oron, 'Merkavah Texts and the Legend of the Ten Martyrs',

of Contemplation which presented the various recensions and 'subtexts' of the work.[115]

Schäfer's claim about the need to publish the Hekhalot texts synoptically has recently come under attack. In a study entitled '*Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Hekhalot Rabbati*',[116] James Davila challenged Schäfer's conclusion that a single critical text cannot be edited, and presented a *partiture* text to a section of *Hekhalot Rabbati*.[117] This challenge to the synoptic presentation of the Hekhalot texts raises many important issues. Foremost among them is that modern textual criticism *should not* be viewed as a linear progression from two, to three, to eight columns. Although obvious, it is important to state that each text or group of manuscripts dictates a different set of criteria for its editing.

As Davila has summarized the problem, the editor tries to either a) restore the author's original document, b) present the ultimate source of all the witnesses, c) edit a particular canonical text, the *textus receptus*, or d) present within one edition or page-layout all of the recensions and/or differences.[118] While these choices cover the range of editions now which scholars have and intend to prepare, I would phrase the question a little differently. What concerns the editor is not, above all, the type of text to be edited, i.e. which version is best to edit, but rather what purpose and which audience does it serve.[119]

Eshel Beer Sheva 2 (1980), pp. 81-96 [Hebrew]; Alter Velner, *The Ten Martyrs in Midrash and Poetry*, Jerusalem 2005 [Hebrew].

[115] *Sifrei ha-Iyyun*, Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, September 1984. Published by SUNY Press as *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, Albany 1992. On the term '*circle*' *(ḥug)* as it applies to Kabbalistic works and figures see Daniel Abrams, '*The Book of Illumination* of R. Jacob ben Jacob Ha-Kohen: A Synoptic Edition From Various Manuscripts', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University 1993, pp. 39-41 [Hebrew].

[116] James Davila, 'Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Hekhalot Rabbati', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994), pp. 208-226.

[117] Schäfer's edition contained in his study, 'Prolegomena zu einer kritischen Edition und Analyse der *Merkavah Rabba*', is the first partiture edition of a Jewish mystical text. See also Klaus Herrmann, 'Text und Fiktion: Zur Textüberlieferung des *Shi'ur Qomah*', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 16 (1988), pp. 89-142.

[118] p. 215.

[119] See also the edition of a passage based on Ms. New York 8128 by Noam Zadoff, 'An Annotated Edition to a Passage from *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§81-§106)', *Shai le-Yosef:*

5. *Editors and their Audience(s): Academic, Traditional and Popular*

The academic editor ideally would like to prepare a critical text which can be used by the specialized scholar, but at the same time can be inviting to the more general reader. This goal has been achieved in what should prove be considered a new standard for the presentation of critical texts, by Charles Mopsik's *Le Secret du mariage de David et Bethsabée*.[120] This volume critically edits a Hebrew text from manuscript, places it opposite a French translation, and offers variants and commentary on the same page (see figure 1.11). To my knowledge, this is the first volume of its kind in the field of Jewish mysticism, now available in English translation in the posthumously published volume of studies I edited, *Sex of the Soul*.[121]

Collected Articles in Jewish Studies by his Students, Presented to Professor Joseph Dan on the Occasion of his Retirement, Jerusalem 2003, pp. 1-62 [Hebrew]. In the case of the *Book Bahir*, I chose to edit the Munich manuscript not only because it was the oldest and most reliable witness but also because it was the version upon which nearly all critical research has been conducted in this century. By preserving Scholem's divisions of passages, a matter for which I have been criticized, (see the review by Boaz Huss in *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), pp. 333-340), the reader is automatically guided through all of Scholem's analyses, not to mention his annotated German translation. The facsimile of the Munich manuscript displays another early division of the text into smaller units. For a criticism of other interventions in the text such as the addition of punctuation, see Annelies Kuyt's review in *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 22 (1995), pp. 197-199.

[120] *Le Secret du mariage de David et Bethsabée* / סוד ראוה היתה בת שבע לדוד מששת ימי בראשית, Texte hébreu introduction, traduction et notes de Charles Mopsik, Éditions de l'Éclat, Combas 1994 (new edition, with a different layout, Paris; Tel Aviv: Éditions de l'Éclat, 2003 and in English translation in: *Sex of the Soul: On the Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah*, by Charles Mopsik, edited, with a foreword by Daniel Abrams, Los Angeles 2005). See my review in the first French edition in *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 278-282. In a two-part study published some years before his book mentioned above, N. Séd offered a French translation opposite a Hebrew (handwritten) transcription of the text. See his 'Une cosmologie juive du haut moyen age *la Berayta di Ma'aseh Bereshit*', *Revue des études Juives* 123 (1964), pp. 259-305; part II: 'Le texte, les manuscrits et les diagrammes', Ibid., 124 (1965), pp. 23-123.

[121] Mopsik is the editor of a series of Jewish mystical texts in French translation published by Verdier, Paris. Mopsik has issued five volumes of the zoharic corpus among other works. His study of the treatise on sexual relations (1986) was recently published in a revised edition which includes a Hebrew text based on a number of manuscripts: Charles Mopsik, *Lettre sur la sainteté: le secret de la relation entre l'homme et la femme*

Mention should be made here of critical advancements in the traditional and non-academic world of publishing. Exceptional for its beauty and methodological rigor of its preparation from various manuscript sources, Simḥa Lieberman's edition of Recanati's *Rationale of the Commandments* stands out as an early edition that makes use of academic methods.[122] The most useful edition of a kabbalistic text, one that brings together useful indices and annotations, is Elijah de Vidas' *Reshit Ḥokhma* edited by Chaim Waldman and published in Jerusalem, 1984.[123] In 1989, critical editing penetrated this same world with the publication of Joseph Gikatilla's *Ginat Egoz* by *Yeshivat ha-Ḥayyim ve-ha-Shalom*.[124] This edition systematically presents manuscript variants to a carefully chosen base text. With this edition, *the clearly demarcated borders which once offered academics a unique definition to their textual scholarship have broken down.* Some methods of the academy have therefore become common place in traditional circles, either by imitation of printed editions, by dialogue with academics in the National Library in Jerusalem and other major centers of textual resources or by a complex

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dans la cabbale, Paris 1986; Idem, *Lettre sur la sainteté (Igueret ha-Qodech) ou la relation de l'homme avec sa femme (Ḥibour ha-adam 'im ichto)*, présenté, traduit de l'hébreu et édité par Charles Mopsik, (Nouvelle édition bilingue revue et corrigée), Lagrasse 1994.

[122] London 1962. It should be noted that he left out the introduction which appears in R. Judah Ḥayyat's *Commentary to Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*. The placement of parallel passages from other works of Recanati allows the reader to engage this work with an eye toward the author's thought through his writings. As Idel has noted in his book on this kabbalist, the *Commentary to the Torah* subsumed the *Rationales of the Commandments* explaining the great overlap. The collectanea produced by S. Lieberman (London 1963) and presented in the lower section of the page thus misses the opportunity to show how the text evolved and was re-rewritten by Recanati. Further, the inclusion of a transcription of the rather poor first edition is rather puzzling, either intended to address its canonical status or as a way of not including it in the annotated edition. For a more detailed review of the works and printings of Recanati, see Idel, *R. Menaḥem Recanati: The Kabbalist*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1998, pp. 68-80 [Hebrew].

[123] See also the more recent edition of *Ḥokhmath ha-Nefesh*, ed. N. E. Weiss, Benei Beraq 1987 and *Sodei Razaya*, Jerusalem 1991 which cites Schäfer's *Synopsis*!; *Sefer Shoresh Yishai*, Jerusalem 1992 and R. Avraham Ibn Sava's *Ṣeror ha-Mor* (*Ha-Shalem*), ed. Meir Wichelder, Benei Beraq 1990, two volumes.

[124] Moshe Idel has informed me that he advised the editors of this volume in the selection of the manuscripts and the preparation of the text.

relationship between cultural forces that are not readily apparent.[125] In light of these developments, it would be helpful if the academic community would issue a handbook that would explain the methods and practices of critical editing. If prepared with such a community in mind, such a guide would offer traditional editors direct access to the benefits of academic methods.

The phenomenon of critical scholarship in the traditional, non-academic sector has for many years now been coupled with the publication of university scholarship by presses such as *Ofeq*, a publishing house which reaches both audiences.[126] Despite such positive collaboration, many editions have been published in traditional circles which are not only uncritical, but also distort the text and its recensions to the point that a new edition is required.[127] Moreover,

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[125] Note for example the exquisite presentation of Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah*, Jerusalem 2002, edited by B. Bazaq and N. Samet, which displays no connection to university circles.

[126] See the recent edition of the *Mesilat Yesharim*, edited by Joseph Avivi, Jerusalem 1994. This volume is joined by two other volumes of Geonic texts, *Teshuvot of Natronai Gaon*, edited by Robert Brody and *Teshuvot ha-Geonim he-Ḥadashot* by Simḥa Emanuel, Jerusalem 1995. For references to early mystical texts such as *Raza Rabba*, see Emanuel's edition, pp. 133-134 and notes. Alongside these editions are works which were published for a Kabbalistic audience alone and are not sold to a wider audience, including academics. See Salman Eliyhau's *Kerem Shlomo*, published by *Ahavat Shalom*, six volumes, Jerusalem 1966-1980 and Scholem's handnote in his copy (Scholem Library #1515) and the more recently published Lurianic prayer books also published by *Ahavat Shalom*, *Siddur Kavannot*, three volumes, Jerusalem 1984, 1988, 1993.

[127] *Perushei Siddur ha-Tefilah la-Roqeaḥ*, ed. M. Hershler, Jerusalem 1992, two volumes. See the initial criticism of Gad Ḥasidah, *'Hashlamot le-Ferush ha-Tefilah le-va'al ha-Roqeaḥ'*, *Ṣefunot* 19 (1994), pp. 6-11. Ḥasidah states that Hershler used only Ms. Oxford 1204 and did not use Ms. Paris BN 772. Ḥasidah offers many corrections, but the problems with this editor are far greater. An initial comparison of these two manuscripts demonstrates that certain sections of the work are considerably different, particularly in the later sections of the work. See Joseph Dan, 'Ashkenazi Hasidic Commentaries on the Hymn *Ha-'Aderet We-ha-'Emunah*', *Tarbiz* 50 (1980-81), p. 400 n.30 [Hebrew]. See also the corrections to Hershler's edition of Eleazar's *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, offered by Shmuel Ashkenazi, 'On Two Books of the First Hasidim', *Qoveṣ Sifrei Ṣadiqim* 4 (1992), pp. 105-115 [Hebrew]. Two separate texts are mixed together in Moshe Hershler's edition of *Siddur of R. Solomon ben Samson of Garmaise, Including the Siddur of the Ḥaside Ashkenaz*, Jerusalem 1971, (facsimile reprint, Jerusalem 1992). In Eleazar's *Commentary to the Prayers*, Hershler added the separate work he entitled *'Sodot ha-Tefilah'*. See his introduction, p. 13. See further, Israel Ta

some of these editions were reproductions of, or relied almost entirely on, the work of academics.[128] At times, however, the publication of uncritical work

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Shma, 'R. Judah the Pious' Pamphlet of the Secrets of Prayer', *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), pp. 65-77 [Hebrew]. See also below, chapter 5, note 283. See also Simha Emanuel, 'New Fragments of Unknown Biblical Commentaries from the "European Genizah"', *'Genizat Germania' — Hebrew and Aramaic Binding: Fragments from Germany in Context*, ed. A. Lehnardt, Leiden-Boston 2010, pp. 207-215.

[128] *Sefer Yeṣira with the Commentary of Or Yaqar by Moses Cordovero [and the] Commentary of R. Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides and R. Isaac of Acre*, Jerusalem 1989. Cordovero's commentary was recently reissued within the series of volumes from the *Or Yaqar: Commentary to the Zohar* (Jerusalem 1995, vol. 23). Scholem had earlier published both of the remaining commentaries in this volume: the first as an appendix to his lectures *Ha-Qabbalah be-Provence*, Jerusalem 1963 and the second in *Qiryat Sefer* 31 (1956), pp. 379-396. (See the comments of Yehudah Liebes in his review of Chaim Wirszubski's *Between the Lines*, Jerusalem 1990: 'On the Borderline of Kabbalah', *Tarbiz* 60 [1991], pp. 132-133 [Hebrew]); Idem, 'Mysticism and Reality: Toward a Portait of the Martyr and Kabbalist R. Samson of Ostropoler', *Tarbiz* 52 (1982), pp. 108-109 [Hebrew]. See also the three volume set published in Jerusalem by Ya'aqov Hillel, *Shivḥei ha-Ari* 1991, *Kitvuni le-Dorot* 1992 and *Ha-Ari ve-Gurav* 1992, which relies heavily on the research and editions of earlier academic scholarship. Compare for example Simḥah Asaf, *'Iggerot me-Ṣefat'*, *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* 3 [13] (1940), pp. 117-133 to ha-Ari ve-Gurav, p. 81 n.1, and compare Ya'aqov Hillel's *Kitvuni le-Dorot* to Avivi's *Binyan Ariel*, Jerusalem 1987 [Hebrew]. On the uncited use of Avivi, see his article *'Eṣ Hayyim, Peri Eṣ Ḥayyim* and *Nof Eṣ Ḥayyim* by R. Ḥayyim Vital', *Tzfunot* 5 [1] (1993), pp. 84-91 [Hebrew]. (Related to this phenomenon is the free use of Charles Manekin's study, 'On Ramḥal's Book of Logic and Ramist Method in his Works', *Daat* 40 (1998), pp. 5-25 [Hebrew] in the foreword of Mordechai Chirqi's *Sifrei Ramḥal*, Jerusalem 2000). To be sure, *Shivḥei ha-Ari* acknowledges its reliance on Benayahu's *Toledot ha-Ari*, thereby perpetuating his questionable conclusions. See now the review of David Tamar, *'Temihot ve-Hassagoth'*, *Sinai* 109 (1992), pp. 184-191. I would like to thank J. H. Chajes for discussions on this matter. See also Chavel's edition of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*, Jerusalem 1959, vol. 1, p. 275 where he cites Scholem's article 'The Paradisic Garb of Souls and the Origin of the Concept of *Ḥaluqa de-Rabbanan*', *Tarbiz* 24 (1955), pp. 290-306 [Hebrew], according to the journal and page number without mentioning Scholem's name. See, however, the later note by Chavel where he refers to him as החכם גרשם שלום. See *Kitvei Ramban*, Jerusalem 1964, vol. 2, p. 345 [Hebrew]. A more blatant example is described in my *Book Bahir*, p. 3. See also E. Gottlieb's review of Chavel's work in *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, Jerusalem 1976, pp. 524-528 [Hebrew]. Finally, although not a matter of text edition, of note is a comment by Scholem which is

preceded the efforts of university scholars.[129] Furthering blurring the once easily identifiable modes of editing within and without of the university, in publishing houses associated with universities and those of the traditional communities, are private presses and self-publishing. The most prolific example of such, which seems to draw from aspects of both ends of the spectrum is the many volumes issued by Raphael Cohen, including the most bizarre essay of a polemic in traditional vocabulary against nearly every member of the field, published as an appendix to his edition of *Pitḥei 'Olam*.[130]

The relationship between the traditional and academic communities of editors is a complex phenomenon, ranging from open cooperation and printed references of acknowledgment to outright disdain and contempt in cultural conflict with blatant theft taking place in the printed domain. No one statement could capture all that has occurred and the trends that have emerged in recent years. Certain traditional publishing projects are noteworthy for their scope and the effect they have had on scholarship. Foremost, the publication of the main works of Abulafia is a major event for both communities, even if not accomplished in a critical manner, alongside the (partial) and unacknowledged use of the scholarly fruits of manuscript research. Prior to this effort, only a few of his texts had been published, namely small treatises, passages or commentaries by Jellinek, Scholem, Weinstock and Idel. In two series of books, a total of seventeen volumes have been issued by Amnon Gross and Matityahu Safirin.

Of interest here are the multiple editions by Gross of *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba*,

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the sharpest handwritten note I have found in any of Scholem's books and offprints: השיטה הידועה: מזכירים אותי פעמים אחדות וגונבים ממני פי חמשה בלי כל ציוני מקור ומערבבים דברי עם דברי הבלים והטעָיוֹת. בסך הכל: ספר עלוב, גנוב ורקוב (Kurt Hruby, *La Cabbale et la Tradition Judaïque*, Paris 1974, Scholem Library #8804).

[129] See most prominently the editions of Todros Abulafia's *Sha'ar ha-Razim* edited by Michal Kushnir-Oron, Jerusalem 1989 (issued by H. Erlanger with a facsimile of *Oṣar ha-Kavod ha-Shalem*, Warsaw 1879, Benei Beraq 1986); *Me'irat Einayim of Isaac of Acre*, edited Amos Goldreich, Jerusalem 1981 and printed 1984. The first volume of Erlanger's edition of this work was issued in Benei Beraq in 1975.

[130] Shlomo ben Shmuel, *Pitḥei 'Olam*, Jerusalem 2004. Of the more texts he has edited see the editions of works by Abraham Abulafia, *Sefer ha-Berit*, Jerusalem 2001 and *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah*, Jerusalem 2001. See also *Sefer ha-Yiḥud*, Jerusalem 1998; Joseph Gikatilla, *Sod ha-Naḥash u-Mishpaṭo*, Jerusalem 1998; Shem Ṭov ben Jacob di Faro, *Sefer ha-Yiḥud*, Jerusalem 1998.

each produced after discovering yet a better manuscript.[131] Not only have (the) texts of the Ecstatic Kabbalah become available, functionally breaking the ban established by the R. Solomon ibn Aderet (Rashba), but these works are now widespread, Ibn Aderet having found their way into computerized databases and apparently pirated versions of the whole text on-line. This is surely a major cultural event, particularly within traditional communities, although it is important to compare the relatively small resurgence of interest in Ecstatic Kabbalah following the publication of these editions when compared to that of studies in Hekhalot literature following the appearance of the *Synopsis*.[132]

With greater frequency we can point to a phenomenon of traditional and commercial editions which, without permission, reproduce the critical work

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[131] Adoph Jellinek, 'Sefer ha-Ôt: Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia', *Jubelschrift zum Sibzigsten Geburtstage des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz*, Breslau 1887, pp. 65-88; Israel Weinstock, *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah 'Almoni mi-Yesodo shel Rabbi 'Avraham 'Abul'afiya'*, Jerusalem 1984. Further texts were published in Gershom Scholem's, *The Kabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and Abraham Abulafia*, edited by J. Ben-Shlomo, Jerusalem 1965 [Hebrew]. Amnon Gross has issued the following works in Jerusalem: *Sefer Ḥayyei ha-'Olam, ve-Zot le-Yehuda, 'Imrei Shefer, Gan Na'ul, Sheva Netivot ha-Torah, Oṣar 'Eden Ganuz, Mafteaḥ ha-Ḥokhmot, Mafteaḥ ha-Shemot, Mafteaḥ ha-Tokhehot, Ḥayyei ha-Nefesh, Meṣaref la-Kesef ve-Khur la-Zahav, Or ha-Sekhel, Shomer Miṣwah. Meṣaref ha-Sekhel ve-Sefer ha-Ot, Sitrei Torah, Ner Elohim ve-Get Shemot, Mafteaḥ ha-Ra'ayon ha-Ḥesheq ve-ha-Melamed, Sefer ha-Ṣeruf u-Maḥshevet Ḥoshev.* Safrin issued two volumes which include *Sefer Ha-Ḥesheq* and *Or ha-Sekhel*. For a full listing of these titles see the bibliography below.

[132] See Elliot Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy*, Los-Angeles 2000; Saverio Campanini, 'Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka – *Perush Ha-tefelot*', (appendix) in: Giulio Busi, *Catalogue of the Kabbalistic Manuscripts in the Library of the Jewish Community of Mantua*, Firenze 2001, pp. 219-358; Christine A. Meilicke, 'Abulafianism Among the Counterculture Kabbalists', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 9 (2002), pp. 71-101; Adam Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Study and Critical Edition of an Anonymous Commentary to the Prayers*, Los Angeles 2004 [Hebrew]; Harvey Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans and Joachimism*, Albany 2007; idem, 'A Seal within a Seal: The Imprint of Sufism in Abraham Abulafia's Teachings', *Medieval Encounters* 4 (2006), pp. 153-172; idem, 'Three in One or One that is Three: On the Dating of Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Ot*', *Revue des études Juives* 165 (2006), pp. 179-189; Robert Sagerman, 'Ambivalence toward Christianity in the Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2008.

accomplished by university academics, even if the phenomenon is not limited to the theft of the editorial work of this community of scholars.[133] One might conjecture that these acts are (often) part of a cultural conflict of the appropriation of classical literature from one setting to another, such that hegemony is maintained if a university edition is reprinted in a traditional format.[134] Be that as it may, it is also clear that these ventures are at times fueled by the pursuit of profit no less than cultural impact. The borders of the cultural-traditional and the secular-capitalistic motivations break down when the phenomenon is accompanied by commercial presses which do the same. The most blatant examples of such theft are the editions published by Nezer Shraga in the collections, *Yalqut ha-Ro'im* (Jerusalem 2000) and the two volumes of *'Ammudei ha-Qabbalah* (Jerusalem 2001, 2005). The first is an expansion of the collection of texts first published in Warsaw 1885, which includes the entire Hekhalot literature based on amalgam of the synoptic presentation in Schäfer's *Hekhalot Synopsis*.[135] The second volume of *'Ammudei ha-Qabbalah* scandalously copies out the full texts of my editions of the works of R. Asher ben David and R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen's *Book of Illumination*, adding on the title page that these particular works appear here for the first time from manuscripts. The listing of 'secrets' (*sodot*) or literary units which comprise the book that *I composed and added* to the edition of the manuscript source in my dissertation (that is, it is not found in any of the manuscripts and was provided by me in my edition for the reader's edification) was also copied into this shady edition. To their credit, or possibly as a further criticism of the wholesale abuse of the critical edition for other purposes, it should be said that the different versions presented synoptically from various

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[133] Joseph Avivi, '*Eṣ Ḥayyim, Peri Eṣ Ḥayyim* and *Nof Eṣ Ḥayyim* by R. Ḥayyim Vital', *Tzfunot* 5 [1] (1993), pp. 84-91 [Hebrew].

[134] So for example, the two texts from the 'Iyyun Circle, which were edited by Menachem Kallus in his master's thesis, *Sefer ha-Yiḥud ha-'Amiti* and *Perush Lamed-Beit Netivot* curiously appear as in recent collection, *Sifrei Qabbalat ha-Geonim*, Jerusalem 2006. It should be noted however, that the versions are not identical and that this volume contains other works from manuscript that are attributed to the Geonim. See Menachem Kallus, 'Two Mid-13th Century Kabbalistic Texts from the *Iyyun* Circle', master's thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991.

[135] I note with irony, that whereas Schäfer denied the existence of book in the Hekhalot literature, it was his edition of the manuscripts in the *Synopsis* that produced, via Nezer Shraga, an edition of the Hekhalot texts as a book.

manuscripts were synthesized into a harmonized text, adding words and phrases to smooth out the locutions when he (or they?) thought it necessary.

Their collection entitled *'Ammudei ha-Qabbalah* includes Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon's supercommentary to Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah, Keter Shem Ṭov*. The work was already published in 1798 in *Ma'or va-Shemesh* from a poor text that included significant reworkings or additions from later kabbalistic texts.[136] It is therefore a positive step forward that Nezer Shraga produced a new text from manuscript sources. Their talent for copying, however, reveals a spectacular case of the corruption of the quality of the text over time which can be restored by tracing the manuscript histories of the work.[137] In Ibn Gaon's supercommentary, he wrote about the ten *sefirot* and offered a comment about the diagram he introduced into his work. From the first copying, apparently, the diagram amounted to the names of the ten *sefirot* positioned in their appropriate places without the accompanying circles which often characterize such graphic depictions. The adjacent text was therefore indented, leaving room on the page for the names of the *sefirot* by their side. Immediately after the completion of the ten names, the text once again occupied the full line width. Such that in a Parma manuscript (Ms Parma 2654, de Rossi 1221, fol. 180a; figure 1.12) it appears at the end of the pericope *Teruma* next to the text that refers to these names. There in the text, Ibn Gaon writes that he will 'refer to their arrangement according to kabbalistic tradition and their placement' (*ve-'al ken ermoz lekha ṣuratan ba-qabbalah ve-he'emadetan*). In Ms. Paris, BN de France, héb 774, fol. 95a (figure 1.13), the diagram was moved up in the work, now positioned next to the text which begins the following pericope, *tezaveh*. In a third manuscript of exceedingly poor quality, but reproduced in a beautiful script (Vatican, Barberini Or. 110, fol. 114a, figure 1.14), the work was copied by a scribe who didn't understand the first thing of what he was copying. These opening lines of *tezaveh* were copied with the names of the sefirot interpolated into the flow of the commentary, meaninglessly incorporating the names from their place in a diagram into the flow of the words of the sentence that in any event had no relation to the diagram which belongs elsewhere. While we might marvel at the ingenuity of the copyist who compounded his errors of misconception and misrecognition, it served as the basis for the new edition by Nezer Shraga which

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[136] *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, ed. Y. Koriat, Livorno 1798, fols. 25a-54a.

[137] I offer my deep thanks to Aharon Eisenbach who shared this data with me and provided the information presented here.

reproduced the nonsensical text with the names of the *sefirot* interspersed into the text of the supercommentary. Nevertheless, they reproduced from another manuscript source the names in a diagram just prior to it (figure 1.15).

This case is important for it shows the inherent relationship between an author's text and the graphic depiction found in later manuscripts. Here we have a case where the author felt the need to graphically depict his intent thereby showing a necessary relationship between text and diagram. Whereas modern audiences are particularly interested in images, here, the early transmission history through the latest printing absorbed, albeit by error, the diagram into the text and disjointed the text from the diagram even when it was restored. This is a special case, no doubt, since the editors are, at least in the minds of many in the academy, who have forsaken textual work themselves, representatives of the traditional community who continue, as it were, to *copy*, from within, the texts created and preserved by the traditional community.

The wholesale copying of editions and textual works of others in modern times is not in any sense limited to the traditional community of editors and printers. More recently, the volume *Torat ha-Sod ha-Qedumah: Hekhalot Rabbati, Sefer Yeṣira and Sefer ha-Bahir*, published by Yediyot Aḥronot, lacking an editor on the title page but boasting an impressive editorial board of professors, literary figures and their staff who either know very well, or have no idea at all, what is in the volume to which they extend their names and authority. The first text is based on the JTSA manuscript (8128) which incidentally is featured in Schäfer's *Synopsis*, without any mention of his edition.[138] The particular transcription of the *Bahir* that I prepared and published from the Munich manuscript was, without permission, lifted from my edition, including inadvertent errors that I made, and without reproducing any of the critical notations, marginal notes or variants which explain the choices made in constructing this unique version and interpretation of the manuscript witness. The reader can only wonder at the intention behind the citation in the preface that mentions the existence of my edition, which surprisingly lacks any statement of the source of the text which was re/produced in the volume. I add that the introduction to this volume is said to have been *jointly authored* by Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel! The introduction is in fact a translation of a

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[138] It seems clear that the editor(s) made avail of the *Synopsis* in *copying* and preparing a 'better' text from the additional manuscripts transcribed by Schäfer. See page 34: 'This edition is based on Ms. New York 8218 (sic!) and corrections were made in comparison with other manuscripts'.

section from Scholem's entry 'Kabbalah' to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in 1973. Although Idel offered additional comments to the entry in a second edition, nothing from Idel appears in this 'introduction'. In short, some 25 years after Scholem's passing, the dark irony of falsely claiming that they composed an introduction to a volume of central texts of Jewish mysticism (presented uncritically and from unacknowledged sources) for wide consumption is dishonest at best, seemingly prompted more by commercial interests to provide an attractive project than the desire to offer scholarly accuracy or content.

The past two or three decades have seen a tremendous interest in Kabbalah and its literature, mainly amongst the English speaking audience, but also for a popular readership of Hebrew, German, French and Italian. As a result many translations have been issued which open up obscure texts to a wider public.[139] Many other translations could be mentioned here,[140] but the most important items include Hebrew texts.[141] Of note as well are traditional Hebrew editions of

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[139] See for example the volumes issued in the Paulist Press series of Classics of Western Spirituality: *The Early Kabbalah*, introduced by Joseph Dan, Foreword by Moshe Idel, translated by Ronald C. Kiener, New York and Mahwah 1986; *Isaiah Horowitz: The Generations of Adam*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Miles Krassen; preface by Elliot Wolfson, New York and Mahwah 1996; *Abraham Miguel Cardozo: Selected Writings*, Translated and introduced by David J. Halperin; preface by Elliot R. Wolfson, New York, Mahwah 2001. *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*; translated and introduced by Morris M. Faierstein; preface by Moshe Idel, New York 1999. On the types of translations made available in different languages see my article, 'Recent Translations of Kabbalistic Texts', *Henoch* 18 (1996), pp. 197-204. See more recently the translation of *Sha'ar ha-Kelalim* by Eliyahu Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation: Isaac Luria's Earlier Mysticism*, Northvale 2000 (reprinted 2005); Simcha Benyosef, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Unabridged Translation of the Gate of Love from Rabbi Eliahu de Vidas' Reshit Chochmah*, Hoboken 2002. The latter is notably a translation volume intended for a readership from traditional communities, the translator using a name which hides *her* gender. On this phenomenon see also the edition of *Galia Raza* published by *Yerid ha-Sefarim*, noting on the title page the manuscript transcription provided to them by R[achel] Elior, leading the reader to believe that she was is male, namely, Rabbi Elior.

[140] Paul Fenton, *La consolation de l'expatrié spiritual. Un commentaire sure le Livre de la Création (Sefer yeṣîrâh) par Juda Ibn Malka, précédé d'un essai inédit sur le Sefer yeṣîrâh par Georges Vajda*, Paris 2008.

[141] Fabrizio Lelli, *Yohanan Alemanno, Hay ha-olamim: parte I, la Retorica*; edizione, traduzione e commento a cura di Fabrizio Lelli, Firenze 1995; idem, *Eliyyah*

texts which include Aramaic sources, passages from the *Zohar* or composition of lengthy sections in Aramaic, which are presented from Hebrew translation in columns or parenthetically. These bilingual editions include Joseph Karo's *Maggid Mesharim*, R. Menaḥem Recanati's *Commentary to the Torah* (figure 1.16) and of course, the zoharic Corpus.[142] Most fascinating of all, in terms of the state and expectations of the modern reading audience and the popularization of esoteric texts, is the simple paraphrase of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*, printed below his original text (figure 1.17).[143]

We should draw a sharp distinction between anthologies of texts from the Middle Ages and contemporary anthologies, whether they be traditional, academic, or popular in the broadest sense of the term, offering small samples from various texts in English translation. The fundamental difference is one of intent, the editor's construction via the frame of the volume as a collection, and the perceived reception it could or should have with the intended audience. Collectanea of short kabbalistic texts reach back to the earliest dated kabbalistic at the end of the thirteenth century (the earliest notebooks of the first kabbalists not having survived, even if scattered traditions seem to have been copied into the newer codices). In most cases, there appears to be no categorical distinction, namely, no self-awareness on the part of the copyists, who were no doubt students of these texts, that there was a difference between short texts extracted from larger works and a series of shorter works copied into the codex. They were certainly aware of this fact, however, as the particular character of the collection and the overall genre of the bound volumes of the medieval period testify, that the codex possessed a certain identity for its intended reader, patron or scholar that would be the end-user. These volumes were thus samplings, the best material representations of what was preserved and transmitted in a study-house, library or other geographic center of kabbalistic

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Ḥayyim ben Binyamin da Genazzano, La lettera preziosa; introduzione, edizione e traduzione a cura di Fabrizio Lelli, Firenze 2002.

[142] *Maggid Meisharim*, ed. Yeḥiel Bar-Lev, Petaḥ Tiqwa 1990; and the edition by Joseph ha-Kohen, Jerusalem 2007; Amnon Gross, ed. *Rabbi Menahem Recanati: Perush 'al a-Torah*, two volumes, Israel 2003; *Sefer ha-Zohar*, tr. Judah Edri, Jerusalem 1994/1998, 9 volumes on the Torah, and the tenth, also issued separately of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Two additional volumes were later issued, numbered as volumes 11 and 12 comprising *Zohar Ḥadash*.

[143] *Nahmanides' Commentary to the Torah, with the Simple Commentary Tov Yerushalyim*, ed., Pinḥas Lieberman, Jerusalem 1985-1995, five volumes.

learning. Production here meets up with transmission and is transformed into scholastic re-production of knowledge that shapes further mappings reconfigured with newer texts and organizations.

In the modern period, particularly the last three or four decades, a different textual strategy has guided the construction of such anthologies and translation volumes. My sense is that overall, the expectations of the uninitiated reading audience to encounter the image of what they believe to be Jewish mysticism, or alternatively within the traditional community, the books that they would have wanted the medieval luminaries to have written to conform to their reading habits, is constructed for them by the editor.[144] While most volumes of this kind are clearly collections of passages, some have restructured the material, added new material and in fact created a new work such as *Shulḥan 'Arukh ha-Zohar*.[145] Other examples of this greater phenomenon of anthologies for the English reader are anthologies that are framed to capture for the reader who will read but one book, the essence of 'Jewish mysticism', 'the Jewish mystical tradition', or 'the essential Kabbalah'. While these efforts are well-intentioned and have satisfied many a reader, the mutual affirmation between producer and consumer goes straight to my point. Take for example the much celebrated anthology of texts by Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*,[146] which clearly seeks to provide samples of ecstatic or illuminative experiences from the Jewish literary past for modern consumption and presumably modern imitation. One could of course argue that medieval composition was originally intended for such consumption and reproduction and that the modern anthology continues in this tradition, even if in a new key. I would argue, nevertheless, that in the sense that mediation is intended, at least in the common English usage to suggest the conscious imitation or mirroring of

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[144] One such example, of an anthology constructed for a ritual need, is Mordechai Scheinberg. *Haggadah shel Pesaḥ le-fi Kavvanot ha-Ari*, Jerusalem 1989.

[145] *Shulḥan 'Arukh ha-Zohar*, ed. Joseph Eliyahu Deutsch, Jerusalem 1993-2004, 28 volumes; See also *Shulḥan Ariel ve-hu Shulḥan Arukh ha-Ari z"l, yanun malakhi*, Bnei Beraq 1998; *Even ha-Shoham: Shulḥan ha-'Arukh mi-ktvei ha-Ari z"l*, Jerusalem 1988-1990, 8 vols, and two more volumes of hagiography: *Ḥayyei ha-Ari z"l*, Jerusalem 1990. See also *Hagadat Peninei ha-Ramban*, London 1994.

[146] Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, York Beach 1982 (Hebrew edition, Jerusalem 1995). This should not be confused with the short monograph of practical instruction he composed entitled *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide*, New York 1985 (Hebrew translation published, Tel Aviv 1998).

Eastern meditative practices, meditation does not exist in Kabbalah.[147] My claim is thus, that although the 'original' Hebrew sources are provided to the English reader – and note that I highlighted the most traditional example of such anthologies which only underscores the force of this argument in the more unconventional editorial efforts – the editorial construction of the anthology seeks to answer the demands and expectations of the reader who presumes that Kabbalah provides the Jewish equivalent of spiritual practices popularly associated with Buddhism. A more detailed study would be necessary to compare the two, but for the present argument, it is sufficient to claim that *hitboddeut, hitbonenut, hitpa'alut* and *histavvut* are not literal or contextual equivalents to the Eastern meditative tradition. Moreover, the texts which describe unitive experiences, and ascension of thought to the highest ranks of the divine theosophy are the rare result of kabbalistic experiences based on mystical techniques, mediated through the use of linguistic content and not achieved through the emptying of the mind.[148] In all, the presentation of select

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[147] For a sophisticated review of the arguments of constructivism with special reference to Eastern traditions see Randall Studstill, *The Unity of Mystical Traditions: The Transformation of Consciousness in Tibetan and German Mysticism*, Leiden-Boston 2005.

[148] Gershom Scholem, 'A Note on a Kabbalistical Treatise on Contemplation' *Mélanges offerts à Henri Corbin*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran 1977, pp. 665-670; Ithamar Gruenwald, 'Mirrors and the Technique of Prophetic and Apocalyptic Vision', *Beit Miqra* 1 [40] (1970), pp. 95-97 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'On the Medieval Development of Ancient Technique of Prophetic Vision', *Sinai* 86 (1980), pp. 1-7 [Hebrew]; idem, '"*Hitbodedut*" as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah', *Jewish Spirituality I*, ed. Arthur Green, New York 1986, pp. 405-438; idem, '*Hitbodedut* as Concentration in Jewish Philosophy'. *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7 (1988), pp. 39-60 [Hebrew]; Jonathan Garb, 'Trance Techniques in the Kabbalah of Jerusalem', *Pe'amim* 70 (1997), pp. 46-67 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Mysticism and Magic: Opposition, Ambivalence and Integration', *Maḥanayyim* 14 (2003), pp. 97-109 [Hebrew]; Paul Fenton, 'La "*hitbodedut*" chez les premiers Qabbalistes en Orient et chez les Soufis', *Priére, Mystique et Judaisme*, Colloque de Strasbourg (10-12 septembre 1984), Paris 1987, pp. 133-157; idem, 'La "tête entre les genoux": contribution à l'étude d'une posture méditative dans la mystique juive et islamique', *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 72 (1992), pp. 413-426 [In Hebrew, *Da'at* 32-33 (1994), pp. 19-29]; idem, 'Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery', *Medieval Encounters* 1 (1995), pp. 271-296; Jacob Yuroh Teshima, 'Self-extinction in Zen and Hasidism', *Zen and Hasidism; the Similarities*

passages from texts and works of the medieval past reflect more on the modern editors as motivated by the popular reader than the intended meaning and mystical practices that were in play, referred to and intended by their practitioners in the original contexts.[149]

The impact of such projects on teaching and scholarship in the academy has not yet been documented. On the whole, the proliferation of sources to new audiences is a positive step. The negative effects for scholarship, however, emerge from ideologically invested editing projects, particularly in editions of the original from manuscripts and the reprinting of existing editions in more modern formats with new commentary which become canonical. This phenomenon has thus devalued the critical editions produced by scholars, for now, any edition will suffice, even if the very scholars that follow this practice would reject a claim of the complete relativization that they have created. At times, two parallel editions have been produced in the university and traditional settings, pointing not just to the competition between groups with different methods and aims, but more sharply highlighting the cultural tension between agents of culture who seek hegemony, authority and control in producing the authoritative library of the Jewish canon within the printing houses of their cultural world. Nowhere is this more striking than when the same manuscript is issued in two editions.

Beyond the competition mentioned above, whereby university scholars have relinquished the helm of editing to non-academic editors, an unhealthy overlap exists in presenting the face of Kabbalah, especially from Lurianic Kabbalah on through present times. The overlap is complicated by a branch of recent scholarship of Jewish mysticism that investigates the activity of modern kabbalists in the last century. The complication arises when instead of reading all the available sources in manuscript and print, scholars rely on what the more recent proponents of these kabbalistic schools have printed, whether they be by historically authentic inheritors of the older traditions and institutions or religious figures who self-fashion themselves in the image of the old.[150]

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between Two Spiritual Disciplines, ed. Harold Heifetz. Wheaton, IL 1978, pp. 108-117; Jacob Yuroh Teshima, *Buddhism and Hasidism: A Comparative Study*, Lanham-New York-London 1995.

[149] See further my review of some compilations: Daniel Abrams, 'Recent Translations of Kabbalistic Texts', *Henoch* 18 (1996), pp. 151-158.

[150] See Jonatan Meir, 'The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed: On the Opposition to the "Followers" of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag and the Dissemination of Esoteric

The interaction between the two communities of scholars, traditional and academic, bears fruit with mutual admiration. A healthy example of such is the facsimile edition of R. Judah the Pious' *Sefer Gemaṭriyot*, published in 1998 with introductions by myself and Israel Ta-Shma, followed by the two volume type-set edition in 2005, generously edited and annotated by Jacob Stahl.[151] He has further produced a fuller edition of R. Judah the Pious' work, published in part by Ta-Shma as '*Zekher 'asah le-nifle'otav*'.[152] Telling of the motivations for such editions, in the case of *Sefer Gemaṭriyot*, is that the text was re/produced twice from manuscript, once according to the order of traditions in the manuscript and the second, according to the order of the Pentateuch, showing the cultural demands of the traditional reading audience. Curious editions have appeared on this point such as the *Siddur 'im Perush ha-Zohar*,[153] where passages from the zoharic corpus are presented at the bottom of the page to the modern (and not medieval!) text of the Sephardic prayer book, with Hebrew translations rendered from the Aramaic (figure 1.18). While the purposes of such a volume are clear, and comparable to one of the first *siddurim* published with a commentary, namely that of Naftali Hertz Treves, *Mala ha-'Areṣ De'ah*, Tiengen 1560, once again, here is a powerful tool for the academic studying zoharic traditions on prayer. Another curious edition is Moses de León's *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, issued in 2008 in Miami Beach, Florida by David Holtzer, covering only the prayers for the high holidays, and without any mention of

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Literature', *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 151-258, esp. 255-258 [Hebrew]; Zeev Gries, 'The Printing of Kabbalistic Literature in the Twentieth Century', *Kabbalah* 18 (2008), pp. 113-132.

[151] Judah the Pious. *R. Judah the Pious' Sefer Gemaṭriot*, introduced by Daniel Abrams and Israel Ta-Shma, Los Angeles 1998 [Hebrew]; Judah the Pious. *Sefer Gemaṭriyot*, ed. Jacob Stahl, Jerusalem 2005, two volumes. On page 11, Stahl discusses, including the mentioning of the names of the editors of the earlier edition, the work of university scholars. See also the edition of 'Judah Ibn Malka's *Commentary to Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* with a Translation and Glosses by R. Isaac of Acre' which was issued as an article by Paul Fenton, in *Sefunot* 6 (1993) 115-165 [Hebrew], and simultaneously fom the same plates as numbered edition of fifty copies, Jerusalem 2005. This text was reproduced in the volume of texts about *Pirqei de Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. Jonathan Blair, Jerusalem 2005, citing Fenton in the introduction, p. 8.

[152] Israel Ta-Shma, '*Qunrṭes Zekher 'Asah le-Nifle'otav*', *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* 12 (1994), pp. 121-146 [Hebrew]; *'Amarot Ṭehorot: Ḥiṣoniyot u-Fenimiyot*, ed. Jacob Stahl, Jerusalem 2006.

[153] *Siddur 'im Perush ha-Zohar*, ed. Abraham Meshi Zahav, Bnei Beraq 1997.

Elliot Wolfson's complete edition. But again, not all such duplications should be cast in such a light. Take for example the traditional edition of R. Ezra of Gerona's *Rationale of the Commandments*, which was issued after the appearance of a dissertation which included this text.[154] Finally, in testimony to mutual cooperation and respect of editorial projects, I mention with praise the work of Aharon Eisenbach who most recently issued a two volume set of the collected esoteric works of R. Eleazar of Worms. Eisenbach is open to dialogue with scholars at the National Library in Jerusalem, and consults with scholars who visit the library including Moshe Idel and myself. Prior to the publication of my edition of R. Eleazar of Worms' *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, I shared with him the proofs and asked him not to include it, a request which was honored. His edition marks a major contribution to the availability in print of some of the most important texts to precede the appearance of the theosophic Kabbalah.[155]

All too often though, articles are written *about* texts which remain in manuscript form without their sources ever being published. The scholar is not always to blame for this situation. At times, the text is indeed lengthy and complex, but at other times one must question why a study is more important than publishing the text which is of the same length. This inverted relationship between secondary literature and the primary sources is obvious to the untenured academic who seeks job security in a world where textual groundwork is viewed as technical, over-specialized or too esoteric for the wider (interdisciplinary) audience. Nevertheless, some studies are followed by the publication of the text by an academic or a traditional editor.[156] In fact, many

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[154] Jacob Travis, 'Kabbalistic Foundations of Jewish Spiritual Practice'; Reuven David Gershon, *Sefer Ṭa'amei ha-Miṣwot le-rabbenu ezra Mi-Gerona zs"l*, Cleveland Heights 2004.

[155] Aharon Eisenbach, *Sifrei ha-Rav Eleazar mi-Germaiza Ba'al Ha-Roqeaḥ*, Jerusalem 2004, 2006, two volumes [Volume 1 = *Sefer Sodei Razaya*, Part 1, *Sefer Sodei Razaya*, Part 2, *Sefer ha-Shem*; Volume 2 = *Perush ha-Roqeaḥ le-Sefer Yeṣira, Ḥokhmat ha-Nefesh; Sha'ar Sod ha-Yiḥud ve-ha-'Emunah, Sefer Razei Semukhim, Perush Eikha Rabbati*]. On the attribution of the pietistic *Commentary to Torah* to R. Eleazar of Worms see Joseph Dan, 'Eleazar of Worms' Commentary to the Torah', *Qiryat Sefer* 59 (1984), p. 644 [Hebrew].

[156] See Lawrence Fine, 'Mishna as a Vehicle for Mystical Inspiration: A Contemplative Technique Taught by Ḥayyim Vital', *Revue des études juives* 141 (1982), pp. 183-199, who published certain passages from manuscript of the fourth chapter of

such studies contribute important insights into a given text and ultimately help a later editor.[157] The problem of issuing these texts is exacerbated by private academic and university(!) presses which openly state their disinterest in or refusal to publish Hebrew text editions. In short, textual work is in some circles out of fashion and not prudent for the advancement of career interests.[158] I cite

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Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedusha*. An (uncritical) text was issued by *Ahavat Shalom* in the volume *New Writings of Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital*, Jerusalem 1988 [Hebrew]. See also the comment of R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *R. Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, tr. by Y. Zoren, Jerusalem 1996, p. 77 n. 150 [Hebrew].

[157] Many important texts still await proper editions, amongst them the Castilian texts discussed by Farber. See Asi Farber-Ginat, 'The Secret of the Paths of the Letters: On the Sources of R. Moses De Leon's Early Kabbalistic Symbolism', *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 67-96 [Hebrew]. For additional manuscript sources see my 'From Germany to Spain: Numerology as a Mystical Technique', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996), pp. 86-87 n. 9. See also Gerrit Bos, 'Ḥayyim Vital's "Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy": A 17th Century Book of Secrets', *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 55-112 and now the edition of *Sefer ha-Peulot*, [Israel] 2009. It is hoped that the many books and articles by Moshe Idel on the Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia will lead to the publication of some of his many works. Aside from the publication of some short texts of Abulafia by Adolph Jellinek (see for example, '*Sefer ha-Oth*, Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia', *Jubelschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz*, Breslau 1887, pp. 65-88) and Ben Zion Dinur (*Yisrael ba-Gola*, Jerusalem 1970, Volume 2, Book 4, pp. 365-380), the only text of significant length to be published is his *Commentary to the Book of Creation* which was edited by I. Weinstock, Jerusalem 1984 [Hebrew]. In his letter to Bialik, Scholem listed four central works written by Abulafia: *Ḥayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba, Or ha-Sekhel, Gan Naul* and *Imre Shefer*. Of these only one fragment of *Gan Naul* was published. See *Hebrew Writings Concerning Music in Manuscripts and Printed Books from Geonic Times up to 1800 (RISM)*, by Israel Adler, München 1975, pp. 35-36. See also the Simon Levi, '*Sefer Ḥayyei ha-Nefesh* – A Commentary to Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed According to Ms. Munich 408', M.A. thesis, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1956, Scholem Library, #R4686.

[158] The last decade has seen a significant decline in doctoral theses which edit manuscript texts. It seems that critical text work is now limited to master's theses. See for example Yuval Herari, '*Ḥarbe de-Moshe*: Text, Structure and Meaning', master's thesis, The Hebrew University, 1991 [Hebrew], published in Jerusalem 1997 by Akademon; Nahora Gabay, '*Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim (The Book of "Gate of Heaven") by Rabbi Jacob ben Sheshet Girondi*', master's thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1992 [Hebrew].

here the painfully true anecdote offered by D.C. Greetham who noted the academic activity of the chair of his department who would review the curriculum vitae of applicants, marking, and so identifying, entries as books or 'not-books', whereby the latter referred to critical editions that merited half-the credit of a 'real' book, namely a monograph.[159] While Greetham casts this move as a resistance to philology, in the field of Jewish studies whose primary sources are almost exclusively written in Hebrew, there is a secondary impulse emerging from a self-awareness of academics as members of the modern worlds who wish to distance themselves from the language, literary forms and discourse of the earlier periods and so to participate in the broader academic culture as part of a self-vindicating mode of modern identity. Thus a hierarchy is established from the re/presentations of ancient, medieval and early-modern literature to monographs of prose by modern authors who speak to modern audiences. Of course, this presumes that the sources should be used to extract their meaning for other projects and that the critical edition is the use of source in its own term, thereby negating any contribution or guiding hand of the editor as being in dialogue with the text he or she is shaping.

If proof were needed for the guiding hand of editors informed by culture and ideology, the zoharic corpus provides ample evidence for multiple venues, aims and formats, as will be demonstrated in the fourth chapter of this study. Critical editions in the academy are not exempt from such preconceptions of what did or should exist in the original or intended literary form. Most recently, Beer Sheva University Press issued an edition of an unpublished part of a major kabbalistic work, Moses Cordovero's *Elimah Rabbati*.[160] I would first like to offer my praise for the diligent work behind the publication of sources that have for one reason or another remained in manuscript. Moreover, this volume amounts to a cooperative effort between scholars who read the text together as a group and were invited by the editor to contribute studies to the publication as introductory chapters. This alone is a rare event in Jewish studies.

My criticism, however, emerges from the lack of dialogue that the volume represents with the studies issued in the last few years on the main subject of

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[159] D.C. Greetham, 'The Resistance to Philology', *The Margins of the Text*, ed. D. C. Greetham, Ann Arbor 1997, p. 11.

[160] Beracha Sack, *Ma'ayan Ein Ya'aqov: The Fourth Ma'ayan from Sefer Elemah*, edited and annotated by Beracha Sack, with introductions by Shifra Asulin, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Beracha Sack, Esther Liebes, and Leah Morris, Beer Sheva 2009 [Hebrew].

the work and the volume, namely the female body of God in theosophic Kabbalah, albeit as presented by R. Moses Cordovero.[161] Be that as it may, such studies do not substantively engage gender theory or adequately use studies of Kabbalah scholarship that have already integrated the relevant advances and methodologies into their work, in Hebrew, French and English. Rather, my surprise is that the implicit structure of the project is that a group of women – or maybe even, a group that excludes men – casts themselves as uniquely positioned to interpret and present the contemporary feminist message of this kabbalistic text about the corporeal images of the *Shekhinah*.[162] This indeed amounts to a biological argument that presumes privileged hermeneutic access to meaning by members of one sex, to the exclusion of the other, essentializing feminist theory by linking the female body above to that of the woman scholar below. From my reading, it can be argued that, in most cases, the array of methodological tools available within gender studies and the benefit of existing studies in Kabbalah and gender has been narrowed to define a more limited horizon for the meanings that can be reaped from this text, suggesting that identity politics is the unstated issue behind this interpretive project.[163]

If my understanding is correct, then this thus may be considered a regression of Kabbalah scholarship and feminist studies, separating out gender and men from such a project, ideas which further inform editorial practice. That is, from within the constructs of the texts and ideas that informed this

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[161] Numerous examples could be cited including the various volumes published by Elliot Wolfson, most recently *Language, Eros, Being,* and Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul.* See also the discussion of much of the literature in Jonathan Garb, 'Gender and Power in Kabbalah: A Theoretical Investigation', *Kabbalah* 13 (2005), pp. 79-107.

[162] This, despite the claim of Yehuda Liebes to the contrary in his recent book review, Yehuda Liebes, 'A Bride as She is: On *R. Moshe Cordovero: Ma'ayan Ein Ya'avov*', *Massekhet* 9 (2009), pp. 191-198. Liebes further voices as yet unstated objections or misconceptions and refutes them, many of which I read with suspicion, namely that he has correctly identified the problems with the project. I would further note that the distinction he offers between the tension or contradiction in zoharic myth and the systematization in Cordovero's writing is too strong.

[163] While the identity politics underlying this and many other projects is apparent, I am aware that a much fuller study is necessary to map out the various methodologies and choices of inquiry that demonstrate the range and character of how Jewish studies has served, and continues to serve, identity politics. For now see the early study by William Cutter, 'Jewish Studies as Self-Definition: A Review Essay', *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1996), pp. 158-176.

literary creation, the publication of an edition of the chapter on the *Shekhinah* alone, as a separate volume, independent of the discussion of the male partner Above (which was issued on in part), would be considered *qiṣṣuṣ ba-neṭiyot*, the cutting of the shoots, a break in the ontic continuum comprised of the union between complementary aspects of the masculine and the feminine.[164] To be sure, the edition did not complete the existing printed edition, transcribing the manuscript text from the place the printer's left off. *Elimah Rabbati* is truncated, as it were, in the middle of the discussion of the masculine, *Yesod*. The editor intends to complete this lack in a separate study, so that all the texts of this Cordoverian work will have been issued. But my point is that the edition of textual material on [the] *Shekhinah* extracted from the larger work that exists in manuscript responds neither to the internal conceptual and literary intent of the author, nor to the academic need of completing the publishing efforts of what was made available. The selection reveals an interest in isolating the feminine, through editorial practice, and concealing a sexualized view of the *Shekhinah* by removing Her from her place in the syzygy as expressed by the kabbalist and recent studies on gender and Kabbalah. To be sure, Beracha Sack, who has devoted the greater part of her scholarly life to Cordovero's work and thought is committed to issuing all the texts and is preparing the unpublished *section* of the material on *Yesod*, even if this too is to be published outside of the greater literary frame of the sefirotic couplings within the complete decade. Additionally, I have learned of efforts underway to produce a traditional edition of the complete work, *Elimah Rabbati ha-Shalem*. While such an edition will most likely base itself on the work of the above-mentioned scholars, it is no coincidence that the publishing efforts, their chronological order, literary definitions and final results, fall along the lines I have described here.

The cultural competition I mentioned above has virtually been decided by the academic community, which has forfeited their central role, in the university and in graduate training programs, in producing critical texts. I wish

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[164] On feminism and the editing of texts see Ann Thompson, 'Feminist Theory and the Editing of Shakespeare: *The Taming of the Shrew*', *The Margins of the Text*, ed. D. C. Greetham, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 83-103; Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, pp. 433-486, esp. pp. 439-445. On the cutting of the shoots in zoharic Kabbalah in particular see Elliot Wolfson, 'Iconicity of the Text: Reification and the Idolatrous Impulse of Zoharic Kabbalah', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 238-240; idem, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*, New York 2005, pp. 154, 172, 374.

therefore to put in writing, thoughts and verbal discourse about academic practices which are not committed to writing. All too often, scholars, including the most distinguished professors, belittle the preparation of editions as the mindless transcription of data that is better relinquished to other sectors of society interested in the material. Once again, misreading the skills required and gained from working with the primary sources of the field, some are reluctant to acknowledge the academic accomplishment of editorial practice and manuscript research, discouraging scholars who seek job security and promotion from producing grounding studies.

6. *Computers and the Printed Format of Critical Editions*

Scholars have for decades enjoyed the use of home-computers and more importantly, the laptop computer. Anyone who has worked with manuscripts prior to the laptop computer knows that this invention has contributed more to textual scholarship than any other related area of research.[165] More significant are the advances in computer programs which can (correctly) integrate multiple languages and typefaces, present texts in columns and layer the page with a series of notes for a critical apparatus and editor's commentary. Finally, the laser printer, and now digital printing, with all their graphic capabilities, have enabled the text editor to prepare a camera-ready copy of an edition and avoid the (always) painful process of proofreading a retyped edition or renumbering the lines of the base text and the corresponding manuscript variants.[166]

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[165] Not so many years ago, when only home-computers were available, the scholar would copy a given text from a manuscript only to type it in at home. Errors resulting from copying should now be considerably less than what they once were. For an overview see 'Bibliography in the Computer Age', *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography*, ed. Peter Davidson, Cambridge 1994, pp. 276-289. On adavnces in Judaica cataloging see Bella Weinberg, 'From Copy Cataloging to Derived Bibliographic Records: Cataloging and its Automation in American Judaica Research Libraries from the Sixties Through the Eighties', *Judaica Librarianship*, ed. Charles Berlin, Cambridge, Mass. 1989, pp. 1-13.

[166] To the best of my knowledge, all printing houses in Israel who work from bromide galleys still paste-up the separate output of the text and the notes! This phenomenon affects other scholarly books which include endnotes instead of footnotes possibly to save money. So for example, the serious reader is burdened by the presentation in two major volumes of Kabbalah research: Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah New Perspectives*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1993 [Hebrew], and Yehudah Liebes, *On*

Early editions in the university setting utilized the typewriter and, out of practical concerns, transcribed each folio or page of the manuscript source on a separate page. Manuscript variants and notes would then be placed at the end of the volume, causing the serious reader to jump back and forth to obtain all the relevant data.[167] Scholars trained in these years also transcribed the text according to the line division in the primary manuscript. This system of presentation limits the graphic presentation of the text and is still used today.[168] While today most scholars in Jewish studies use a form of Microsoft Word which has greatly evolved in the later versions, it still cannot produce various types of editions.[169] With the advent, and at times the expectation, that scholars produce camera-ready editions, the modern Hebrew word-processor provides the editor a greater voice in how the reader will view the chosen text.

Ironically, the reverse has also occurred, when the editor preferred to present the relationship between various sources over the internal structure of the text. So for example, the synoptic arrangement of the Hekhalot texts glosses over the poetic rhythm and structure which Scholem so successfully conveyed in his 1960 monograph, *Jewish Gnosticism*.[170] The best example of such a

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Sabbateanism and its Kabbalah, Jerusalem 1995 [Hebrew]. On this matter see Liebes' criticism in his review of the Hebrew edition of Idel's *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, printed in *Ha-'Arez*, October 10, 1993, p. 9b.

[167] One early advancement (1978) is the edition of Asi Farber-Ginat, who placed the variants on facing pages of the manuscript transcription, placing the lengthy notes in a separate volume: Asi Farber-Ginat, 'Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen's *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*', master's thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978 [Hebrew].

[168] Mordechai Pachter, *From Safed's Hidden Treasures: Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Safed and its Sages in the 16th Century*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 89-117 [Hebrew].

[169] No Hebrew word processing program today can link the base-text to the line numbers of the edition, to the variant readings *and* to the editor's notes. Such linkage has to be done manually. See the most complex page layout of any camera-ready edition prepared by a single scholar in the field of Jewish mysticism: Elliot Wolfson's *The Book of the Pomegranate*.

[170] See for example, pp. 22, 25-26 and the Appendix C, pp. 103-117. See now Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, Albany 1989; Rachel Elior, 'From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Liturgy in the Hekhalot Literature, *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), pp. 374-375 [Hebrew]. For a very helpful layout of the Hebrew Bible see *Tanakh le-'Am*, ed. Moshe Anat, Tel Aviv 1972, four volumes. See more recently Haviva Pedaya's *Vision and Speech: Models of*

presentation as interpretation, where editorial structuring of the lines and passage divisions is *Sefer Yeṣira* as edited by Avraham Leader and Temimah Ziskind.[171] *Text layout should therefore be viewed as interpretation* and in many cases is no less important than the selection of base text.[172] In too many cases, the graphic presentation of kabbalistic works in medieval manuscripts far surpasses modern editions. Some of these medieval scribes were themselves kabbalists and understood the layout and symbolic language of the texts they were copying.[173]

The first Hebrew books printed resembled manuscript copyings, both orthographically and with respect to the layout of the page. Certain later

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Revelatory Experience in Jewish Mysticism, Los Angeles 2002 [Hebrew].

[171] *Sefer Yeṣira*, ed. A. Leader and T. Ziskind, Raanana 2007 [Hebrew]. The bibliographic data is presented on the final page of the 86 page volume. The following text which appears there is apparently the subtitle of the edition, playing on language from the text of *Sefer Yeṣira*. My translation is necessarily figurative: 'In order to simplify [*le-fasheṭ*] *Sefer Yeṣira*, and to establish it properly, we sought to set the text as poetry. We joined its letters, considered its words and made decisions about the versions of its text and organization'. See also the edition of Uzziah Sarbaf, *Sefer Yeṣirah me'yuhas le-Avraham Avinu*, Hebron 2008 [Hebrew], where similar line breaks structure his standard text. In scholarship, various studies of Rachel Elior and Haviva Pedaya adopt this method of presentation. See for example Rachel Elior, 'Between the Earthly Temple and the Heavenly Hekhalot: Prayer and Holy Hymns in Hekhalot Literature and their Affinity to Traditions Related to the Temple', *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), pp. 341-380 [Hebrew].

[172] Much may be lost when multiple versions of a work are given over to a printer for preparation of proofs. I therefore believe that in many cases a scholar's work includes the research, editing and even the elements of the printing of a work.

[173] So for example, most kabbalistic manuscripts include notations identifying the various divine names, names of angels and a wide variety of terms used to denote the ten *sefirot*. The need for better graphic presentation of the text is necessary particularly where angeology is a recurrent theme (i.e. the printing of the Hekhalot texts) and for works which are based on gematria and letter permutations (e.g *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* and Abraham Abulafia). Of note is the use of three dots above words in Jacob ha-Kohen's *Commentary to the Chariot* in Ms. Firenze II.41, which Asi Farber used as her base text (Farber-Ginat, 'R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen's *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*' [1978]). The copyist places these dots over words which signify divine powers, such as sefirot and angelic beings, including words which are found in verses cited. The copyist further uses them to mark words which begin new ideas (i.e paragraphs for the modern editor), a matter which is omitted from Farber's edition.

printings of kabbalistic texts preserved many of the unique features of a text's presentation in the manuscripts. This is particularly true with respect to diagrams of the ten sefirot and commentaries to *Sefer Yeṣira*, which included movable wheels of paper upon which were printed the various permutations of the divine name. As in many manuscripts, these wheels were anchored to the page with a single stitch of thread at its center, allowing the reader to *use* the device to explore the numerous combinations.[174] A related phenomenon is the preservation of an early printed format in a later edition based on better manuscripts.[175] In these cases, it is clear that the printed edition has received an almost canonical (or holy) status amongst later printers and editors.

7. *Photographic Reproductions*

Both academic and traditional publishers have seen the need to issue facsimile editions of first and rare editions of kabbalistic works.[176] The need for such

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[174] I have seen this wheel in some copies of the first printing of the *Book of Creation*, Mantua 1562, fol. 33a (see further discussion as figures in chapter five). See also the numerous diagrams and paragraph divisions in *Raziel ha-Malach*, Amsterdam 1701. On the first source see Harvey Hames, 'Judaism in Ramon Llull', p. 103 n.63.

[175] See the Yeminite commentary to the abridged version of Isaiah Horowitz's *Shnei Luḥot ha-Berit: Me'il Qatan – R. Yiḥya Saliḥ's Commentary to R. Shmuel David Ottolenghi's Me'il Shmuel*, edited and annotated by Ephraim Ya'aqov and introduced by Moshe Idel and Moshe Hallamish, Nahariya-Jerusalem-Washington D.C. 1992 [Hebrew]. This edition is based on the autograph manuscript of the commentary (which includes the abridged version of the printed text), and is arranged like the printed edition of *Me'il Shmuel* which the author viewed.

[176] See for example the facsimile editions of *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, Mantua 1558, (Jerusalem 1963 – based on a copy which includes marginal hand notes of Zoahric source references), *Sefer ha-'Emunot* of Shem Ṭov ben Shem Ṭov, Ferara 1556, published by Georg Olms, Westmead 1969, and the many editions released by Meqor Publishing in the 1970s which included Barzeloni's *Commentary to Sefer Yeṣirah* and Al-Nakawa's *Menorat ha-Me'or*. Today various publishers in Brooklyn, N.Y. are issuing countless reproductions of hard-to-find printings from all fields of Jewish literature. Of special importance is the facsimile volumes of the works of Jacob Emden (Benny Ogorek Books), Ḥayyim ha-Kohen's *Sefer Torat Ḥakham*, Venice 1654, (Copy Corner, 1992); Menahem Azariah Fano's *'Asarah Mamarot* with the Commentary *Yo'el Moshe*, Amsterdam 1649 (Katz Book Binding, 1992). Of great significance is the series of Hasidic (and early Kabbalistic) works which contains over 200 volumes, each containing up to ten books: *Sefarim Qedoshim mi-Talmidei ha-Besht*, Brooklyn: Gross Bros. Printing.

volumes in the academic world stems from the need to view the printed version, that may have had a specific influence on later figures or from the fact that the volume represents an editing from various manuscripts or a lost manuscript tradition. In any event, when introduced by a scholarly study or survey, these volumes serve as powerful research tools.[177]

Modern textual scholarship has also benefited greatly from the photographic reproduction of manuscripts. As indicated above, the graphic display of certain particulars in a manuscript is often lost in a typeset critical edition. Scholem was the first editor of kabbalistic works to include sample pages of manuscripts consulted in his textual studies.[178] Many other examples followed. Years later, facsimile editions were produced with transcriptions placed opposite each page of the manuscript.[179] This format was followed in

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[177] Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi, *Ma'amar Mashare Qiṭrin*, Constantinople 1510, with and introduction by Gershom Scholem, revised by Malachi Beit-Arié, Jerusalem 1977; *Sefer Leqaḥ Ṭov: Commentary on the Book of Esther*, Safed 1577, with an introduction by David Tamar, Jerusalem 1977 [Hebrew]; *Shir ha-Yiḥud: The Hymn of Divine Unity with the Kabbalistic Commentary of R. Yom Ṭov Lipmann Muelhausen Tiengen 1560*, with an introduction by Joseph Dan, Jerusalem 1981 [Hebrew]; *Yom-Tov Lipmann Mülhausen – Sefer Ha-Nizzaḥon*, with an introduction by Frank Talmage, Jerusalem 1983 [Hebrew]; *Midrash ha-Ne'elam Ruth*, Venice 1566, facsimile edition with a critical introduction by Daniel Abrams, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew]. My brief introduction in this last volume is explicitly intended as a tool, providing a listing of the printings to the work, an initial listing of the known manuscripts and a bibliography of secondary sources related to *Midrash ha-Ne'elam Ruth*. This text has proven to be relatively poor, but contains some important and unique readings. See Yehudah Liebes, '"Two Young Roes of a Doe": The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before His Death', *Lurianic Kabbalah* [=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10, (1992)], p. 169 (unnumbered additional note) [Hebrew].

[178] Namely, in the early *Tarbiz* and *Maddaei ha-Yahadut* studies discussed above. See also the facsimile page from the extremely difficult manuscript used by Tishby in his edition of *Ṣiṣit Novel Ṣevi le-Rabbi Ya'aqov Sasportas*, Jerusalem [1954], placed between pages 16 and 17.

[179] See my *Book Bahir*. See also the study of N. Séd where the manuscript text is included as an appendix: N. Séd, 'Le *mystere des couleurs* de J. Gikatilla', *Chrysopoeia* 1 (1987), pp. 3-20. In this context mention should be made of the facsimile reproduction of the 1517 printing of Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica* opposite a page by page translation in modern English: *On the Art of the Kabbalah by Johann Reuchlin*, translation by Martin and Sarah Goodman, New York 1983. This volume was reissued with an added

Schäfer's edition of the Geniza fragments of the Hekhalot literature as well as in the volume of magical fragments from the Geniza edited by Lawrence Schiffman and Michael Schwartz.[180] Other volumes of ancient magical texts placed the facsimiles at the end of the volume as a type of appendix.[181]

Facsimile editions of entire works which lack a typeset edition and to which are appended introductory studies include *Baddei ha-Aron u-Migdal Ḥanan'el*[182] and *Ṣafenat Pa'aneaḥ of R. Yosef ben Moshe Al-Ashqar*.[183] To this list one can add the facsimile editions which lack any introduction: *Shoreshei Shemot* of Moshe Zacuto,[184] *Sefer Gaḥalei Eish* of Joseph Praeger,[185] and a number of Lurianic prayer books.[186] Other facsimiles of relevant literature were published to correct the uncritical presentation of earlier printed editions.

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introduction by G. Lloyd Jones and Moshe Idel, Lincoln and London 1993. (A facsimile of *De arte cabalistica* without any translation was published in Stuttgart 1964 and bound with a facsimile of his *De Verbo Mirifico, Basel 1494*). See now the fully annotated and introduced Italian translation prepared by Giulio Busi and Saverio Campanini, *Jonanes Reuchlin, L'arte cabbalistica*, Firenze 1995.

[180] *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Geniza: Selected Texts from Taylor Schechter Box K1*, ed. Schiffman and Swartz, Sheffield 1992.

[181] See Gruenwald, 'New Fragments of Hekhalot Literature'; Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Jerusalem 1985; idem, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, Jerusalem 1993; *Magische texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, hrsg. von Peter Schäfer und Shaul Shaked, in Zusammenarbeit mit Martin Jacobs, Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker und Giuseppe Veltri, Tübingen 1994.

[182] The facsimile edition of *Baddei ha-Aron u-Migdal Ḥanan'el*, Jerusalem 1977, includes the offprint of D. S. Levinger article, 'Rabbi Shem Ṭob ben Abraham Ben Gaon', *Sefunot* 7, (1963), pp. 1-40 [Hebrew] as well as photographs of Ms. Paris BN 840, fols. 1a-117a.

[183] *Sefer Tsafenat Pa'aneaḥ of R. Yosef ben Moshe Al-Ashqar*, facsimile edition of Ms. Jerusalem, JNUL 4° 154, with an introduction by Moshe Idel, Jerusalem 1991 [Hebrew].

[184] Published as *Sefer ha-Shemot*, Jerusalem 1987 (and includes the fourth chapter of *Sha'arei Qedusha* discussed above); A typeset edition of this *Shoreshei Shemot* was published from a different manuscript in Jerusalem 1995, two volumes.

[185] Printed by Benny Ogorek Books, Brooklyn 1993. This volume includes facsimile pages from the early catalog descriptions. See also below regarding the works of Luzzatto.

[186] See for example, *Siddur ha-Ari z"l: Ketivat Yad ha-Rav ha-Qadosh R. Avraham Shimshon z"l, ben Rabenu ba'al Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef z"l*, Benei Beraq 1995; *Shalom Sharabi – Siddur Nahar Shalom*, Jerusalem 1981, 4 volumes.

Examples of such are the work *Ketav Tamim*, which polemicized against the German Pietists,[187] and the facsimile edition of the celebrated Parma manuscript to *Sefer Ḥasidim*.[188] Oddly enough these two volumes did not present newly discovered or better manuscripts of the works previously edited, but provided exact reproductions of the manuscript witnesses which the original editors used.[189]

Photographic reproductions of rare and important printed editions have been prevalent for many years and have served both the traditional and academic communities. New technologies, particularly digital reproduction and dissemination of files on the internet have offered open access to a library of books from the first few centuries of Hebrew printing. But here we are not just

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[187] *R. Moshe Taku – Ketav Tamim: 13th Century Controversy Over Saadian Theology*, Jerusalem 1984 [Hebrew]. This volume appeared in the '"*Kuntresim*" Texts and Studies' series of the Dinur Center which publishes many facsimiles of rare materials.

[188] *Sefer Ḥasidim Ms. Parma H 3280*, with an introduction by Ivan Marcus, Jerusalem 1985 (published by the Dinur Center). See the new edition with commentaries and corrected according to the Parma manuscript, edited by S. Guttman, Jerusalem 2007. See further, Ivan Marcus, 'The Recensions and Structure of *Sefer Ḥasidim*', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978), pp. 131-153; Haym Soloveitchik. 'Piety, Pietism and German Pietism: "*Sefer Ḥasidim* I" and the Influence of "Hasidei Ashkenaz"', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 92 (2002), pp. 455-493. A new edition is being prepared under the direction of Peter Schäfer, with Israel Yuval, Alfred Haverkamp, Saskia Dönitz, Rami Reiner, Evelyn Burkhardt, and René Richtscheid. The project will include a Hebrew text and German translation. See www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/judaistik/forschung_und_projekte/hassidim/index.html for a description of the project, 'Juden und Christen im *Sefer Ḥasidim* („Buch der Frommen"). For access to the synoptic on line edition of *Sefer Ḥasidim* see now: https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim>. While this project is to be praised for making the various texts available, I wonder, in this case, what advantage there is to such a format beyond the release of a searchable PDF that would align the various versions in a traditional synoptic edition.

[189] A partial edition of *Ketav Tamim* was published by Rephael Kircheim in *Oṣar Neḥmad* 3 (1860), pp. 54-99 [Hebrew]. *Sefer Ḥasidim* was published in Berlin 1891 by Judah Wistinetzki from Ms. Parma. In his introduction, Marcus cites a newly discovered manuscript (p. 11 n.16) from the Boesky Family Collection (no. 45) of the Jewish Theological Seminary which is similar but not identical to the Parma recension. Hopefully (the text of) this manuscript will also be made widely available in a synoptic edition of all the recensions.

speaking about access, but the canonization and furtherance of the received image of the particular editions. The printed book has similarly reflected this preference in the traditional world. It is well-known that the pagination, font and layout of the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud has received sacred status such that newer editions have been produced that have retypeset the edition that is otherwise identical to the nineteenth-century printing. With kabbalistic works, I note the recent edition of Recanati's *Commentary to the Torah*, Jerusalem 2000, which was retypeset from the Lemberg 1880 edition. More significant to the question of canonicity is the retypset edition of *Sefer Yeṣira* with the traditional commentaries from Warsaw 1884 (figures 1.19-1.20).

8. *New Tools and Methods of Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature*

Great works of scholarship serve as tools for workers in the field as well as for the continuing research of the author. This holds true for historical and conceptual no less than the textual surveys which organize large bodies of data. Early examples of such tools include Scholem's catalog of the kabbalistic manuscripts housed in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, his listing of commentaries to the ten *sefirot* and his catalog of studies related to Jewish mysticism, which included printings of the *Zohar* and its commentaries.[190] Although Scholem did not explicitly make the distinction between studies and tools, he did view editions of texts as building blocks to a larger goal. In Scholem's letter to Bialik,[191] he stated that Jewish mysticism may be divided into the period(s) before Lurianic Kabbalah and that which followed.[192] He argued that the early period must be systematically treated first in order to understand what is new and different in the later period. He divided texts into three categories, early Jewish mystical texts which include the Hekhalot works, ten major works or bodies of works from thirteenth-century Germany, Southern France and Spain, and the zoharic corpus. Critical editions of these would serve as the data base for a *Thesaurus Codicum Kabbalisticorum*. Scholem attempted to complete alone this three part project.

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[190] Scholem, *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*; idem, 'An Index to the Commentaries on the Ten Sefirot'; idem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*.

[191] See chapter 5, section 11.

[192] For more on Scholem's historical placement of Lurianic Kabbalah, see the introduction to my edition of his studies: *Lurianic Kabbalah: Collected Studies by Gershom Scholem*, ed. D. Abrams, Los Angeles 2008, pp. 7-19 [Hebrew].

Unfortunately, the textual groundwork Scholem described in 1924 as critical to all future research was not fully completed in any one area. Scholem touched on all of them, as he apparently allotted a certain amount of time to each period, after which he moved on regardless of what still needed to be done.

Scholem's model requires some adjustments in light of new trends and advances in the field. Scholem was assisted by many catalogs of Hebrew manuscripts, none however devoted exclusively to kabbalistic sources. The most significant of these catalogs, in ascending order of detailed annotations, are those of Zotenberg (Paris),[193] Neubauer (Oxford),[194] Steinschneider (Munich),[195] and Margoliouth (The British Library).[196] Today, many more catalogs have been published including those devoted exclusively to kabbalistic manuscripts, the most recent being volumes for the collections in Mantua, Parma, Oxford, the Vatican and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.[197]

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[193] Hermann Zotenberg, *Catalogues des Manuscripts Hébreux et Samaritains de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, Paris, 1866. A more detailed description of the Paris collection of Kabbalistic manuscripts was prepared by Vajda, a copy of which can be found in the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts.

[194] A. D. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Library of Oxford*, Oxford 1886.

[195] Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Handschriften der K. Hof-Und Staatsbibliothek in Muenchen*, Muenchen 1895.

[196] G. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Part III, London 1915. I have seen a number of copies of the Kabbalah section of this volume bound independently, apparently released as an offprint or separate pamphlet.

[197] Joseph Avivi, *Ohel Shem*, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew]; Eli Davis and David Fraenkel, *The Hebrew Amulet*, Jerusalem 1995 [Hebrew]. Moshe Hallamish, *Ohel Ḥayim: A Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts of the Manfred and Anne Lehmann Family*, New York 1988, volume one [Hebrew]. The most detailed catalog is the volume compiled under the direction of Malachai Beit-Arié, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of the Addenda and Corrigenda to Vol. I (A. Neubauer's Catalogue)*, ed. R. A. May, Oxford 1994. With the exception of two Ashkenazi manuscripts described by Joseph Dan, (Mss. 1566/1567), all of the Kabbalistic texts prior to the Spanish expulsion were described by Moshe Idel. See most recently: Benjamin Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bibliotheca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue*, Paleographical and codicological descriptions by Malachi Beit-Arie, Parma 2001; Giulio Busi, *Catalogue of the Kabbalistic Manuscripts in the Library of the Jewish Community of Mantua*, Firenze 2001, three volumes. (The third volume contains many

Moreover, the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, founded in 1950, has acquired over the years thousands of reels of manuscripts, which its staff has systematically cataloged.[198] Its card catalog was indexed by library and manuscript number, author, title and subject(!).[199] Beginning in 1987, updates to the catalog were entered in to the computer data base, and today the entire description of manuscripts is available on line as a sub-category of the National Library, with the added benefit, decades overdue, of the manuscripts of the National Library itself.[200] It is little known that the Institute has been compiling

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important Hebrew texts); *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library; Catalogue, Compiled by the Staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem*, edited by Benjamin Richler, palaeographical and codicological descriptions by Malachi Beit-Arié in collaboration with Nurit Pasternak; Città del Vaticano 2008 (now available for download in PDF format http://nli.org.il/imhm/vaticanhebmss.pdf); *Manuscrits en caractères hébreux conservés dans les bibliothèques de France, vol. I: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits de théologie n° 669 à 720*, par Philippe Bobichon, sur la base des notices de Georges Vajda, Paris 2008. See further Colette Sirat, 'New Catalogues for Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts?', *Studies in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Culture, Presented to Albert van der Heide on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Baastan, R. Munk, Dordrecht 2007, pp. 21-30.

[198] See the masterful overview of all the collections of the world, a book which only Benjamin Richler could prepare: *Guide to Hebrew Manuscript Collections*, Jerusalem 1994. Rachel Nissan of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts has been cataloging all new Kabbalistic manuscripts and recataloging the manuscripts of the major collections. Her contribution, as part of the team of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, has advanced the field immeasurably.

[199] Many have erred in using only one method or means of searching for material and by assuming that the (original) manuscript holdings of the National Library of Israel are inter-filed with the card catalog of the Institute. As strange as it sounds, one can access through the computerized and card catalog of the Institute the recently cataloged listings of every known manuscript to a given work throughout the world with the exception of manuscripts housed in the building. For this, a separate card catalog must be used, which incidentally has no index or basic list that would separate out those Kabbalistic manuscripts that were painstakingly described by Scholem from those acquired since the printing of his catalog.

[200] The computerized catalog is accessible by modem. The older, typed cards are available on microfiche and have been purchased by some major libraries around the world (for example in the microfilm room of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America).

a citation index of Hebrew manuscripts so that one can access the bibliographic reference of a secondary treatment of a manuscript source.[201]

The second most powerful tool for textual scholarship of Jewish mysticism is the Gershom Scholem Library, also housed in the National Library of Israel. Scholem's collection of about 15,000 volumes since is available to the public (in open stacks). The collection, supervised with great care and dedication by Esther Liebes, has been kept current since Scholem's passing with the inclusion of new studies and text-editions.[202] Unfortunately, due to the restrictions of space and a limited budget, not all studies and editions can be acquired by the National Library or the Scholem Library for its shelves. Most important is Scholem's chronological and thematic ordering of his books which provides a ready-made bibliography for the most basic user. It goes without saying that every serious scholar *must* make use of this collection, even if on a limited basis, and use the catalog or ordering of bibliographic knowledge as a map that is conceptually and administratively imposed on the works that are consulted elsewhere.[203] Borges' image of the cartographer looms in the background here,

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[201] Most major works of textual scholarship are indexed, to a large extent based on those volumes donated to the Institute (according to a pre-arranged agreement with its readers). With a few significant exceptions, journal articles are not included in this index.

[202] It is most unfortunate that newly acquired volumes printed before Scholem's death – some taken from doubles of the general holdings of the JNUL – do not include notes regarding their date of acquisition. Outside of any original inventory the reader does not have an impression of the extent of the original collection. Out of the 111 items listed in Scholem's 1937 desiderata that he published, *'Alu le-Shalom*, Scholem acquired in his lifetime all but 31. In a number of cases Scholem sufficed with a photocopy. Today, most books can be acquired in photographic reproductions as described above. More recently, the Anne and Manfred Lehman Foundation donated photocopies of Sabbatean printed works. See *Books and People* no. 5, Feb. 1993, p.11 [Hebrew].

[203] This includes of course a perusal of the holdings over the (international) network of computerized library catalog. JNUL utilizes the program Aleph which can be read in Hebrew characters using the Hebrew version of the program *Kermit*. For an example of the use of Scholem's notes – properly cited – which he penned into a printed book, see *Le Sicle du sanctuaire – Chéqel ha-Qodesh*, Traduction de l'hébreu, introduction et notes, par Charles Mopsik, Paris 1996, pp. 25-26. (Many of Scholem's notes were written for his own private use and were not written from a conscious effort to preserve his comments for future readers. See for example his copy of the *Zohar* which published in facsimile [*Gershom Scholem's Annotated Zohar (Jozefow 1873)*, with an introduction by Yehudah Liebes, Jerusalem 1992]. Other comments show, however, that Scholem was

as an actual visit to the material books transforms this impression into a one-to-one ratio of the map to the collection.[204]

The catalogs of these main collections of manuscript and printed sources have significant limitations. Source and form-critical research is necessary to appreciate and evaluate the various recensions of works which may be listed together in the above catalogs. The strongest examples of this research are Joseph Avivi's *Binyan Ariel* (and superseded by his three-volume magnum opus, *Lurianic Kabbalah*),[205] and Ronit Meroz's 'Redemption in Lurianic Doctrine',[206] which divide many Lurianic works into their text types. Similar works are badly needed, including overviews of the literary boundaries of major kabbalistic works,[207] genres of literature,[208] and individual figures.[209] Only then

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definitely not writing for himself, but for a future audience). Joseph Dan is additionally editing the publication of the (main) holdings of the Scholem Library, which make it even easier for a scholar abroad to become acquainted with the riches of this collection. One hopes that this major contribution will be supplemented by listings of what is absent from the Scholem collection so that an even more complete bibliographic appraisal of the printed sources of Jewish mysticism and related fields can be made.

[204] Jorge Luis Borges, 'On the Exactitude of Science', *A Universal History of Infamy*, London, 1975, p. 131. I am aware that the parable is used to show the collapse of semiotics. See also Umberto Eco, 'On the Impossibility of Drawing a Map of the Empire on a Scale of 1 to 1', *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays*, tr. William Weaver, New York 1994, pp. 95-106. On the Scholem Library as a construct of the field see below, chapter five.

[205] Joseph Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, Jerusalem 1987; idem, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 2009 [Hebrew].

[206] Ph.d. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988 [Hebrew].

[207] See Avraham Elqayam, 'On the Architectonic Structure of the Book *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*', *Qiryat Sefer* 64 (1993), pp. 289-304 [Hebrew]. Hopefully, Elqayam's systematic presentation of the complexities and issues involved in the study of the manuscript sources of this work will lead to a comprehensive, critical edition which will include his other studies on *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*.

[208] Excellent examples of what is lacking in recent scholarship of Jewish mysticism are: Uriel Simon, 'Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries', *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra Studies in the Writings of A Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, ed. I. Twersky and J. Harris, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England 1993, pp. 86-128 (A expanded version of this study appeared in the *Sara Kamin Memorial Volume*, pp. 367-411); Barry Walfish, 'An Annotated Bibliography of Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Song of Songs', *The Bible in the Light of its Interpreters – Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume*, ed. Sara Japhet, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 518-574

can a true reappraisal be made of the field which (at least on the textual level) would parallel Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.[210] Similar rewritten classics and overviews published in the last ten or twenty years have served as basic tools for students in Bible,[211] Second Temple studies,[212] midrash,[213] Talmudic literature,[214] medieval Hebrew poetry,[215] and Jewish

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[Hebrew]. See also Ivan Marcus, 'Hasidei Ashkenaz Private Penitentials: An Introduction and Descriptive Catalogue of their Manuscripts and Early Editions', *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, ed. J. Dan and F. Talmage, Cambridge, Mass. 1982, pp. 57-83. Two major desiderata of this type of scholarship are a revised version of Scholem's listing of the commentaries to the ten sefirot and an annotated listing of all the commentaries to *Sefer Yeṣira*.

[209] See foremost Moshe Idel, 'Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine', Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976 [Hebrew], and Efriam Gottlieb, 'Clarifications of the Writings of Joseph Gikatilla', *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, ed. Y. Hakar, Tel Aviv 1976, pp. 96-131 [Hebrew]; Roland Goetschel, *Meir Ibn Gabbay: Le Discours de la Kabbale Espagnole*, Leuven 1981; Joseph Avivi, 'The Kabbalistic Writings of R. Menaḥem Azariah of Fano', *Sefunot* 19 (1989), pp. 347-376 [Hebrew]; Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, translated by Saadya Sternberg, Waltham, Hanover and London 2005; Netanel Lederberg, *Sod HaDa'at: Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Ṭov: His Spiritual Character and Social Leadership*, Jerusalem 2007 [Hebrew].

[210] Two major studies should be mentioned here which treat central themes of Jewish mysticism according to a historical outline. See Elliot Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, Albany 1989, which begins with a historical outline. More recently Elliot Wolfson's study, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1994, has treated the subject of vision, beginning with the Hebrew Bible and concluding with the *Zohar*.

[211] *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Mulder, Assen 1988. See now, Francis Anderson, 'The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)', *Scholarly Editing – A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C. Greetham, New York 1995, pp. 33-59.

[212] *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael Stone, Assen 1984.

[213] J. Heinemann, *Aggadah and Its Development*, Jerusalem 1974 [Hebrew].

[214] H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, tr. Markus Bockmuehl, Edinburgh 1991. See also *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. Samuel Safrai, Assen 1987.

[215] Ezra Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages*, Jerusalem 1975 [Hebrew].

philosophy.[216] Such contemporary (re)appraisals of the modern scholarly appreciation of medieval mystical texts is taking place in the arena of Christian sources by Bernard McGinn, which may serve as a model for a similar work regarding early Jewish mysticism and medieval Kabbalah.[217]

9. *Major Text Projects: Methodology and Cooperation*

Peter Schäfer's Hekhalot project is unique in the history of modern scholarship of Jewish mystical literature. Schäfer and his colleagues succeeded in producing what many years of individual work had not.[218] It stands to reason that significant advances in the field can (only) be made with teams of scholars who work together.[219] The Hekhalot project was followed by a host of studies in

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[216] Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1985, (also available in French and Hebrew).

[217] Bernard McGinn has publishing a four volume series entitled *The Presence of God: A History of Christian Mysticism*: vol. 1: *The Foundations of Mysticism*, New York 1992; vol. 2: *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great Through the 12 Century*, New York 1996; vol. 3: *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism: 1200-1350*, New York 1998; vol. 4: *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, New York 2005. On Christian Kabbalah see his 'Cabbalists and Christians: Reflection on Cabala in Medieval and Renaissance Thought', *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews – From Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. R. Popkin and G. Weiner, Dordrecht-Boston-London 1994, pp. 11-34.

[218] Mention should be made here of the recent publications in the area of the Hebrew Bible and its medieval commentators, produced by groups of scholars working together: *Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Isaiah*, ed. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, Jerusalem 1995; *Mikra'ot Gedolot Ha-Keter: A Revised and Augmented Scientific Edition of 'Mikra'ot Gedolot' Based on the Aleppo Codex and Early Medieval Mss*, ed. Menachem Cohen, Ramat Gan, (Joshua-Judges, 1992; Samuel 1-2, 1993; Kings 1-2, 1995).

[219] The works of R. Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto have been studied critically by a number of scholars who did not work together. In this case, a series of textually grounded studies were written first. See Shimon Guenzberg, *R. Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto and His Contemporaries*, Jerusalem 1937, two volumes [Hebrew]; Meir Benayahu, *The Kabbalistic Writings of Ramḥal*, Jerusalem 1979 [Hebrew]; Isaiah Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches*, Jerusalem 1993, volume 3 (collected studies in Hebrew). Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 8° 5217 was published in a limited edition facsilime by Ogoreck Books: *Qoveṣ Ketavim*, Brooklyn 1984 (JNUL, R 4° 84A515). On Luzzatto's thought see most recently Joëlle Hansel. *Moïse Ḥayyim Luzzatto (1707-1746):*

Jewish magic and more recently by an online transcription of manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*: https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim. The only case of such a project for kabbalistic texts is the *Zohar* project which was supervised by Rivka Schatz.[220] The *Zohar* project began in the 1980s with the stated goals of assembling an international team of scholars to produce a critical edition of the *Zohar* with a modern scholarly commentary and to issue separate volumes of a Hebrew translation and lexicon. The project was terminated with the passing of Prof. Schatz. The manuscript photocopies they collected (which include page references to the printed edition) can be found today in a closet just outside the Scholem Library. The only fruits from this project which were published are Zvia Rubin's volume on citations of the *Zohar* in Recanati's *Commentary to the Torah*.[221] To date, very few zoharic texts have been critically edited.[222]

Kabbale et philosophie, préface de Moshé Idel, Paris 2004.

[220] See Zvia Rubin, 'The *Zohar* Project: Goals and Achievements', *Supplement to Qiryat Sefer*, volume 68 (1998), pp. 167-174 [Hebrew].

[221] Zvia Rubin, *Citations of the Zohar in R. Menahem Recanati's Commentary to the Torah*, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew]. While this volume is very helpful to the study of *Zohar* and Recanati, the inclusion of Recanati's two other works, *Ṭa'amei ha-Miṣwoth* and his brief *Commentary to the Prayers* would have given the reader a composite picture of the zoharic sources employed by Recanati. See now the recent edition of the *Commentary to the Prayers*: Giacomo Corazzol, *Menahem Recanati, Commentary on the Daily Prayers: Flavius Mithridates' Latin translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, Torino 2008, two volumes. See also the very important note of Pinchas Giller in his *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar*, Albany 1993, pp. 131-132, n. 9.

[222] See now the synoptic edition from various manuscripts of a zoharic passage in Daniel Abrams, 'The Virgin Mary as the Moon that Lacks the Sun: A Zoharic Polemic against the Veneration of Mary', *Kabbalah* 21 (2010), pp 7-56. The synoptic edition of a significant passage from the 'Body of the Zohar', included in the study demonstrates that a great measure of stability exists in the textual quality of this passage. While this is obviously not the case for other sections, it indicates to my mind that different scholarly narratives must be considered for the composition and/or transmission history of the various sections and literary units later published as 'the' *Zohar*, once again demonstrating that the *Zohar* is not a unified book. For other scholarly editions of zoharic materials see Stephen Wald, *The Doctrine of the Divine Name: An Introduction to Classical Kabbalistic Theology*, Atlanta 1988. Other more recent tools for the study of the *Zohar* include the collection of printed zoharic texts in the volume: *Music Subjects in the Zohar: Texts and Indices*, by Amnon Shiloah in Collaboration with Ruth Tene,

Despite the best intentions of the *Zohar* project, its methodology was flawed.[223] From the summaries of their work in the Scholem Library, it is clear that the project as a whole was based on the canonical text and layout of the sixteenth-century editors and printers. It was initially decided that the base text would be Margolioth's 1956 edition, although it was later switched to the Mantua printing or one of the printings based on it that contained additional glosses or variant readings inserted into the body of the text.[224] In short, these scholars began their work with the assumption that the late medieval editors had succeeded in organizing the best literary frame for the work from the manuscripts (and thereby equating work with book), so that now they could begin modern critical work of sorting through the many textual readings found in the manuscripts. Note the comment offered by Isaiah Tishby: 'As far as the actual text is concerned, there is not a great deal of difference between the manuscripts and the printed editions. Sometimes the printed text, particularly the Mantua text, is preferable'.[225] Needless to say, such a stance can hardly be defended today. The Cremona edition offers less elegant readings than the highly stylized Mantua edition, lending itself to the conclusion that the Mantua edition conforms more to the ideal of zoharic language as it was conceived in

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Jerusalem 1977 [Hebrew] and Boaz Huss, 'A Dictionary of Foreign Words in the *Zohar*', *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 167-204 [Hebrew]. Mention must be made of the fine annotated translation of the 'Introduction' to the *Zohar* by Hillel Zeitlin first published in *Meṣudah*, London 1943, pp. 36-82 [Hebrew]; reprinted in his *Be-Fardes ha-Ḥasiduth ve-ha-Qabbalah*, Tel Aviv 1960, pp. 229-279. See also Rivka Schatz, 'Hillel Zeitlin's Path to Jewish Mysticism', *Kivunim* 3 (1979), pp. 81-91 [Hebrew]. See now the newly discovered zoharic texts in the studies of Ronit Meroz: '"And I Was Not There?": The Complaints of Rabbi Simeon Bar Yoḥai According to an Unknown Zoharic Story', *Tarbiz* 71 (2002), pp. 163-193 [Hebrew]; idem. 'Ezekiel's Chariot: An Unknown Zoharic Commentary', *Te'udah* 16-17 (2001), pp. 567-616 [Hebrew].

[223] I offer the following criticisms in the intent that it will enrich the scholarly discussion of how to edit corpora of texts as well as assist those scholars who are continuing to prepare their editions of zoharic texts.

[224] The Cremona printing preserves a better text overall despite the popularity of the Mantua printing amongst later Kabbalists. If a *textus receptus* is chosen as the base text it might be suggested that the Amsterdam 1715 printing be used as it is the basis of later printings and is edited as an integrated edition based on both the Mantua and Cremona printings. See my article, 'When was the "Introduction" to the *Zohar* Written', and the chapter on the *Zohar* in my *Book Bahir*, pp. 236-257.

[225] See the comments of Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 100.

the sixteenth century and on through more modern expectations such as those of Tishby.

A better defined scholarly project would seek to edit the different zoharic texts *as they are found* in the earliest manuscripts. The history of scholarship on the status of the zoharic text will be explored in chapter four. For now our concern is to highlight the main question of the literary identity of the object of study. As will be shown, most all scholarship presumed that a book was produced by an author or group of authors and it is this book which was preserved in the 'fragmentary' manuscript witnesses. Variations in the language were tacitly considered as scribal contaminations and that much scholarly work was needed to uncover and restore *the* correct, or best recoverable version of the singular text. It should be noted, however, as expressed in the comment cited above by Tishby, that a consensus had existed that the textual differences would not be that meaningful.

My earliest work on this subject challenged the basic assumption that is common to all these views, namely, that a scholarly edition of the zoharic corpus cannot base itself on the assumption that *there is 'a Zohar'*. This developed in various publications to the positive formulation that the particular conception of the Zohar as a book were certainly inappropriate and that in whatever sense some of the texts were initially constructed as works, no book of the corpus produced in Castile and that the sixteenth century printers invented the *Book of the Zohar*. To be sure, the so-called 'body of the Zohar' may indeed have been a singular literary effort to produce a mystical commentary to the Torah, even if incomplete and even if other texts were interwoven into the fabric of its textual arrangement and quality, not to mention the constant reworking of the text from the Middle Ages until today. But here too, much more work needs to be done and as a scholarly community we should err on the side of caution and not rush to sweeping conclusions before the tools have been prepared to properly evaluate all the data.

For zoharic research as with many other kabbalistic texts, scholarship demands the contextualization of every text and witness. It may very well be that the incomplete character of many of the early manuscripts to the *Zohar* was an intentional ploy of its author(s) to create an impression of fragments recovered from antiquity.[226] To appreciate the earliest form of the zoharic texts,

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[226] Charles Mopsik has suggested to me in conversation that (if true) a similar literary technique may be seen in the *various* ways in which Moses de Leon refers to the *Zohar* in his Hebrew works. See also the comment of Basnage, *The History of the Jews*

the scholarly community needs to first prepare annotated and indexed editions of the works written in the first one hundred years since the composition of the *Zohar*.[227] At this point a detailed description of all the manuscripts could be made, much like that found in studies of the Babylonian Talmud.[228] Various editions of any one section or arrangement could then be edited according to their text-types and history of transmission, including the *separate* publication of facsimile editions of the Mantua and Cremona printings.[229] This method

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from Jesus Christ to the Present Time, London 1708, p. 664: 'The Rabbin Moses who was born in the Kingdom of Leon, was a Learned Man, but Poor. He was call'd to the Government of a snagogue, the salary whereof was insufficient to maintain his numerous family. He resolved for his support, to deceive the doctors. They had in their hands several loose sheets of the Zohar, which was a work attributed to Simeon Jachaides. Moses of Leon observing it to be distributed by pieces, which were infinitely esteemed, imitated his style, finish'd what was wanting, and sold his work compleat, This policy was successful. He sold a great number of copies, by which means he reliev'd the necessities of his family. But there was some difference perceived betwixt the style of the ancient Doctor and modern Rabbin, who, after that conviction, was confounded with the discrace'.

[227] For example, Joseph Angelette's *Livnat ha-Sappir* and *Quppat Rokhlin*.

[228] See the lengthy introduction in *Mishna Zeraim*, ed. Nissim Zaqs, Jerusalem 1972, volume one. See also the other volumes regarding the Mishna and Talmud published by the Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud (*Yad ha-Rav Herzog*). *The Literature of the Sages*, pp. 351-366 contains a useful overview. The Lieberman Project and the M.A. and Ph.D. theses of the students of Prof. Shamma Friedman are building toward the end goal of a critical edition of the Babylonian Talmud as a whole. See S. Friedman, 'New Bibliographic and Textual Tools for Talmudic Research', *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Division C, Jewish Thought and Literature*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 31-38 [English Section]. On *Zohar* manuscripts very little has been published. See Menahem Zevi Qaddari, 'The First *Zohar* Manuscript', *Tarbiz* 27 (1958), pp. 265-277 [Hebrew].

[229] In 1992 Scholem's copy of the *Zohar* was published by Magnes Press: *Gershom Scholem's Annotated Zohar (Jozefow 1873)*, with an introduction by Yehudah Liebes, Jerusalem 1992. These volumes contain Scholem's hand notes in German and Hebrew, notes which were intended for his own use. The printed edition of 1873 is of no particular value and Scholem's German script is difficult for even the most trained scholars. Ideally, the Cremona printing(!) could have been issued in facsimile with Scholem's notes *printed* at the foot of the page. Editions of Rabbinic literature have combined the modern critical work of scholars with the photographic reproduction of manuscripts and first printings. See respectively, *The Mishna Treatise Eruvin*, critically edited and provided

ensures that even when an early redaction of most of the *Zohar* becomes available to the scholarly community,[230] the exact reproductions of specific manuscripts are still of value to the scholar.[231] Following these major steps, it would be possible to produce (if so desired) an eclectic edition of what the scholar views to be the best text of the *Zohar*, corresponding to the layout of the *textus receptus* or to the format of a running commentary to the Torah.[232]

Large text projects of Jewish mystical literature are certainly necessary in order to produce tools which could not be produced by an individual.[233] For example, only the comprehensive and comparative text research of all the works of a circle can produce a serious study regarding the oral teachings of the leader of a circle. This is the case for the students of the major figures of almost every period of the Kabbalah: R. Isaac the Blind,[234] Nahmanides,[235] R. Isaac

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with introduction, commentary and notes, by Avraham Goldberg, Jerusalem 1986 [Hebrew] and *Sifra on Leviticus according to Vatican Manuscript Assemani 66 with Linguistic Notes and References in Rabbinic Literature and Rishonim Commentaries*, by Avraham Shoshana, vol. 3, Jerusalem-Cleveland 1992 [Hebrew].

[230] An early manuscript containing large sections of the *Zohar* is known to be in private hands. It is hoped that the manuscript or a copy of the text will be made available to the public. See Israel Ta-Shma, 'R. Joseph Karo: Between Spain and Germany', *Tarbiz* 59 (1990), pp. 153-170, esp. pp. 168-170 [Hebrew].

[231] Schäfer's edition of the Palestinian Talmud is a case in point. This edition presents the few good sources of the Talmud as a whole in columns. These volumes are now joined by the publication of many fragments by Ya'aqov Zussman, *'Seride Yerushalmi'*, *Qoveṣ 'al Yad* 12 (1994), pp. 1-120 [Hebrew] and the discovery of numerous fragments form the 'European Geniza' of Italy and Germany. See the overviews of Simcha Emanuel, '"The European Geniza" and its Contribution to Jewish Studies', *Jewish Studies: Forum of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 35 (1995), pp. 5-30 [Hebrew] and Mauro Perani, 'Un decennio di ricera dei frammenti di manoscritti ebraici in Italia: rapporto sui rinvenimenti e bibliografi', *Annali* 12 (1995), pp. 111-126.

[232] Finally, despite the ongoing research of various scholars internationally on the history of commentaries to the *Zohar* a careful overview of the commentaries to the *Zohar* in manuscript and print is necessary *before* most work may progress. Initial steps in this direction were undertaken by Gershom Scholem in his *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, pp. 185-210 and see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 103-105.

[233] See the important comments of Isadore Twersky concerning an 'Institute Nahmanides', 'Introduction', *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. I. Twersky, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, pp. 8-9.

[234] See Haviva Pedaya, '"Flaw" and "Correction" in the Concept of the Godhead in

Luria,[236] the Ba'al Shem Ṭov,[237] Sabbatai Ṣevi,[238] Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna[239] and on a much smaller scale Rabbi Kook.[240] As a work which was in all likelihood written or edited by a number of people, the zoharic corpus is not very different from the above texts. Although oral teachings do stand out in these texts, Yehuda Liebes' argument about the 'Circle of the *Zohar*' presents a complex model of textual layers and editing by a number of figures that would require the careful planning and preparation of *new textual tools and methods* for its full appreciation.[241]

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the Teachings of Rabbi Isaac the Blind', *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe*, ed J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), pp. 157-286 [Hebrew]. I have critically edited the works of Isaac's student, R. Asher (Abrams, *R. Asher ben David*) and upon completing a similar project for the works of Isaac's students in Gerona will attempt a re-evaluation of this problem.

235 See the project outlined in chapter 3, 'The Textualization of Orality: The Reception and Interpretation of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Traditions'.

236 Comparative work on Israel Saruq and Joseph Ibn Tabul now being conducted by Ronit Meroz and Joseph Avivi will bring the field closer to an understanding of how the Lurianic doctrines were taught and interpreted.

237 For his sayings see the final pages of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy's *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, Koretz 1780 (fols. 200b-202b). On the reverberations and copyings of these sayings see Shlomo Zucker, 'An Early Hasidic Manuscript', *Qiryat Sefer* 49 (1974), pp. 223-235 [Hebrew]; Gedalyahu Nigal, 'Note to the Article by S. Zucker, 'An An Early Hasidic Manuscript', Ibid., pp. 451-452 [Hebrew]. For problems related to the text of *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, see Abraham Rubenstein's *In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Ṭov*, Jerusalem 1991 [Hebrew] and Moshe Rosman, 'The History of a Historical Source: On the Edition of *Shivḥei ha-Besht*', *Zion* 58 (1993), pp. 175-214 [Hebrew].

238 The case of Sabbatai Ṣevi is significantly different. In his case a list could be compiled of quotes or statements attributed to him for example in the works of Nathan of Gaza, Avraham Cordozo and Shmuel Primo. I would like to thank Avraham Elqayam for discussions on this matter.

239 See Joseph Avivi, *Qabbalat ha-GRA*, Jerusalem 1993.

240 See Dov Schwartz, 'The Hebraic Auditory Logic and the Revival of Prophecy', *Tradition* 26 (1992), pp. 81-86. A Hebrew version was published in the journal *Da'at*, *'Airkha Mul Yezirah'*, *Da'at* 24 (1990), pp. 87-92.

241 Yehuda Liebes, 'How the *Zohar* was Written', chapter 2 of his *Studies in the Zohar*, Albany 1993, pp. 85-138. The Hebrew version appeared in *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 1-72. Case studies of various sections (of the different strata) of the *Zohar* according to these new methods might help further clarify or disprove the composition of the *Zohar* by a circle of mystics.

From my own research, I have learned that, more often than not manuscript witnesses contain significantly different readings and at times unknown recensions. This is true even for kabbalistic works which for all purposes have been treated in the academic literature and whose meanings have been explained. These phenomena include new parallels to known manuscripts which prove that the texts were written by others, in an earlier period and system of thought,[242] unknown recensions suggesting the re-editing of the work by the author or its adaptation by students,[243] and the inclusion of late kabbalistic glosses in the body of the text.[244] Rewritten texts require new types of editions which account for the whole history of a text's development.[245]

Finally, a new avenue must be explored for the study of Jewish mystical literature, one that appreciates a manuscript as a whole and considers the possible relationship of a given work to the others copied in the codex. It seems that, to date, modern scholarship has approached manuscripts as they would a printed journal, photocopying the one item of particular interest, which could have just as easily appeared in another periodical. Examples of the importance of such a new methodology have to be prepared and published as a guide for future textual scholarship.[246]

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[242] Daniel Abrams, 'Fragments of *Sefer Shakod* of R. Samuel b. R. Qolonimus and the Doctrine of the Divine Glory of a Student of R. Eleazar of Worms', *Asufot* 14 (2002), pp. 217-241 [Hebrew]; idem, 'New Manuscripts to the "Book of Secrets" Compiled by R. Shem Ṭov bar Simḥa'. In the last article I raise the question if there can be a definition of 'Kabbalistic editing' in medieval manuscripts. See further below.

[243] Idem, '"The Unity of God" of R. Eleazar Ha-Darshan'; idem, '"The Secret of Secrets": The Concept of the Divine Glory and the Intention of Prayer in the Writings of R. Eleazar of Worms', *Daat* 34 (1994), pp. 61-81 [Hebrew].

[244] For some examples see Abrams, *Book Bahir*, pp. 40-42. On the 'Kabbalistic' statements recorded in the name of R. Abraham ben David (Rabad) see idem, 'From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of *Akatriel* in Jewish Literature', *Journal of Religion* January 76 (1996), pp. 43-63.

[245] One such project which would require such new methodologies is the development of the canon of prayers in light of the influence of Jewish mysticism. This project would require various editions which would outline the various historical layers and additions to the liturgy as well as the glosses and commentaries of the Kabbalists.

[246] Such a guide could also include examples of errors made by scholars based on false assumptions. See the parallel handbook for historical research: David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, New York 1970.

10. Rewritten Texts in the Early Kabbalah: Multiple Versions and Editorial Practice

The phenomenon of multiple versions of Jewish mystical texts is characteristic of the Early Kabbalah. If the first stages of kabbalistic speculation were completely esoteric, where secrets were transmitted orally to a small group of initiates, then the break with orality which marks the historical phenomenon known as Kabbalah should rightfully be termed mystical exotericism and written documents were not produced. Unfortunately, such a clear break with past methods of transmission cannot be charted amongst early thirteenth-century Jewish mystics.

Historically, the first thirteenth-century mystic to make the conscious break with a tradition of oral transmission is R. Eleazar of Worms, the student of R. Judah the Pious and the leading figure of German Pietism, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. As I have outlined in a study dedicated to this phenomenon, R. Eleazar of Worms invented his own method of esoteric composition where he could commit his secrets to paper without making them accessible to the widest possible audience.[247] In the same generation, that is the very end of the twelfth, and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the first kabbalists began to compose esoteric texts. These works are for all purposes *esoteric* documents inasmuch as they are impenetrable to one who is not trained in the symbolic systems of the Early Kabbalah.[248]

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[247] Daniel Abrams, 'The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism', *Shofar* 12 (1994), pp. 67-85. This move from orality to literacy should be distinguished from the rise in textualization of the period and the sanctity afforded to physical manuscripts as religious or cultural artifacts as argued by Talya Fishman, 'The Rhineland Pietists' Sacralization of Oral Torah', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006), pp. 9-16. On the physical book in German Pietism, see further *La Conception du livre chez piétistes ashkenazes*, par Colette Sirat, Michèle Dukan, Claude Heymann, Carsten L. Wilke, Monique Zerdoun, Genève 1996. On the love of the book, see Moses Carmeli-Weinberger, 'The Love of Books in *Sefer Ḥasidim* and in Philobiblon', *Sinai* 56 (1965), pp. 159-175 [Hebrew]; Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Ideals versus Reality: Scribal Prescriptions in *Sefer Ḥasidim* and Contemporary Scribal Practices in Franco-German Manuscripts', *Rashi 1040-1990: Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach*, ed. G. Séd-Rajna, Paris 1993, pp. 559-566.

[248] Daniel Abrams, 'The *Shekhinah* Prays before God: A New Text Toward the Theosophic Orientation of the German Pietists and Their Method for the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrines', *Tarbiz* 63 (1994), pp. 509-533 [Hebrew].

The first historical personality to compose a kabbalistic work, as against isolated traditions recorded in his name, is R. Isaac the Blind, the son of R. Abraham ben David (Rabad). Unlike R. Eleazar of Worms, R. Isaac the Blind does not reflect in writing on his conscious choice to compose, nor does he fill volume after volume with the secrets entrusted to him. Isaac's works are few in number and short in length. It would be safe to say that all his mystical works together amount to no more than ten or fifteen folios in manuscript form. His most influential work, a *Commentary to the Book of Creation*,[249] is possibly a student's notebook and may not have been deliberately written as a work to be disseminated widely. His other works include a *Commentary to the 'Amidah*[250] and a *Commentary to the Account of Creation*.[251] I once believed, and so interpreted, each of these works to be internal documents, intended for his own private use or that of his students. I now believe that they were written as documents intended for a wider readership, even if a truly exoteric style of writing was only developed in the next generation, namely with the works of his nephew, R. Asher ben David.

Despite such appearances, R. Isaac was attacked by Nahmanides and R. Jonah Gerondi, who held him responsible for disseminating material or teaching secrets to those who did. In his response – the only document from this episode to survive – Isaac the Blind characterized the nature of literary documents in his celebrated comment, *'the written text cannot be closed away'* הדבר הנכתב אין לו ארון.[252] This comment can be seen to be intentionally

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[249] Published as an appendix to his *Ha-Kabbalah be-Provence*, Jerusalem 1976. See now the annotated translation included in the Ph.D. dissertation of Mark Sendor, 'The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah: Rabbi Isaac the Blind's *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*', Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University 1994. Sendor is now preparing a critical edition of this text.

[250] Published by Moshe Idel, 'On the Intention [of Prayer] in the *Shmoneh Esreh* According to R. Isaac the Blind', *MASSU'OT: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 25-52 [Hebrew]. Idel noted but did not include all of the changes made to the text in the generations following its composition. See page 27.

[251] This work will be published in my book on R. Asher ben David (Abrams, *R. Asher ben David*). Scholem cited this work according to Ms. Paris BN 353 in his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 265, n. 144; 271 n. 155; 279 n. 169.

[252] Ms. Vatican ebr. 202, fol. 59a, published by Scholem in 'A New Document Concerning the History of the Early Kabbalah', *Sefer Bialik*, ed. Y. Fichman, Tel Aviv 1934, pp. 143-144 [Hebrew], Idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 394. An alternative

polemical and politically motivated, instructing initiates not to transcribe the deepest secrets or not to commit to writing too much in any systematic way that could be understood by others. In is nevertheless apologetic in tone, as the rest of the letter is undoubtedly polemical, defending his position as the leader of his own geographically based school of kabbalists. In contrast to this defensive rhetoric and in agreement with his own acts of writings, his students in Gerona *did* compose many new works which were widely read in the following generations.[253]

In discussing the beginnings of literary composition, scholarship to date has taken on this binary model of literary composition versus oral transmission. I would like to suggest an alternative model which explains much of the literary activity of the first kabbalists and closes some of the gaps in our understanding of the emergence of literary kabbalistic documents. In his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Moshe Idel noted the attitude of some kabbalists who viewed themselves not so much as custodians of a secret lore, but as those who held to 'a lore that promoted the production of secrets'.[254] Along these lines, it could be argued that in the context of the Early Kabbalah, literary composition lends itself to creativity and the production of differing systems of kabbalistic thought and symbolism. Idel has, however, argued in a number of studies, that there are indeed many competing systems of thought in the first known stages of the

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reading not supported by the unique witness and first suggested to me by Moshe Idel is *'adon* (master) instead of *'aron* (closet), i.e. 'The written text has no master'. See Moshe Idel and Victor Malka, *Les chemins de la Kabbala*, Paris 2000, p. 43; see now the discussion by Yehudah Liebes who, without reference to the present discussion, also suggests the reading *'Adon* as a possibility based in part on the indeterminacy of deciphering the single manuscript witness, a point not supported in my opinion by the clearly transcribed *reish* in the single manuscript. Yehuda Liebes, 'God's Attributes', *Tarbiz* 70 (2001), p. 60, n. 51 [51-74], reprinted in, idem, *God's Story*, p. 137. n. 51 [Hebrew]. See also the discussion of Joseph Dan, 'The Ancient Hekhalot Mystical Texts in the Middle Ages: Tradition, Source, Inspiration', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), p. 83, reprinted in *Jewish Mysticism, Volume 1: Late Antiquity*, Northvale-Jerusalem 1998, p. 244.

253 I am not certain that we can date all of the Geronese works to the period prior to this exchange of letters.

254 New Haven and London 1988, p. 254. This might be considered as similar to an appreciation of kabbalistic writing as an invitation to action, where here, writing is turned onto itself, inviting the reader to develop more works in the growing library of kabbalistic literature.

Kabbalah in Europe.[255] Following this line of thought, many texts could have easily been written once these first known kabbalists felt free to express themselves in writing. This is, however, not the case. The kabbalists in the first third of the thirteenth century composed dense and short works. Moreover, the unique and possibly dominant characteristic of these first kabbalistic personalities is the rewriting of the few kabbalistic works which were in their possession.

An example of the proliferation of various recensions of an early kabbalistic text is a certain commentary to the *Account of Creation*, that appears in R. Jacob ben Sheshet's *Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim*, *Yalquṭ he-Ḥakham ha-Maskil*, R. Isaac of Acre's *Me'irat Einayim*, manuscripts to *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* and a host of other places.[256] To explain the various recensions of this work, Joseph Dan has argued that the text originates with R. Isaac the Blind, who transmitted this teaching, apparently orally, to his various students. These students, in turn, reworked the text according to their own needs and understanding. Joseph Dan's hypothesis therefore explains this case of multiple versions of another early kabbalistic text as the by-product of its reception, contingent upon the particular paths of its transmission.[257]

I believe that in this case, Isaac the Blind is not the author of some hypothetical Urtext, rather, we have here various attempts to grapple with an early kabbalistic work. I base this view in part on the separate and very different work, the *Commentary to the Account of Creation* which Isaac wrote. There is therefore no reason to claim that he composed some lost Urtext when his own composition differs so drastically.[258] The various versions of the *Commentary*

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[255] See for example Idel's introduction to my edition of the *Book Bahir*, pp. 1-6; idem, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid*, Albany 1990, see the 'Introduction', esp. pp. xxviii-xxix; idem, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah', *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 265-286 [Hebrew].

[256] See the final chapter of my book, *R. Asher ben David*.

[257] Joseph Dan, *The Early Kabbalah*, (edited and introduced by J. Dan, texts translated by R. Kiener), New York 1986, 'Introduction', p. 33; idem, 'The Cultural and Social Background of the Emergence of Traditional Ethical Literature', *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Part 1, Jerusalem 1988, pp. 246-247 [Hebrew].

[258] No less than three recensions, compared with the eight versions of the above mentioned *Commentary to the Account of Creation*, have survived. This edition will be, to the best of my knowledge, the first synoptic edition of multiple *versions* of a

to the Account of Creation are as effective a test-case of the act of rewriting as they are a function of esotericism. That is, these Kabbalists, many of which are otherwise unknown, may have felt restricted to write, and instead engaged in a highly active reading process in which they recasted the work they were reading. *Reading, commentary and re-writing all form a continuum of kabbalistic literary activity.* If this is the case, and I am aware that this is in part an argument from silence, then oral transmission, esotericism, and literary reproduction are linked together and in certain cases inseparable.[259]

The kabbalistic enterprise of editing and rewriting has a long and rich pre-history that involves many non-mystical texts. Israel Ta-Shma has described Germany as the main center of such activity. His now celebrated comment of their '*aggressive*' relationship to rewriting or 'appropriation' of texts characterizes this activity.[260] While I do not question the overall differences that exist between Ashkenaz and Spain, I find that the Jewish mystics of Germany, France and Spain alike, all embraced similar aggressive stances toward esoteric textuality as a major feature of their literary activity. Examples of such rewriting range from the incorporation of brief comments or marginal glosses to the change in the basic meaning of a text so that it will accord with a new literary setting or ideology.[261] In early thirteenth-century Jewish mystical

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Kabbalistic text. See also my '*The Book of Illumination*'. I have argued that *The Book of Illumination* is comprised of various secrets (*sodot*) which were later scattered throughout various manuscripts. My edition reconstructs the book from the various fragments. A synoptic edition was prepared since there is no one reliable manuscript and at times there are significant, though not recensional, differences. By contrast, the various commentaries to the *Account of Creation* display various reworkings of the text by different individuals. (In my edition of *The Book of Illumination* I edited the unique sections of Moses of Burgos' collection of passages from *R. Jacob's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot* from two corrupt manuscripts – Ms. Mussayef 145 and Ms. New York JTSA Mic 1806 – integrating the two critically). See also *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar of Worms and R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen*, edited and introduced by Asi Farber-Ginat and Daniel Abrams, Los Angeles 2004 [Hebrew].

[259] This phenomenon is distinguished from an author's reworking of his own book such as the revisions Joseph Gikatilla made to his own works. On additional works by Gikatilla, see Idel's introduction to Epharim Gottlieb's *The Hebrew Writings of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar and Ra'aya Meheimna*, Jerusalem 2003, p. 21 n. 65 [Hebrew].

[260] Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Qiryat Sefer* 60 (1985), p. 299 [Hebrew].

[261] See my remarks in the introduction to the *Book Bahir* and studies cited there on

literature, the phenomenon of rewriting takes on historical and methodological complexities. Not only are ancient texts reworked into medieval versions, but some of these late works are written to resemble texts from antiquity. An example of such was presented by Annelies Kuyt who discussed German Pietist texts that appear to be surprisingly similar to Hekhalot texts.[262] A further contribution in this direction was published by Klaus Herrmann, in a study which demonstrated the 're-creation' of a text from a commentary to *Sefer Yesira* by the German Pietists, inserted within the flow of texts in the Hekhalot corpus.[263]

As we shall see in greater detail in chapter five, the German Pietists and the later copyists of their works and the library of sources which were at their disposal, invented the corpus of Hekhalot literature, editing the discrete works together. Their interpolations to the texts and the imitations of the Hekhalot literature demonstrate that they were able to identify the style of writing in these texts and amass them in one place, such as in a codex of such works, but at the same time they realized that its textual quality was not fixed nor should the form and order they lent these texts (as a library) be reified or sanctified. Instead, the imitations and reworkings together indicate that they were not beholden to any essential definition of the texts. This should be compared to the variegated 'Hekhalot' materials found in the Cairo Geniza, which also contain works, variations of works and imitations of the style found in many of the now

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pages 8-14. See further Simḥa Emanuel, 'The Lost Halakhic Books of the Tosafists', Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 189-191 [Hebrew].

[262] Annelies Kuyt, 'Traces of a Mutual Influence of the Ḥaside Ashkenaz and the Hekhalot Literature', *From Narbonne to Regensburg: Studies in Medieval Hebrew Texts*, ed. N. A. van Uchelen and I.E. Zwiep, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 62-86. See also similar examples in Jacob Ha-Kohen's *Commentary to the Chariot* as noted by Farber in her edition ('R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot', p. 186 n. 1). This methodological problem is a major stumbling block for those who research early (magical) material in medieval manuscripts. See for example Ms. Sasson 290 as described by Meir Benayahu, '*Sefer Shushan Yesod Olam* of R. Joseph Tirshom', *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism* 1 (1972), pp. 187-270 [Hebrew]. Much initial research, like that found in Benayahu's study, needs to be completed before these texts can be properly treated.

[263] Klaus Herrmann, 'An Unknown Commentary on the Book of Creation (*Sefer Yezirah*) from the Cairo Genizah and Its Re-Creation Among the Haside Ashkeanz', *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought. Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. R. Elior and P. Schäfer 2005, pp. 103-112.

published works, which proves that in a different cultural setting a similar textual phenomenon occurred.[264] My intent here is not to break down all histories of the Hekhalot literature, but to highlight the fluidity of language and form throughout both its antique development and in its later life in medieval Europe, all without positing a dualistic structure between the two, based on neatly defined categories of creation and reception.

Other problems in identifying the origin and context of a text result when a text was transmitted by members of similar but significantly different systems of thought. In these cases small changes can be made to a text in accordance with what may seem an error to a later figure. An example of such can be found in some manuscripts of the *Pesaq ha-Yirah*, one of the early and short works of the *Special Cherub Circle*. Two manuscripts read: 'And to that Glory [*Kavod*] we bless',[265] though others read 'And to that Cherub [*Keruv*] we bless'.[266] While this discrepancy can be explained by the orthographic similarity of the two words כבוד and כרוב, such a change was most likely made by figures who read this interpretation into the text and into their subsequent copying efforts. My claim here is that we should not view this change as a mistake, grounded in the original and correct version, but the creation of a third textual tradition based on a different understanding. Certainly, this move should not be taken ad absurdum, such that no mistakes exist in Hebrew manuscripts. Rather, in many case, changes indicate interpretation in a particular direction and should not readily be dismissed as misunderstanding, which is either equated with error or meaningless corruption.

This copyist, who held to a later doctrine of the Special Cherub, which overlaid the kabbalistic or Pietist symbolism of the Glory (*Kavod*) as the lower hypostasis onto the *'Pesaq'*, read the term Glory not as the upper manifestation as intended in the *'Pesaq'*, but as the lower one. By making this change, this copyist demonstrated that *for him* the *'Pesaq'* was not a text which preserved an earlier doctrine concerning the intention of prayer, but a testimony of his (current) belief. Because we cannot know more of the thinking behind this change, in this example, the boundaries between error, commentary and

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[264] My thanks to Gideon Bohak for discussions on this point.

[265] Ms. Munich 92, fol. 11b and Ms. New York, JTSA Mic 2340, fol. 70b. See further Daniel Abrams, 'New Manuscripts to the "Book of Secrets" Compiled by R. Shem Ṭov bar Simḥa and the Sources He Possessed', *Asufot* 10 (1997), pp. 49-70 [Hebrew].

[266] Ms. Oxford 2575, fol. 4a and Ms. Cambridge Add. 858, fol. 10a. Although Dan cites variants according to Ms. Oxford, he neglects to note this change (*'Pesaq'*, p. 200).

editing are blurred. Put differently, the study of a text's recensions cannot be separated from the history of its reception.[267]

This example shows how authorial intention cannot always be the guiding principle for a modern editor. These changes alone demonstrate that the presentation of a single base text or edition of one recension is not sufficient to document the importance of the text for the understanding of the history of Jewish mysticism. The inclusion of such changes in the text in manuscript variants would not expose the reader to the change in orientation. Rather, this text and those like it are best presented in layered editions where the various recensions are presented within a particular literary context or in synoptic form much like Schäfer's *Synopsis*. In cases where the original or earliest version has only limited importance for the understanding of the text or period, we can speak of the breakdown of textual authority or its democratization from the scholar's point of view. When a text is found in so many different versions that an edition is not practical and that an electronic database of all the recensions must be recorded and accessed, then we must speak of the end or death of the critical edition as we have known it.

A number of examples have foreshadowed the imminent development of computerized texts for critical study. The most recent advances in editorial practice permit the reader to use one of many combinations of texts preserved by the editor. An example of such is discussed by David Greetham in his seminal study, *An Introduction to Textual Scholarship*. He discusses modern compact disk technology and describes an audio recording of various interpretations of each movement of a given classical piece so that the listener can construct a composite version to which he or she wishes to listen.[268]

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[267] This example is taken from my study, 'The Evolution of the Intention of Prayer to the "Special Cherub" From the Earliest Works to a Late Unknown Treatise', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 22 (1995), pp. 1-26. On a related subject see the development of traditions concerning the angel Metatron: Daniel Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead', *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp. 291-321.

[268] D.C. Greetham, *An Introduction to Textual Scholarship*, New York and London 1994, p. 357. The availability of known texts in CD format has offered many new avenues of research including foremost the ease with which a scholar can annotate a text. See further David Mealand, 'On Finding Fresh Evidence in Old Texts: Reflections on Results in Computer-Assisted Biblical Research', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 74 (1992), pp. 67-87. The study of Jewish mysticism has yet to embrace interactive, digital

A similar phenomenon can be produced with the program *Tu-Step*, used by Peter Schäfer at the Institut für Judaistik of the Freie University. Instead of choosing a base text, the members of the Institut first transcribe all of the manuscripts. The computer program then collates the data to produce the desired edition. Until press-time, the editors retain the option of replacing their base text with any one of the manuscripts in the computer, including the selection and order of the manuscripts to be used in a *partiture* text edition. Inasmuch as only one edition is printed, this leverage is offered only to the editors who possess all of the raw data in their computers. However, I imagine it is not long before compact disks are issued, for Jewish studies and Jewish mysticism in particular, which will allow the reader or user to produce any one of a number of editions or types of editions to suit a particular need.[269] A step in this direction is offered by the options available in the online edition of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, where different manuscripts can be viewed upon request. When this becomes the norm for various texts we will certainly find ourselves in a new era of textual scholarship.

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platforms of textuality. In the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the main tools available to the academic scholar remain text-seach databases which primarily include classical Jewish literature and secondarily, works of Kabbalah and Hasidism. These works reflect the *current* view of what is the Jewish canon as most all works are acquired from other publishers who have reissued the works and sell their files to the databases.

[269] See Patrick Conner, 'Hypertext in the Last Days of the Book', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 74 (1992), pp. 7-24. Conner correctly shows that cybernetic hypertext allows the editor to link texts in ways not possible in the printed medium. Against the view that advances in computer technology will quickly bring about the end of the printed book, see Elisabeth Eisenstein, 'The End of the Book? Some Perspectives on Media Change', *The American Scholar* 64 (1995), pp. 541-555. On an early prediction of the future of (Judaica) libraries and their use of computer technology see Joseph Avivi, 'An Example of Future Bibliographic Research', *Alei Sefer* 15 (1988), pp. 135-138 [Hebrew].

נוסח א׳

מדת הגבורה והם נוונים אומים כארגמן ויש מהם שאינם אדומים מאד אלא כתולעת השני. בא ללמד כי חלקי הדין זה גדול מזה ומי יוכל לספר. וחמרסק אינו דין קשה בעבור שהוא קרוב לרחמים. אבל הזרוע בין חוק (1166) ואמיץ. ועל כן יאמר חסיסוק שהיש ה׳ ר׳) הדרי צח כנגד מדת הרחמים ואדום כנגד מדת הדין. דני׳ מרבבה כנגד מדת החסד שהוא מהחיו יגלי רבביתיו בחסד. אחר כך המציא נצח שהוא שוק ימין והוא ענף מן חחסד שנ׳ (תהלים מ״ה. י״א) נעימות בימינך נצח. ואנו אומרים כי לצד הימין חסד והם נצחי עולם. ואותה המעלה ניתנה למשה ע״ה ועל כן זכה לקבל תורה. שנ׳ (דברים ל״ג. ב׳) מימינו אש דת למו. ונצח אינו חסד גדול וכמו כן הוא נבדל במין. כי אתה רואה כי מראה הכים אינו שוה. והוד שנקרא שמאל ענף היוצא מן הדין והוא הנקרא מישור שמיישר לארם ועל ברחו יחהלך במישרים וזה הכרה נתנה לאהרן ועל זה היה מכפר על עונות בני ישראל הנעשים מצד צפון ועל כן נזכר אהרן במעשה הענל והמכין יבין. אעפ״י שבוגתו יחיה לשמים. וכמו כן קוראים לשוק הימין ולשוק שמאל הוד והדר שנ׳ (תהלים צ״ו. ״) הוד והדר לפניו. וצדיק יסוד עולם משם הנשמות מורחות הוא הנקרא יום השביעי. היאך. חסד אחד. דין שתים. רחמים שלשה. נצח ארבע. הוד חמש. המחשבה והחכמה והבינה שתים נשמה הרי ששה. והיסוד שבע.

נוסח ב׳

והשלשה ספירות אחרות הבד דין ורחמים הם כנף ב״ע והחכמה והבינה כנשמה להם. כי על כל פנים צריך הנשמה לפעול על ידי הכלים אשר הוא הגוף. והחבר הוא הדע יסן נחלק לכמה עוני אורה ומדר ובשאבר דוד לך ה׳ הגדלה כו׳ על זאת הספירה אמ׳ כי החסד קרוי גדלה וזו הגדה החזיק בה אברהם אבינו ע״ה והוא כמו שלג או מים או צמר ועליה אומר הכתוב לבושה כתלג חיור ושער ראשה עמר נקי. וכמו שהחרמק גדול מן הדרע והדרע מן היד והיד מן האצבעות ואצבע גדול מחבירו. וכמו שהחרמק דבוק אצל הגוף יותר מן הדרע. כך תמצא מיני חסדים זה גדול מזה והבבן יסן. ומדת הדין הוא זרוע שמאל וקראה דוד המלך ע״ה גבורה ובספירה הזאת יצחק החזיק בה ועל זאת הספירה אמר יעקב ופחד יצחק היה לי. והוא הנקראת מדת הדין הקשה. ובה כמה נוחים אדומים מאד כתולעת שני ובא ללמד בה כי חלק הדין בה זה גדול מזה הו׳ יכל לספר כי עצמו מספר. והדע הוא דין הסרמק אינו דין קשה בעבור שהוא קרוב לרחמים כי הרחמים הוא באמצע (דף ב״ס. ב׳) וכל התרחק מן האמצע שהוא הרחמים. הוא הדין הקשה מהבדו. ועל כן אמר הפסוק דודי צח ואדום צח כנגד מדת הרחמים אדום כנגד מדת הדין. ועל מרבבה כנגד מדת החסד שהוא מכרת רבבותיו בחסד. והספירה השלישית שהוא. הרחמים עליה אמר דוד והתפ״ארת. והוא רמת. דחקו של יעקב אבינו ע״ה. והוא. הנקראת אספקלריא המאירה הוא. כח גלגל החמה כלומר פנימותו: וקראו אותה חכמים עין הדים ועלה הבא הספירה הזאת הוא הדין אשר אזכיר את שמי. וקראוה בעלי הקבלה מדת יום כי אור היום

1 זכ״ר. פ׳ לאדון ג׳ ספרה בתוך בוקר. חכמה הוא. ודרש | 2 ע׳ פ׳ לחזא חוחר | 7 פ׳ קדאה האבמקת. האאבבקת אחר גדול מהבירו | 10–11 המר—גדול מהבירו לחזא בר. ר׳ גדול מן הדר | 11 ר׳ גדול מן האבמקת. האאבבקת אחר גדול מהבירו | 13 ר׳ כמה מיני. פ׳ בחמה חסדים | 16 פ׳ רכל זה רמז יעקב אבינו ע״ה | 17 הוה.לו כלחא בפ׳ | 18 ר׳ נעטקם אחר ״הקבה״: ואמרה אלון נקראת רחמים וחמשה האחרות נעמנות. מדת הדין קשה בה כמה נוחים אדומים כארגמן רם מהם אדומים מאד אלא כתולעת שני. פ׳ אדומים. רם בתולעת. בא לחזא בפ׳ | 19 ר׳ רא׳ כי חלקי הדין זה קשה מזה | 20 פ׳ לחזא מבבר. ר׳. פ׳ לחזא הדרל הוא. דין | 22 פ׳ לחזא הוא | 27 ר׳ אח דנלי רבבישי. פ׳ ברחיזי | 28 ר׳ הוא מבבבו הנוף ורבלה אמר | 31 ר׳ לחזא בבמר מצמיחתו | 31–33 ר׳ ותקראך—את מקבל לחזא | 32 פ׳ כן הרחים רצין הדרש | 32–33 פ׳ ולכל המדה הזאת אמר הכתוב כל מקום אבר אזכיר את שמי | 34 ר׳ כי זרחתה הרים

Figure 1.1 : Commentary to the Ten Sefirot
published by Scholem *Maddaei ha-Yahadut* 2 (1927)

ג"כ בסוף שאמ' כי את המלך
יי' צבאות ראו עיני לעת שזה
הדבר חוזר למה שלמעלה
בתחלתו. ולזה נמשל לבן כרך
הכוונה בו כי נבואתו היתה
השנה שלימה וכל זה מבואר
בעיון נקל. ואשוב לענין ראשון
ואומר בתחלה כי מאמר רוח
סערה באה מן הצפון הכוונה בו
כי הוא חלקי הנבואה הנאצלים
מצד הדין[41]) שהוא לצד שמאל
והם כדמות. ושמים רוחנים[42])
חולמים על בעלי מדות שכליות
[דף 39ª] דתוריות או
פילוסופיות[43]). ומאמר אליפז
יוכיח [איוב ד', ט"ו] ורוח על פני
יחלוף וגו'. והם התחלות
להתעוררות הנבואה השורה על
הנביאים ע"ה.

ענן גדול הוא הענן
הידוע שמתלבש בו הכבוד הוא
כבוד הגבורה. והוא[44]) הפרגוד
העומד בין מדת הגבורה ובין
אספקלריא שאינה מאירה שהיא
מדת הדין האחרונה[45]) והה"א[46])
אש מתלקחת ואש אוכלת.
ונוגה הוא המבעיר את האש
הגדולה והמבהקת והוא יסוד
עולם בתוקף הרוח המרחפת
מאצילות קו האמצעי שהוא רוח
אלהים דהמחיה ודהמעורר

[נוסח ארוך בכ"י ו'.
לשון ר' יצחק הכהן עצמו או לשון תלמידו ר' משה מבורגוס]

ן' ראיתי בפי' רוח סערה באה מן הצפון לחכם
אחד מן המקובלים כי המלאך הממונה על הגוזרים שמו
צפוני רמז לפושעי ישראל וגם הוא אש מתלקחת והוא
מדת השדים וכולם יוצאים להזיק את הרשעים מדה
כנגד מדה. ולזה נמשל כבן כרך וכל זה מבואר בענין
נקל. ואמר בתחלה כי כוונת רוח סערה לדעת חכמי
הקבלה היא חלקי הנבואה הנאצלים מצד הדין שהוא
לצד שמאל והוא כדמות השמים רוחניים חולמים על
בעלי מדות שכליות תורניות או פילוסופיות כמאמר
אליפז ורוח על פני יחלוף והם התחלות למראות
הנבואות השורות על הנביאים ע"ה. ענן גדול
הוא הענן הידוע שמתלבש בו כבוד מדת הגבורה.
ועתה לך זה הסוד כפי אשר פרשהו (ו) הקדמונים על
פי הקבלה. וארא והנה רוח סערה באה מן
הצפון וענן גדול שני שרים הם כדמות שני
פרגודים עומדים לפני כתר מלכות המי[ו]חסת מדת
הדין. אש מתלקחת והיא רוח צפון והיא הטוב והמטיב
הצפון לצדיקים. ושם האחד סַעְרִיאֵל וממנו ומכחו
כשהוא מתגלה מתפוצץ רוח סערה בעולם וכל הרוחות
הקשות והחזקות המתפשטות בעולם. ושם השני עַנְנִיאֵל
ונקרא גדול מפני שהוא מתלבש בצורת ענן רוחני
להאציל הנבואה על הנביאים וזה דמות הענן נקרא
ענן כבוד יוי. וזה הענן נראה לנביאים בשני פנים
לעינים נראה כדמות ענן כצורת הענינים הנראים
באויר אשר עלינו והענן הגדול הרוחני שמתלבש
הכבוד הנאצל מאצילות המלכות העומד לפניה כדמיון
פרגוד רוחני מושג בלבות הנביאים זה הכח הדמיוני
הרוחני לכל נביא ונביא כפי מעלתו והאש הצפוני

המלך וכו'. (ע"כ בו'. המשך למעלה בעמודה השמאלית) 1 מ' בש"ף [כך ו]. 2 מ' ב' (הסת לעת ו) האמ"י
שזה וכתוב. 4 מ' ב' זה נמשל. מ' ליתא לבן כרך. 5–6 מ' ב' כי כוונתו(ו) נבואתו היא שלימה
השנה שלימה. 5 מ' כי נבואה והיה. 6 מ' וקל זה. 9 מ' ב' שהכוונה. 10 מ' ב'
כי הוא חלק הנבואה. 11 מ' מצד הדין הזה. 12 מ' ב' ליתא רוחניים. 13–14 מ' ב'
שכליות מדעיות. 16 מ' ליתא יוכיח. 18 מ' ב' לעוררות מדת הנבואה. 19 מ' ב'
הנביאים ע"ה. 20–21 מ' הענין הידוע. 27 מ' ב' מבעיר. 28 מ' ב' הגדולה המבעירה.

Figure 1.2: R. Isaac ha-Kohen's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot, published by Scholem in Tarbiz 2 (1931)

בס׳ סוד ה׳ המצטמצם בכנויים רבים בהזכרתם בלבד, בלא כל ביאור. אבל יש גם שינויי תוכן בולטים בפרטי דברים רבים. המאמרים המקבילים למראית העין מכילים רעיונות שונים לגמרי שקשה להולמם, אם באמת היה מהבר אחד לשניהם. סדר העניינים בסוד אילן האצילות עולה בהרבה על הסדר שבס׳ סוד ה׳, שלעתים קרובות עלה בערבוביא גמורה ואי אפשר להבין איך התכו שם ענין אחד לשנים שבאו במקומות שונים לגמרי.

אציג לדוגמה שורות אחדות משני הנוסחאות אלו מול אלו:

סוד אילן האצילות דף 96ב	ס׳ סוד ה׳ דף 173ב
ולמטה מאלו המדרגות כמה כחות זכות ונוראות רוחות מושכלות, שכלים עליונים ונוראים, כתות כתות לאלפים ולרבבות, כולם צורות פליאות אשר גבותם עינים מלאות, פנים ואחור רואות והולכות, מעריצות ומקדישות לנורא עלילות אדון התפלות. כל אלו שכלים מושכלים בגלגל שני עמודים נתן השכל במרומים, ולמטה מזו יהיו בגלגל שמיני כתות כתות נוראות ונפלאות, ריבי רבבות אשר מהם למזרח מהם למערב מהם לדרום מהם לצפון. וכולם בכל מין בשיר ושבח ברינה וזמרה משבחים ומפארים ליוצרם בנחת רוח, והם גבוהים זו מזו, נעלמים זו מזו, קדושים זו מזו, אוירים זו מזו, ספיריים זו מזו, משבחים בשיר וניגון ערב בשינויי׳ זו מזו, מהם לקדושה מהם לשירה ולזמרה, מהם לשבח ולתהלה, מהם לנצח ולתפארה, אשר מיחדים ומקדישין ומשבחים בניגון ערבות זו מזו. ומאלו הכתות בהם מדרשות מדרשות אשר בדברי הלכה מגידות ומספרות אשר מכחות שבכסא מקבלות, אשר המדרשות נוראות ועליונות מגידים תורות וחוקים ודברים נוראים ונפלאים דקים זבים רוחניים ונעלמים מאד אשר מתורת האצילות מקבלות.	ולמטה מכל אלו יהיו כמה כתות אחרות מהם למזרח מהם למערב מהם לצפון מהם לדרום אשר בגלגל שמיני ערוכות מהם לשירה ולזמרה ומהם לשבח ולתהלה, מהם לנצח ולתפארה, כולם מנצחים ומגגנים בניגונים ערבות משונות זו מזו ואף לשם כתות של מלאכים יושבות בדברי תורה ובדברי הלכה מספרות, מדרשות מדרשות יושבות מקבלות מכתות שבכסא ששם גם כן בכסא מדרשות נוראות ונפלאות מספרות ומגידות פלאות עליונות נוראות ונעלמות אשר יקרא חקים ותורות נעלמות אשר להם ראויות מגידים

Figure 1.3 : Scholem's Edition of 'Sod 'Ilan ha-'Aṣilut le-Rabbi Yiṣḥaq'

Sefer Yeẓira

[פרק א, משנה ג; הפרק הראשון, ההלכה השניה (למברס, עמ׳ 24)]

3 עשר[1] ספירות בלימה: מספר עשר אצבעות, חמש כנגד חמש, וברית ייחוד מכוונת באמצע במילת לשון ופה ובמילת המעור[2].

(א) עשר] מספר] כמספר בגה, במספר זת[2]| חמש כנגד חמש] חמשה כנגד חמשה ת[2]| כנגד] מול ג| ובריית] וברית לב ג| ייחוד] יחוד בגהת[2], יחיד ז| במילת[3] במלה ז| לשון] הלשון ג, ולשון ז| ופה] ובפה גת[2]| ובמילת[3] ח׳ ז| המעור] ח׳ ז|

(ק) עשר] יסוד עשר צ| מספר] כמספר כעצר| ייחוד] יחוד צ, יחיד כ... פק ...ת[1]| מכוונת] מכוון פר | במילת[3] ומלת צ, כמלת ת[1], בברית[4] כ | לשון] הלשון לעפצקר| ופה] ח׳ כ... ת[1]| ובמילת[3] במלת ס, ומלת לצר, וכמלת ת[1]| המעור] הצער כ, השעור ק, נ׳: שהיא בין עשרת אצבעות רגליו ע|

[1] סעיף זה חסר ב״ד ואילו ב״בה הוא נמצא במקום אחר בהמשך הפרק. [2] בכ״י א: המעיר. [3] ברוב כתבי־היד: במלת. [4] בגיליון: נ״א במלת.

[פרק א, משנה ד; הפרק השני, ההלכה הראשונה (למברס, עמ׳ 36).]

4 עשר ספירות בלימה: עשר ולא תשע, עשר ולא אחת עשרה. הבין בחכמה, חכום[1] בבינה, בחון בהם, חקור בהן. דע וחשוב וצור, והעמד דבר על בוריו, והשב יוצר על מכונו, ומידתן עשר שאין להן סוף.[2]

(א) אחת עשרה] עשתי עשרה ז[2]| חקור בהן] חקור מהן דזת[2]| דע וחשוב וצור] דע וחשוב ג, ודע וחשב וצור ז| בוריו] בידורו ז| והשב] והושב ז| ומידתן... סוף] כי הוא יוצר וכורא לבדו ואין זולתו בגה, כי הוא יוצר ובורא לבדו ואין זולתו ומדתו(?) עשר ואין להם סוף ת[2]|

(ק) בבינה] ח׳ ק| בחון] הבחון ק| וחקור בהן] וחקור מהן כ...קת[1]| דע וחשוב וצור] ח׳ כמ... קת[1]| וצור] ובור ר| והעמד] ותעמיד פ| בוריו] בריו כמנק, בורייו ל| והשב] חשב ע|

[1] כל כתבי היד האחרים: חכם. ת״: וחקור. [2] ומידתן... סוף: רק ב״אז. [3] פרק ב הלכה א (למברס, עמ׳ 37).

Figure 1.4: Page from Gruenwald, 'A Preliminary Critical Edition of Sefer Yezria'

לבירור הנוסח של ספר יצירה

5 דע וחשוב וצור
שהיוצר אחד הוא ואין לו שני
ולפני אחד מה אתה סופר

[ו] עשר ספירות בלימה
עשר ולא תשע, עשר ולא אחת עשרה

6 שהיוצר אחד ג׳: שאודין (שאודין בי״המעני... אדון פ) יחיד א*; שאודון יחיד והיוצר אחד (מיוחד מ׳) ב*: שהיוצר אחד והוא אדון יחיד ד 6. והוא אי״ביק: והוא ד: ליהוא ש״ג 7. ואין לו שני (שיני איביב 8...) א״ב*: ואין שני לו אגאיביק...: ואין (אין ו׳) כלעדיו ג 9. 7 סופר: מדה פ: למה אתה סופר הוס׳ כ״ 10.

[ו] א 4; ב 3 ו״; ג ב 1 (36).

1 עשר—בלימה כ״ג 1. 2 עשר—עשרה כ״ג 2. עשתי עשרה מ׳. 3 הבין בינים 3.

5 דע וחשוב וצור. ראה פיסקה ו, הע׳ 4. בפירוש המיוחס לרס״ג מופיע כאן הלשון: ׳דע שאודון יחיד׳. ואולי ניתוספו ל׳דע׳ שתי המילים האחרות ׳וחשוב וצור׳, שנמצאו שם (בפיסקה ו) כחילופי־נוסח לקודם, ע״ש.

6 שהיוצר אחד: אדון יחיד. לפי כל הסימנים ישנן בזה שתי לשונות, שהאחת מהן נוסח המקור, בעוד שהשנייה היא תוספת־הערה שנרשמה בגליון. איזו מהן המקור, ואיזו התוספת? — אחרי רוב העיון אני נוטה להכיר את נוסחת רס״ג במקוריות: ׳שהיוצר אחד׳. בצדי ביטוי זה הראה חכם קדום בגליון (השווה פיסקה ג, הע׳ 7) לביטוי המקביל בפיסקה ג: ׳אדון יחיד׳. מעתיקים, שחשבו כי זהו תיקון גירסה, הכניסו הציון פנימה — במקום לשון המקור; ואחרים, כמקובל לרוב, צירפו את שתי הלשונות יחדיו, בחילופי־סדר שונים.

7 והוא. נראה, כי מלה זו הינה מגוף הנוסח, אלא שבעירבובי החילופים והצירופים היא נבלעה לרוב, או שונתה (כבנוסח דזנולן) ל׳והוא׳.

8 שיני. כתיב ארצ״ישראלי, שהוא אותיות לכתב״יד ואסיקן הקדום (בי1), ונשתמר אף בהעתקים יותר מאוחרים.

9 ואין לו שני: ואין בלעדיו. תוספת־הדגשה ל׳אחד׳ בשתי לשונות: הראשונה (ע״פ קהלת ד, ח) רוחנית לרוב בנוסח הקצר ובנוסח הארוך (ואולי ׳לו׳ היא תוספת לתוספת, שהוכנסה לפנים בשני מקומות), בעוד שהשנייה נתקבלה בנוסח רס״ג בלבד.

10 למה אתה סופר. תוספת־פירוש (או שינוי־נוסח?) ל׳מה אתה סופר׳.

[ו]

1* סמיכות פיסקה זו לפיסקה ז (כמו בנוסח הארוך) מוכרעת לפי התוכן והלשון. הפנייה הישירה למעיין מתחילה בסוף הפיסקה הקודמת (״... מה אתה סופר״) ומובטחת באורח שיטתי בשתי הפיסקות האלה. סימן נוסף לצמידות של הפיסקות ו—ז תמצא להלן, הע׳ 7. וראה האמור בזה בעמ׳ כד.

1 עשר ספירות בלימה. ראה פיסקה ג, הע׳ 1. הוזרה על לשון המקור משמשת בזה יסוד להערה ׳עשר ולא תשע׳ וכו׳, ולכן נשתמרה יחד אותה בכל הנוסחים.

2 עשר ולא תשע עשר ולא אחת עשרה. הערת דיוק לביטוי ׳עשר ספירות׳ שבנוסח המקור, בפיסקה ב. וקרוב בעיני, שמלכתחילה נרשמה הערה זו בשולי אותה פיסקה,

[מא]

Figure 1.5 : Weinstock, 'Le-verur ha-Nosaḥ shel Sefer Yeṣira'

Edition and Commentary

Sefer Yeṣira § 1

C

[בשלשים ושתים] נ[תיבות]
פלא[ות חכמה חקק יה יוי]
צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים
חיים אל שדי קדוש ונורא
שמו שוכן עד .ברא את עולמו
בשלשה ספרים בספר וספר
וסיפור

By means of thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom Yah, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the Living God, God Almighty, holy and terrible is his name, dwelling for ever, carved out. He created his universe with three types of things (whose names derive from the same root letters – s-p-r): with writing (*seper*) and numbers (*s'par*) and speech (*sippur*).

A

שלשים ושנים נתיבות
פלאות חכמה חקק יה ייי
צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים
חיים אל שדי רם ונישא
שוכן עד וקדוש שמו ברא
את עולמו בשלשה ספרים
בספר וספר וספר.

Yah, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the Living God, God Almighty, *high and exalted, dwelling for ever, and holy is his name* (Isa 57:15), carved out thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom. He created his universe with three groups of letters (*separim*): with *seper* and *seper* and *seper*.

K

בשלשים ושתים נתיבות
פלאות חכמה חקק יה יהוה
צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים
חיים אל שדי רם ונישא שוכן
עד וקדוש שמו ברא את
עולמו בשלשה ספרים[1] : בספר
וספר וספר.

By means of thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom Yah, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the Living God, God Almighty, *high and exalted, dwelling for ever, and holy is his name* (Isa 57:15), carved out. He created his universe with three groups of letters (*separim*): with *seper* and *seper* and *seper*.[1]

[1] דברים K^{mg}

Z

בשלשים ושתים נתיבות
פְּלָאות חכמה חקק יה יוי
צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים
חיים אל שדי רם ונשא שוכן
עד וקדוש שמו ברא את
עולמו בשלשה ספרים בְּסֶפֶר
וסֵפֶר וְסִיפּוּר.

D

בשלשים ושתים נתיבות
פלאות חכמה חקק יה
יהוה צבאות אלהים חיים
אלהי ישראל אל שדי רם
ונישא שוכן עד וקדוש שמו
בשלשה ספרים סֶפֶר סֵפֶר
וספור.

P

בשלשים ושתים נתיבות
פלאות חכמה חקק יה יהוה
צבאות שמו בנ׳ ספרים ספר
וספר וספור.

[1] I have transliterated the Hebrew letter *Pē* here consistently with p in order to show as clearly as possible the play on words going on in the Hebrew text. Elsewhere I will use "f" to reflect the variant pronunciation of this letter when it is preceded by a vowel, e.g. in *sefirot*.

Figure 1.6 : Peter Hayman's edition Sefer Yeṣira (short, middle and long recensions)

כתיב[158]: **ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו וכו'**[159]. על דרך דאיתא בגמרא[160] יודע היה בצלאל לצרף אותיות [שנבראו בהם שמים וארץ], כי המשכן היה חיות של כל העולמות[161], ויובן על דרך זה, הנשמה חיות של כל הגוף, כי הגוף[162] בעצמה אין לה תמונה, רק אנו מכנים כשם הגוף חיות יד או רגל, ואם כן בצלאל שעשה המשכן שהוא חיות של כל העולמות, הוצרך לידע איך להכנים החיות בעולמות, והוצרך לידע האותיות שבהם נבראו העולמות, וכל מה שיש בעולמות היה במשכן[163].

ואיתא[164]: **בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם, ופריך: והלא [ויאמר דבראשית] תשעה [הוו], ומשני: בראשית נמי מאמר הוא. וקשה למה לא** כתיב ויאמר, רק מפני שהמאמר הזה אינו מושג, רק המדריגות התחתונים מושג[165] שהוא תרגום, דתרגום של דבור הוא ארשה, והדבור ההוא הוא היולי של המאמרים, שכל התשעה מאמרים באים ממנו. ובמשכן היה [גם כן] צריך להיות זה, וזאת היתה המנורה שנתקשה בה [משה] ולא היתה יכולה להעשות בידי אדם אלא מאליה[166], דעל ידה הוא עדות שהשכינה שורה בישראל[167]. וזהו נקרא שמן זית, שהבהירות בעצמה שורה עליו כמו האור על השמן, וכל השאר מאמרים נקראים זית ששמנו אגור בתוכו. ולכך לא כתיב בפרשה הזאת וידבר ד' או ויאמר [ד'] אל משה[168], דהדבור שלו אינו מושג, ואפילו 'ויאמר' לשון מאמר[169] לא שייך.

* * *

כתיב[170]: **באל שדי**[171], **שאמר לעולמו די**[172]. על דרך משל דכל מה שאנו מפארים אותו יתברך, דאיהו סביל כל עלמין[173] וכו', ואיהו תחות כל עלמין, ואיהו מלעיל מכל עלמין[174], וכולם כאין נגדו יתברך, כמשל אחד ששכח את שמשון הגבור [ש]נשא חוט של שערה, ועריין אינו דומה להנמשל,

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158. אוה"א דף ז ע"א, או"ת תצוה דף נו. 159. שמות כז, כ. 160. ברכות דף נה ע"א. 161. במדבר רבה פרשה יב פיסקא יא. 162. באו"ת: 'והנשמה בעצמה'. 163. תנחומא פקודי סימן ב. 164. ראש השנה דף לב ע"א. 165. באו"ת: 'רק המדריגה התחתונה מושגת'. 166. תנחומא שמיני סימן ח. 167. שבת דף כב ע"ב, מנחות דף פו ע"ב. 168. באו"ת נוסף: 'כי זה פירושו של שמן זית'. 169. ג"א: 'מחשבה'. 170. אור האמת דף ז ע"א, אור תורה ואורא דף מד. 171. שמות ו, ג: 'וָאֵרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֶל יִצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדָּי וּשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נוֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם'. 172. חגיגה יב ע"א. 173. באור תורה: 'ונותן בהכל חיות, כל זה הוא כאין נגדו'. 174. זוהר הקדוש חלק ג דף רכה ע"א. ועיין זוהר חדש יתרו דף לד ע"ב (מה"ק).

Figure 1.7: Liqquṭei 'Amarim, Jerusalem 2009

family, over against the external parallels. Indeed, we might expect the "Palestinian" versions of PT and *Gen. R.* to agree against BT. Our findings confirm the model of the mystical collection as a source redacted prior to Tosefta, PT, and BT. We may infer the beliefs and purposes of the redactor from his selection and arrangement of units, as this is reflected in the literary sources that drew upon his compilation. The external parallels to units I, VI, and VII are independent variants, which may be used to control the versions of the mystical collection. They may help us detect the redactor's alterations and come closer to the original content and meaning of the units.

e. *Summary.* The foregoing material may be most conveniently summarized in tabular form. I list the units of the mystical collection, as found in all three sources, in the order in which they appear in Tosefta; Arabic numerals, attached to each item, indicate the order in which the items are listed in each source. "External parallels" to items of the mystical collection are noted before each item.

Tosefta	*PT*	*BT*
I. (Cf. *Mek. Rashbi*)		
1. Story of the *merkabah* exposition of R. Eleazar b. ʿArakh, in the presence of his teacher, R. Johanan b. Zakkai.	2. As in Tosefta, + a second story of *merkabah* exposition, involving two other disciples of R. Johanan. Miraculous details in both stories.	2. As in PT, + R. Johanan's account of his dream. One of the disciples in the second story is different from PT's. Miraculous details throughout.
II.		
2. R. Jose b. Judah: List of three disciples who lectured before their masters.	4. As in Tosefta, + introduction and postscript.	3. As in Tosefta, + an introduction (different from PT's).
III. (Cf. *Song R.*)		
3. List of four who entered a garden, and the fate of each.	5. As in Tosefta. Stories of Elisha are inserted by redactor.	4. As in Tosefta, + a cryptic warning by R. Akiba. Material pertinent to Ben Zoma, Aher, and Akiba is inserted by redactor.
IV.		
4. Parable of a royal garden.	7. As in Tosefta.	Omitted.
V.		
5. Parable of a highway, between roads of fire and snow.	1. As in Tosefta, without the highway.	Omitted.

Figure 1.8 : Halperin, The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature

Figure 1.9 : Hekhalot text from Ms. Vatican 228 (See figure 1.10)

180§ - 173§

B238

V228

הצרישו לי | קול כל יצורים שבראתי

174§
יכל מלאך ומלאך כל שרף ושרף כל חיה וחיה כל אופן ואופן(ן) עד שמשמע כ״ל ואשמע ואמרן (תחילה) לשל תפלת בני. וס״א ואמרן תחילה כל שירות ותשבחות ותעילות של ישראל שאר בתן יחד סובבי בקר ויריעו כל בני אלהי. סובבי בקר אלו ישראל בני אלהי אלו מלאכים. ערבי |

V228

M22

189 ← 175§
ר׳ בכל יום ויום בהגיע תפלת המנחה מלך הדור יושב ועם | ומרומם לזיות עד 10
שלא יכלה דבר מפיו וחיה הקדש יוצאות | פתחת כמא (ה)כבוד במיתם מלא
רנה כגסיתם מלא גילה | ידיהם מגעות ורגליהם מרקדות ומקפות ומסובבות
את | מלכם אחת מימינו ואחת משמאלו אחת מלפניו ואחת | מאחריו ומנשקת 15
ומנשקות אותו ומפרצות את פניהם | הם מפרצות ומלך הכבוד מכסה פניו
חיה ערבות רקיע | מתבקע כסבורה [כ] מפני (מלך) חדר דו יוסי תאר אמרת
תגלת | תאות זוהר אותי שבח מראה פניהם כדבר שנאמר ק׳ק׳ק׳ |

190 ← 176§
מרק ר״ב מבמלי מירה מפירי שבחתה מעבירי | ומימה משיבי קנאה מזכירי 20
אהבה אהבתו | של אברהם לפני מלכם כשהיו רואין אותו כשהוא כתוב על |
ברוו מה הן עושין מחבטין כתריהם ומתירין את מתוחם | ומכין על ראשיהם
ונופלין על פניהם ואומ׳ הנה הנני יצגר | בראשית סלח סלח אביו יעקב מחול
מחול לזרע ישראל | כי אדיר מלכים אתה. 25

191 ← 177§
כ׳ מלך נורא מלך מבוהל מלך | יקר מלך נכבד למה לך אויבה עם זרע אברהם
למה לך קנאה | עם זרע יצחק למה לך הזרות עם זרע יעקב כי קין שמים |

178§
ומרק ה׳ מהיכלות | כשמגיע זמנם של מלאכי לומ׳ שירה חמרה לפני הקי׳ יהי
שמתאל ומלאך השר | הגדול הגבור והנורא פומד על חלוני רקיע והחתון 30
לשמוע ולהקשיב כל שירות | חמרות ותשבחות העולות מן הארץ ומן כל בתי
כנסיות ומרשות להשמיע לדם | לפני ערבות רקיע.

179§
ומפני מה הוא על חלוני רקיע מפני שאין לדם רשות למלא(כי) | השירה לומ׳
שירה ותחילה מלמעלה עד שיתחתו ישראל מלמטה אז מיהם שנא׳ | ויענו יהי
אלהינו וכל מלאכי השרת וכל מלאכי רקיע ורקיע כשישומעין קול שירות | 35
ותשבחות שאומ׳ ישראל מלמטה הם מחזר׳ מלמעלה ק׳ק׳ק׳ |

180§
למה נקרא שמו של ההוא שר שמתאל מפני שהוא מומר בבל שהר ושהר
ומשמי(ם) | כל שירות ותשבחות העולי׳ מן הארץ מן בתי כנסיות ובתי
מרשות לפני רקיע | ורקיע עד ערבות רקיע עד דחות הקדש ואומרי׳ ושרמ׳
וכרובי הדר כיון שהו(א) | שומע ומשמיע לכל רקיע ורקיע מיד יורדי׳ כתות
כיתות שרות | הגבורות הגבורה מחנות מחנות הילולה הילולה של מלאכי 40
השרת מן רקיע ורקיע לתוך נהרי אש תוהרי להבה ותהרי שלהבת | ומובלין
עצמן שבע מעמ׳ ובודקין עצמם באש שלש מאות ושש׳ ותשעה מעמ׳

79

Figure 1.10: Page from Schäfer's Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur, Tübingen 1981 (Note the symbol ר at the beginning of §178 and compare to Figure 1.9)

dit : « On renforcera mon refuge, on fera la paix pour moi, la paix qu'on la fasse pour moi » (Is. 27:5) et il est écrit : « Il est temps de faire YHVH, on a violé ta Torah » (Ps. 119:126).

Et sache et crois qu'au début de la création de l'homme à partir d'une goutte de semence, celui-ci comprend trois associés : son père, sa mère et le Saint béni soit-il[9]. Son père et sa mère pour confectionner la forme du corps et le Saint béni soit-il pour confectionner la forme de l'âme[10]. Et quand un mâle est créé, nécessairement sa partenaire

את השם ית'[f] ועל
זה נאמ' או יחזק
במעוזי יעשה
שלום לי שלום
יעש' לי, [קעא"א]
וכתי' עת לעשות
ליי' הפרו תורתיך.
ודע והאמן כי
בתחלת ברייתו של
אדם מספת הזרע
יש בו שלשה
שותפי' אביו ואמו
והב"ה אביו ואמו
לתקון צורת הגוף,
והב"ה לתקון[j]
צורת הנשמה
וכשהזכר נברא

Paix (*'osseh et ha-chalom*) ». Ces variantes pourraient refléter l'embarras qu'une formulation aussi radicale de l'action théurgique pouvait susciter. Sur cette formule typique de ce que nous avons appelé la théurgie instauratrice, ses sources et ses développements, voir notre ouvrage, *Les grands textes de la cabale, les rites qui font Dieu*, Verdier, Lagrasse, 1993, p. 560 et suivantes. Voir aussi Moché Idel, *Kabbalah, New Perspectives*, Yale University Press, New Haven et Londres, 1988, p. 187 et suiv.

[9] Emprunt à Niddah 31a, résumé dans Qidouchin 30b.

[10] Cette proposition résume en l'interprétant le dire rabbinique utilisé ici, qui ne parle pas de « forme » mais emploie des termes plus concrets. Sur la notion de « forme de l'âme », voir plus loin note 11.

[f] Ms. n : מצות

[g] Ms. b,c : הראשונות

[h] Ms. b ajoute : והבינה

[i] Ms. b : עושה כסא ומתקן מרכבה לשם ית'.

Ms c: ומקרב שלם למלכו וכביכול כאילו הוא עושה את השלום

[j] Ms. b lit à chaque fois : לתקן au lieu de לתקון

Figure 1.11: Mopsik Le Secret du mariage de David et Bethsabée
(Note that the edition includes manuscript variants, translation, and commentary)

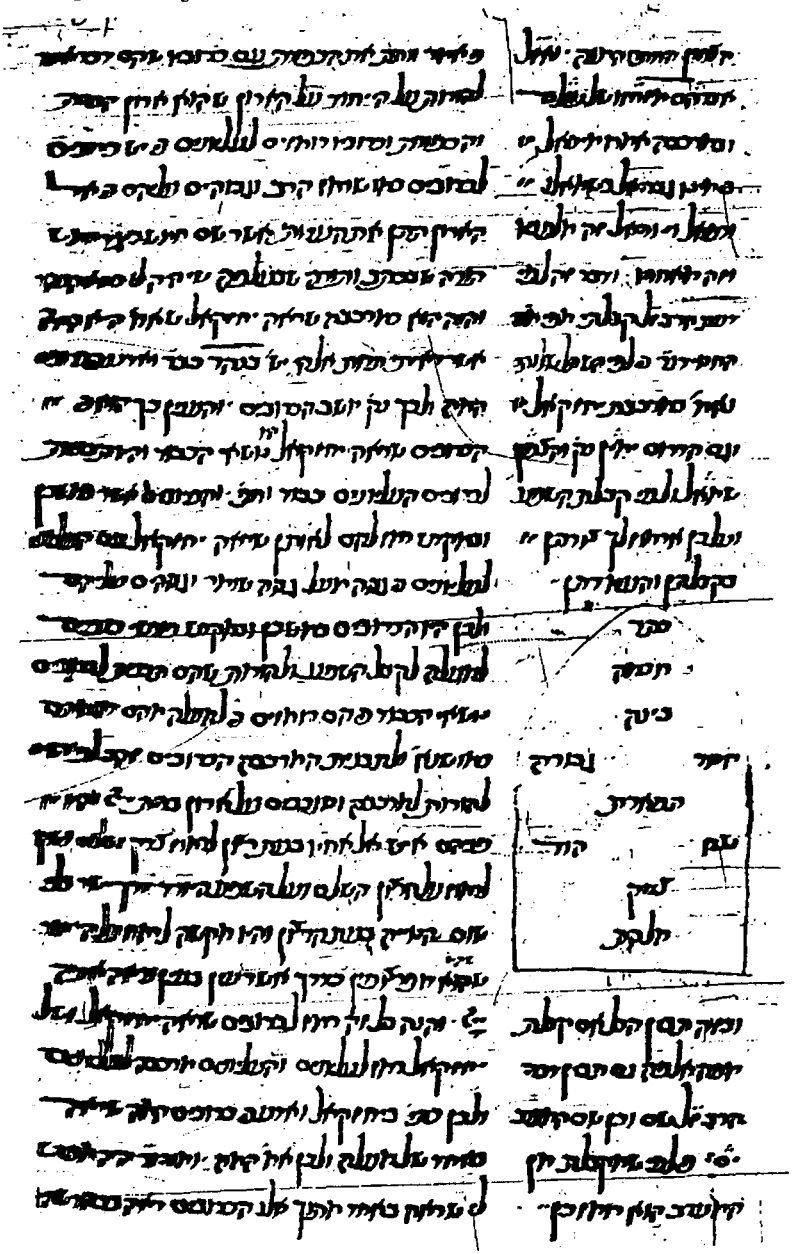

Figure 1.12: Keter Shem Ṭov, Ms. Parma 2654 (de Rossi 1221), fol. 180a

Figure 1.13: Keter Shem Ṭov, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 95a

Figure 1.14: Keter Shem Ṭov, Ms. Vatican Ur. 110, fol. 114a

וכאזניו ששמע, ואשר לא שמע יחדל כי אני ערב לו שלא יבין. ואף מה שרמז הרב ז״ל בזאת הברכה אותו הוא כים ודרום העולם הזה השפל נקרא דרום וגם הוא חמור מאד ומי שלא שמע לא יועיל לו פירוש בכתיבה.

ואתה תצוה

כתר

חכמה בינה

חסד גבורה

תפארת

נצח הוד

צדיק

מלכות

[רמב״ן שמות פרק כח פסוק ב] **והנה המזבח רצונו כתר:** [רמב״ן שמות פרק כח פסוק ב] **והכבוד בית תפארתו חכמה.** דע שהמזבח הוא הרצון והכבוד חסד בינה גבורה והבית של התפארת ולכן כשהיו מכוונים בבגדים לכבוד, וגם היו של כד רמז לרחמים והוא התפארת, נמצאת כוונתם בכוונת קרבן ליחד כבוד והתפארת ואז הרצון והשפע והברכה באה לעולם: [רמב״ן שמות פרק כח פסוק ב] **ובית תפארתי אפאר ואם יבא הכהן לטעות יחשוב בבגדיו שהם לכבוד ותפארת ולא יטעה בעבודה:** [רמב״ן שמות פרק כח פסוק ב] **דמות דיוקנו מנצח לפני בבית מלחמתי** [יומא דף סט ע״א] זה נאמר בהגדה לגבי אותו הזקן והבן שהוא ראייה לרבריו שהרי הכהן הגדול הוא מלאך ה׳ צבאות לבוש במלבושי משרתי עליון עד שנעשה בבגדים דמות כרובים אם השכלת קה בהקדמה שהיו בד בבד רמזתי לך למה של בד: [רמב״ן שמות פרק כט פסוק טו] **לא צורך גבוה** וכו׳ **עד והארץ אזכור** כי בעבוד ישראל עבודתן כהוגן ומפרסמין מצותיו ועושין רצונו מזכירין את הארץ ברחמים ואזכור מלשון זכרנו יברך ואז השכינה אומדת ישראל אשר כך אתפאר כלומר בשבילך ישראל אתייחד בתפארת ועל זה הוציאם ממצרים וכשאין עושין מצותיו משחיתין את הארץ: [רמב״ן שמות פרק כט פסוק טו] **ומה תעשה לשמך הגדול** כביכול אין לו כמה יתחבר ולפיכך נרמזו רוב הדברים לכבוד כמו ארון העדות ומזבח הפנימי כפרת ושלחן ותכלת וכהנה רבות כאשר ארמוז בכל מקום בע״ה: [רמב״ן שמות פרק ל פסוק א] **שהקטרת עוצרת** דע שהקטרת לעטרה ועל כן הוא במזבח הזהב מפני האף אלא שהמצוה והכוונה שתתעלה בשם הגדול פן יהיה בבני אהרן ולכן מכוון ליחד הכבוד והתפארת, ובהכינך דברי הרב בפסוק ריחר אפי ומה קו שרמזתי כאל תמר בו תבין מה שבכאן כי באסף מלשון אף וחרון שהוא מדת הדין הרסה בכח הקשה, והרבה ביאר הרב בזה.

כי תשא

[רמב״ן שמות פרק ל פסוק יט] **נטילת ידים לתפלה** הרבה ביאר הרב ז״ל למקובל מפה אל פה ודע מאמרם שאמרו ז״ל כי רוח רעה שורה על הידים [ברכות דף נא ע״א]

ציתים

קה. ע״ין עמוד ח קו ע״ין עמוד לח

Figure 1.15: Keter Shem Ṭov, ʿAmmudei ha-Qabbalah

פירוש בראשית **הרקאנטי**

שרי ביה עד שמהחוא אור הגנוז נחקק שביל אחד נסתר אל החשך שלמטה ואז שורה בו האור (שזהו גילוי האור בכל העולמות). ***מאן חשוכא דלתתא ההוא דכתיב ביה ולחשך קרא לילה.*** ומי הוא החשך שלמטה, הוא החשך הנקרא לילה שעליו נאמר "ולחשך קרא לילה". ***ועל דא תנינן מאי דכתיב מגלה עמוקות מני חשך*** ועל זה שנינו מחי דכתיב "מגלה עמוקות מני חשך" (איוב יב' כב'). ***רבי יוסי אומר אי מחשך סתם אתגליין הא חזינן דטמירין אינון כל אינון כתרין עילאין וקרינן מגלה עמוקות*** רבי יוסי אומר אם תאמר מחשך סתום מתגלים העמוקות הרי אנו רואים שכל אלו כתרים עליונים נסתרים ולכן נקראים עמוקות, ***מהו מגלה אלא כל אינון טמירין עילאין לא אתגליין אלא מגו ההוא חשך דאיהו ברזא דליליא.*** אם כן מחו מגלה (עמוקות), אלא כל אלו נסתרות עליונים שאינם מתגלים, אלא רק מתוך אותו החשך שהוא בסוד הלילה, ***ויהא כולא חד בסוד והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה במדרגה א' ועד יומא דייתי הוא גניז וטמיר.*** וזה כולו אחד בסוד "והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה" (ישעיה לי' כו') בבחינה שווה ועד היום שיבוא הוא גנוז ונעלם. נאמר כי עד האלף השביעי הנקרא יום בסוד ימי בראשית כי כל אחת נקראת יום אותו אור הרמוז במדת יעקב היה גנוז וטמיר כי כנסת ישראל היא ב"ת וזוג לשבת. והבן זה הסוד מקדוש היום שהנשים חייבות בו ונקרא קדושא רב"א והוא לשון קידושין והבן בסוד עונתן של תלמידי חכמים מערב שבת לערב שבת:

גם בסוד קדו"ש החד"ש כי אז תתחדש עטרת בתפאר"ת וסוד המולד לשון לידה והמשכיל יבין כי הכל טעם אחד והסוד הנמרץ **אלכ"ה ואשובה אל אישי הראשון כי טוב לי אז מעתה** (הושע ב' ט') בסוד **ויתעצב אל לבו** והבן מלת אלכה ומלת אשובה בסוד דור שכבר בא כי אף כי בתחלה עלה במחשבה להבראות שנים לבסוף לא נברא אלא אחד והבן ונהורה שרי ביה מפסוק **כי שמי בקרבו** כי אף בזמן הזה שהאור הפנימי גנוז יש כח בצדיק התחתון להעיר

Figure 1.16: Recanati's Commentary to the Torah, with Hebrew translation

ויברכנו, ונמצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם. ואני הנני מביא בברית נאמנת, והיא הנותנת עצה הוגנת לכל מסתכל בספר הזה, לבל יסבור סברה, ואל יחשוב מחשבות בדבר מכל הרמזים אשר אני כותב בסתרי התורה, כי אני מודיעו נאמנה שלא יושגו דברי, ולא יודעו כלל בשום שכל ובינה, זולתי מפי מקובל חכם לאוזן מקבל מבין, והסברא בהן איולת, מחשבה מועלת, רבת הנזקין מנועת התועלת, אל יאמן בשוא נתעה, כי לא תבואהו בסברותיו רק רעה, כי ידברו אל ה' סרה, אשר לא יוכלו כפרה, שנאמר: אדם תועה מדרך השכל בקהל רפאים ינוח, אל יהרסו אל ה' לראות, כי ה' אלהינו אש אוכלה הוא אל קנאות, והוא יראה את רצוייו מתורתו נפלאות. אבל יחזו בפירושינו חדושים בפשטים ובמדרשים, ויקחו מוסר מפי רבותינו הקדושים. בגדול ממך אל תדרוש, בחזק ממך אל תחקור, במופלא ממך בל תדע, במכוסה ממך אל תשאל, במה שהורשית התבונן, אין לך עסק בנסתרות.

טוב ירושלם

בסיום הקדמתו מזהיר רבינו את הקורא לבל יצפה להבין את סתרי התורה שבפירושו ע"י שכלו וסברותיו, ומבטיח לו שלא יבין אותם אלא אם ילמד אותם מפי רב מקובל מובהק.

והנני מביא בברית נאמנה. ונותן עצה הוגנת, לכל המסתכל בספר זה. שלא יהגה סברות, ושלא יחשוב מחשבות באף דבר מכל הרמזים שאני כותב בסתרי תורה, כי הנני מודיעו נאמנה שאי אפשר להשיג את דברי ואי אפשר לדעת אותם ע"י אף שכל ובינה, אלא רק מפי מקובל וחכם לאוזן מקבל מבין. ולומר בהם סברא היא איולת, המחשבה בזה לא תצלח ותביא נזק רב, ואין בה תועלת, ואל יאמינו בשוא משובש, כי לא ישיגו ע"י סברותיהם רק רעה, כי ידברו על ה' סרה, אשר לא יוכלו להשיג עבורה כפרה, כמו שנאמר (משלי כא טז): אדם תועה מדרך השכל בקהל רפאים ינוח*. אל יהרסו אל ה' לראות, כי ה' אלהינו אש אוכלה הוא אל קנאות, והוא יראה לאלה הרצויים לו מתורתו נפלאות. — אלא יקראו המסתכלים בפירושינו זה חידושים בפשטים ובמדרשים, ויקחו מוסר מפי רבותינו הקדושים.

בגדול ממך אל תדרוש, בחזק ממך אל תחקור, במופלא ממך בל תדע, במכוסה ממך אל תשאל, במה שהורשית התבונן, ואין לך עסק בנסתרות*.

פני ירושלם

בקהל רפאים ינוח, מי שהתחכם בצורה משובשת תמוה נפשו מיתה נצחית. (מאירי)

בנסתרות. סיום זה של הקדמת רבינו הוא מב"ר (ח ב).

Figure 1.17: Nahmanides' Commentary to the Torah, with the Simple Commentary Ṭov Yerushalayim, Jerusalem 1985

תפלת שחרית

ואח"כ כורך שבע כריכות על הזרוע ותיכף אחר הכריכות יקח של ראש ויניח על הראש וקורם ההידוק מברך

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוַת תְּפִלִּין:

ומיד יהדק את הרצועה ויאמר:

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

זהר

כ"ד י"ז) פארך חבש עליך. ותלת כריכין דרצועה, לקבל ג' קדושות, דאינון קדוש קדוש קדוש. קדושה לך ישלשו. (ח"ג ר"ל ע"ב)

יו"ד דא, אצטריך דלא יתעדי כלל מגו תפלה דיד, דלא יעביר פרודא.

(ח"ג רל"ו ע"ב)

וקשרתם לאות על ידכה. הא אוקמוה, על יד כהה, דא הוא שמאלא. ובספרא דאגדתא אמר, על יד כ"ה, כד"א (בראשית ט"ו ה) כה יהיה זרעך.

(ח"ג רס"ט ע"א)

קשורא דתפלה דיד, דומיא דעקדה דיצחק. (ח"ג רפ"ב ע"ב)

מאן דשח בינתיים עבידה הוא בידו.

(ת"ז מז"ח קנ"ח ע"ב)

בצלם אלהים, תפילין דיד דא שכינתא תתאה, דאיהי קשירא ליה, ועלה אתמר (בראשית מ"ד ל) ונפשו קשורה בנפשו. תרוייהו ביחודא חדא, בקשורא חדא. רצועה כריכא באצבעא שמאלא, דא קדושין דילה, דאיהי טבעת, כריכא באצבעא דילה, ובה איהי קשירא עמיה, ואיהי עמה. הא קדושה. (ת"ז ת' מ"ז פ"ד)

ביאור

של הרצועה (על האצבע), כנגד ג' קדושות, שהם קדוש קדוש קדוש. קדושה לך ישלשו. (ח"ג ר"ל ע"ב)

יו"ד זו, צריכה שלא תסור כלל מן התפילין של יד, שלא יעשה פירוד. (ח"ג רל"ו ע"ב)

וקשרתם לאות על ידכה. הרי העמידו, על יד כהה, זו היא שמאל. ובספר דאגדה אמר, על יד כ"ה, כשנ"א כה יהיה זרעך.

(ח"ג רס"ט ע"א)

הקשר של תפילין של יד, דומה לעקדת יצחק. (ח"ג רפ"ב ע"ב)

מי ששח בינתים (בין תפלין של יד לשל ראש) עבירה היא ביחוד"ז מדח קנ"ח ע"ב)

בצלם אלהים, תפילין של יד זה שכינה התחתונה, שהיא קשורה בו. וע"ז נאמר ונפשו קשורה בנפשו. שניהם ביחוד אחד, בקשר אחד. רצועה כרוכה באצבע שמאל, זה קדושין שלה, שהיא טבעת, כרוכה באצבע שלו. ובה היא קשורה עמו, והרא עמה. קדושה זו. (ת"ז ת' מ"ז פ"ד ע"א)

תפילין של ראש

כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך (דברים כ"ח י"), אלין תפילין דרישא, דאינון שמא קדישא בסדורא דאתוי.

(ח"א י"ג ע"ב)

כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך, אלו תפילין של ראש שהם שם הקדוש, בסדר האותיות. (ח"א י"ג ע"ב)

Figure 1.18: Siddur 'im Perush ha-Zohar

הראב"ד ז"ל **ספר יצירה פ"א מ"א** הרמב"ן ז"ל יג 25

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה. לריך לתמה לדעת עכל מה שברלא הקב"ה בעולמו כעבדו ברלא בחלה בעלמה לחדם בלעמו וכל זה כדי שיתבונן מתוך הנגלה לת סתרי החכמה, שלאמר ואחר עורי מקפו זאת ומבשרי אחזה אלוה, פירוש שאיכריס אחר נסללו אחר שרי ומחקקו אלה ר"ל הסטרדה עד שכל הרמיס וכללים מחקקו בחלה, ולכן ומבשרי אחזה אלוה. וכבר ביאלתו לעיל שהיו"ד היא גולם בלי לולה והיא הסחכמה, גל"ס

משנה א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה חקק יה יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים חיים ומלך עולם אל שדי רחום וחנון רם ונשא שוכן עד מרום וקדוש שמו וברא את עולמו בשלשה ספרים בספר וספר וסיפור:

בגימטריא חכמה. ולכך כשם שהחכמה שלשים היא רלתיה כל הסלשים ואחריה הכל והעלמה הכל ואי אפשר שיגלה בלעדיה דבר מן הדברים, כן היו"ד היא רלתיה כל הלותיות ואחריתן והעלמה בכן ולא"ל לשלמה בלעדיה אתה מעלותיה הקרתם, ודמיונה בחלה הרלתם שאמר דמות הכמלה לחדם עליו הלעמלה. וכשם שהגולם היא מקבל כל מיני מלות כך היו"ד הגולם שהמות מקבל כל מיני הקיקות, וכשם שהגולם רלתיה קבוע שם ד' מקומות לד' לוכיות כן היו"ד היא קבוע ד' מקומות כנגד ד' לוכיות, וכשם שהגולם היה מקיף ע מחוץ לרקיע כמין הקרנו שהרלת כן היו"ד היה מקיף לו שמלה דקה לשמאל והיא לבוע והמשל לכל הסמלאים, וכן בחדם מקיף לד' לוכיות לאבר בשתיה בד' חדרי מרכבתו שמלה דקה לשמאל וכשם שהיא סבוה, חכו הרי שי הקדמיה יש לשתה שברלתם, הסלוין שבשם דבוק לשלם

ר' אליעזר מגרמישא ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות וכו' פליאות. מהסמה מ"ש (ירמיה ל"ב) אתה עשית וגו' לא יעלה מחך כל דבר: חכמה. ס' בחכמה יסד ארץ. מי יספר שחקים בחכמה: יהוה. אי' ס"ש הי"ה יהי"ה; יה. כי ביה כ' אר עולמים. ומתריע בחכמה בשלשים דמרכבה בשלו שם לוכיות ברא שקבלים שמים ולכן וקלין שלמים כמגן עולמי"ם. כשהוא ברא היו"ד והעולה"ן בס"ש: אלוה ישראל. ולכלו לא שברלו ישראל אלא מתבונן על ישראל קדמה לכל שאתאר ברלתים

פירוש מיוחס לרביני סעדיה גאון ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות וכו'. פי' יו"ד שמיוחס ול"ב אותיות ולקבן הנכנס בכל יום ויום ומבן אמצע מעולם עומדים בכל יום וקדם אם שמתמיד שלין כל לבשמיו יכולין לבלותו רק בחוה אלו בלעבר בכרוב המיומד שברא לאמר לבוים אם מהלל, ישראל בר הוא על אמו ישראל

פירוש מבעל אוצר ה'

(הגמן א') . בשלשים ושתים, כבר נרמז בספר מקדוקים ולאמר מרמנו בזה בפ' לאותיה בל בראשיה, בל' בלתשיה, כי בל' אמצע לאותלמה סבלי אמר בו ישבר מאמרים כמו אמרן לו לאברהם. ומאמר בפקים עם, בן גרשם מגנה, אמי' אמר. ומסה בל' בשלשים יומה כי ג' מפרדיסים לאמר בלבר כמו"ש: בחיבות. אמיר אמרדגיסים. נאיר לא ידשו מיה לשון זכר. ולשון נקבה דרך הפיסה לא פוה. אמ"ש לנקבה ואיתה פשיק. בנמים

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה. מהרמב"ן ז"ל בספר הזה וכולל שרוב הלשים שבכרוב בשקשות בהיון שלמתיה בעמין שלמתיה בכרוכה. ובכה הלא"ם אמר בו בכנד חכמי דורו מסיו שלקים על מבין שלותיה בלאמר בחכמה בשריה ולא בספר. אמרא אמר בפיטוטים ע"ל בספר בלשון. שבחי בכרוביה סיו מלקים על אלא"ם בלאמרו. ואבחי בכרוביה סיו מלקים לי' בשם, בה ולאמרה חוסרה שיה לשלם שמי מהוה קדושה ולל אמר שבלה אשר שלחרה. אחה נורמה בריה ולאמר נורמה בבבבר. שמשבל בבה לא יבול שבל מוב. וכן אמרו שבשה בוחה ברבה בלאמרו לאו כי ראה עד מרבה, הוא לאחר בבה בוה שלאמרבה ובלאמה ס' מלא שבל רע. ובקרבה בניה היה בבבים שבשבל ברע לא יבא שבל מוב ל"ל ואם בבה אלאמרה בבני אלוהות. בבה בשבה לאבדה בים שלא שלא קדושה בבי אבלה בבי בבוים בבה שבלי אמליות, ולבך ולא בבה אבקה הדין מ' שבה קדושה. בבה הבלשים לאבדה

בשמה

Figure 1.19: Sefer Yesira, Warsaw 1884

29 הראב"ד ז"ל ספר יצירה פ"א מ"א הרמב"ן ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה. צריך אתה לדעת שכל מה שברא הקב"ה בעולמו כנגדו ברא באדם שנאמר נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וכל זה כדי שיתבונן מתוך הנגלה את סתרי החכמה, שנאמר ואחר עורי נקפו זאת ומבשרי אחזה אלוה, פירוש האיברים אשר נסדרו אחר עודי ונחקקו זאת ד"ל העסרה עד שכל פרטיה וכלליה נחקקו באדם, ולכן מבשרי אחזה אלוה. וכבר ביארנו לעיל שהיו"ד היא גולם בלי צורה והיא החכמה, גל"ם כגימטריא חכמה. ולכך כשם שהחכמה העליונה היא ראשית כל הנמצאים ואחרית הכל והיא בכל ונעלמת מכל ואי אפשר שימצא בלעדיה דבר מן הדברים, כן היו"ד היא ראשית כל האותיות ואחריתן ונעלמת בהן וא"א להמצא בלעדיה אות מאותיות הקודש, ודמיונה באדם הראש שנאמר דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה. וכשם שהגולם הוא מקבל כל מיני צורות כך היו"ד הגולם האטום מקבל כל מיני חקיקות, וכשם שהגולם ראשית קבולו הם ד' מקומות לד' איכיות כן היו"ד הזה קבלה ד' מקומות כנגד ד' איכיות, וכשם שהגולם הזה מקיף לו מחוץ לרקיע כעין הקרח הגודא כן היו"ד הזה מקיף לו שמלה דקה למאד והוא לבוש וחשמל

משנה א' בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה חקק יה יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים חיים ומלך עולם אל שדי רחום וחנון רם ונשא שוכן עד מרום וקדוש שמו וברא את עולמו בשלשה ספרים בספר וספר ספור:

מ"א בשלשים ושתים וכו'. פירוש בב' רמז אין סוף, כי בכח א"ס מציאות רום מעלה שממנה אצילות החכמה ומן החכמה ל"ב נתיבות נעלמות. ולפי שהן נמשכות בחכמה מרום מעלה מא"ס נקראים פליאות מלשון כי יפלא, דמתרגמינן ארי יתכסי. ולפי שיש הפרש בין נתיב לנתיב, נקראים כמו כן פלאות שהוא מלשון כי יפליא לנדור, שהוא מלשון הפרשה. וכל נתיב ונתיב ימשוך מן החכמה עד שהוא מגיע להראות כל נתיב ונתיב בבינה, כר"א ומשך חכמה מפנינים: חקק וכר'. כח עלת העלות אין סוף שממנו הכתר העליון רום מעלה והחכמה, חקק והמציא כח סבה שנקראת יו"ד ה"א שהוא בכח הויות, ומכח בינה המציא כל הבנין שהוא

ר' אליעזר מגרמיזא ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות וכו' פליאות. מכוסות כד"א וירמיה ל"ב אתה עשית וגו' לא יפלא ממך כל דבר: חכמה. ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ. מי יספר שחקים בחכמה: יהוה. פי' הי"ה הו"ה יהי"ה: יה. כי ביה ה' צור עולמים. ואמרינן במעשה בראשית דמרכבה באלו שש אותיות ברא הקב"ה שמים וארץ וקצ"ו עולמים כמנין עולמי"ם. העוה"ב ברא ביו"ד והעוה"ז בה"א: אלהי ישראל. והלא לא נכראו ישראל אלא מחשבתן של ישראל קדמה

פירוש מיוחס לרבינו סעדיה גאון ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים וכו'. פי' יו"ד ספירות וכ"ב אותיות ולקמן מפרש להו כי"ד ספירות בפרק זה: חקק י"ה וה' צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים חיים וכו'. פר"ס השמות האלה י"ה יהו"ה צ' ב"ה יהו"ה בשוי שמות אלו ברא ב' שלמות שנאמר כי ביה"ה ה' צור עולמים כמו שמות אלו ברא ב' שלמות שנאמר כי ביה"ה ה' צור עולמים. ואמרינן במעשה בראשית דמרכבה באלו שש אותיות ברא הקב"ה שמים וארץ וקצ"ו עולמים כמנין עולמי"ם. העוה"ב ברא ביו"ד והעוה"ז בה"א: אלהי ישראל. והלא לא נכראו ישראל אלא מחשבתן של ישראל קדמה

פירוש הר"ר משה בוסריל ז"ל

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה. אברהם אע"ה כתב הספר הזה והוא מורה האנשים הבטוחים בהשקפות העיון האמתי בענין האמונה הברורה. והנה אאע"ה עשה זה כנגד חכמי הדור שהיו חולקים על ענין האחדות כאשר כתב רבינו סעדיה רל בספר הנקרא אבן הפילוסופים ורל בשער ראשון. חכמי הבשדיים היו חולקים על אאע"ה באמונתו. וחכמי הכשדיים היו נחלקים לג' כתות. כת ראשונה אומרת שיש לעולם שתי סבות קדמות וכל אחת פועלת הפך האחרת. אחת גורמת הויה ואחת גורמת ההפסד. שמפעל הרע לא יבוא פועל טוב. וכן אמרו שהיחוה כתנת פרעה באמרו ראו כי רעה נגד פניכם. רוצה לומר הנה הוא שאמרתם וקראתם ה' הוא פועל רע. והקדמה בעיה היא מכת המשנים שמפעל הרע לא יבא פועל טוב א"כ זאת הכת מאמינה בשני אלהות. הכת השניה אומרת

[ספר יצירה] ד 4

פירוש מבעל אוצר ה'

מ"א בשלשים ושתים נתיבות פליאות חכמה. כבר נודע בשער הדקדוקים ואנחנו הרחבנו בזה בפי' לתורה בפ' בראשית, הב' בראשית, כי הב' תשמש להוראת הכלי אשר בו יעשה הפעולים כמו באבן או באגרוף. ותשמש במקום עם, בך

Figure 1.20: Sefer Yesira, Jerusalem 2004

Chapter 2

The Interpolation of Marginal Glosses
'The Shekhinah' and Theosophic Revisions of Early Manuscripts of the Book Bahir[*]

'And this is *Shekhinah*' והיא שכינה

– *The Book Bahir*, Ms. Munich 209, fol. 9b, §50

And the reason that it [an *etrog* (citron) fruit, as a scion that was grafted onto another tree] is not permitted is that when grafted it is not called an *etrog* and it should not be permitted. Only that which is [rightfully] called an *etrog* [is permitted], and no other species. And the matter is not dependent upon its appearance, because since it is grafted, it is not called an *etrog* even though it has the appearance of an *etrog*.

– *Sefer Ḥemdat Yamim, Ḥag ha-Sukkot*, end of chapter 2

Much of modern scholarship has accepted, rather dogmatically, the claim attributed to Scholem, that the Kabbalah began with the composition of the *Book Bahir*, based on the decidedly 'new' idea of the feminized *Shekhinah*. So deeply rooted is this assumption that recent studies have sought new reasons to explain why these first kabbalists decided to write a book about the feminine divinity and thereby launch a new key for understanding medieval Jewish esotericism. The following chapter will attempt a sober assessment of the use of the term *Shekhinah* in the *Book Bahir*, distinguishing the literary images attributed to it from other feminized and sexualized expressions of the divine in this work. Against the background of modern scholarship, which has

[*] An earlier version of this chapter appeared as 'The Condensation of the Symbol "*Shekhinah*" in the Manuscripts of the *Book Bahir*', in *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 7-82.

stereotyped the *Book Bahir* as the literary emblem of the feminized divinity that essentially, characterizes Kabbalah, the three text-blocks which contain the term *Shekhinah* will be presented and interpreted. The study will additionally chart some of the major reactions and interpretive assessments to the *Book Bahir* from medieval times and modern scholarship in order to demonstrate how certain communities of readers offered strong readings of the *Book Bahir* in light of their own assumptions.

According to most scholars, the term *Shekhinah* (often translated as the Divine 'Presence') was coined in early rabbinic literature to refer to the manifest presence of the divine, replacing, for whatever reason(s), the biblical term *Kavod* (Glory).[1] And although grammatically the noun is feminine, the kabbalists are credited with transforming this aspect of an undifferentiated divine ontology into a personified and feminized attribute within a complex and dynamic godhead, the ten ontic grades of the kabbalistic theosophy.

The term *Shekhinah* became a relatively common name for the tenth *sefirah*, presumably for its interpretive power in layering the theosophic meaning back onto the kabbalistic reading of rabbinic sources. Nevertheless, the kabbalists of the classical period of kabbalistic literature, from the beginning of the thirteenth century through the Expulsion from Spain, by far preferred the terms *Malkhut* (Kingdom) and *'Aṭarah* (Crown). The move amongst modern scholars to prefer, almost exclusively, the term *Shekhinah* is based, I believe, in an attempt to present kabbalistic thought as the correlate to goddess theologies of various religious traditions and in its central role and motivation in the New Age interest in Jewish mysticism.[2]

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[1] See the detailed study of Arnold Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Schekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, Berlin 1969. The more often-cited conceptualization and interpretation of *Shekhinah* in rabbinic literature is Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem 1969 [Hebrew]; English translation: *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams, Cambridge, Mass. 1979/1987, pp. 37-65. Urbach's study is widely considered authoritative on characterizing the rabbinic idea of the *Shekhinah* over against the later philosophical and kabbalistic traditions. According to Urbach, *Shekhinah* is neither feminine nor hypostatic in rabbinic literature. His conclusions are repeated in various forms in many studies, some of which are cited below.

[2] Mention should be made here of Raphael Patai's thesis in his magisterial survey of feminine images of the divine, *The Hebrew Goddess*, second, enlarged edition, Detroit 1990 (first published in 1967). Patai attempted to show the pre-biblical and biblical

On its own terms, the *Book Bahir* does not present a goddess theology, or for that matter any theology, understood as a systematic integration of interpretations to earlier texts and traditions. The *Book Bahir* does offer a distinct family of traditions which mark the inception of kabbalistic thought and literature, through disparate, midrashic interpretations to Scripture and enigmatic parables that often describe the sexualized relationship between masculine and feminine grades of the divine being. To the modern reader who benefits from a historical perspective, the *Book Bahir* may seem to anticipate the rich body of kabbalistic literature that defends against the heresy of multiplicity through ontic separation.

On the question of the divine feminine, various traditions in the *Book Bahir* express the femininity of the lowest grade of the theosophy through her sexual union with the divine male above her. This idea is central to many of the traditions which constitute the *Book Bahir* in the sense that its traditions do not intend to, and indeed reject, the isolation of the feminine hypostasis outside of its union with the male, as part of the overall theosophic structure. So while the *Book Bahir* most decidedly does not lend itself to modern expectations, whether explicit or veiled, of authenticating the medieval, rabbinic and kabbalistic legitimacy of a goddess theology, which would be most welcome in numerous traditional and cultural circles today, it nevertheless works from within a highly developed construct of divine femininity.[3]

The various feminine images of the divine contained in this text were not identified as '*the*' *Shekhinah*, neither by this name nor by any intention to

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sources for the feminine aspect and counterpart to the divine, tracing its early history and strong re-emergence amongst the medieval kabbalists. While cited by some scholars of kabbalistic literature, his thesis has all but been ignored.

[3] Compare this connection to the following related studies: Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, 'Witches of the West and Goddess Worship as Enlightenment Religions', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989), pp. 77-95; Jane Roberts, 'Is There a Future for the Goddess? Obstacles to the Evolution of Goddess Spirituality in the New Age', *Religion Today* 6 (1991), pp. 8-13; Juliette Wood, 'The Concept of the Goddess', *The Concept of the Goddess*, ed. S. Billington and M. Green, New York and London 1996, pp. 8-25; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, New York, Köln 1996, pp. 88-89, 154-157, 188-189; *The Concept of the Goddess*, ed. Sandra Billington and Miranda Green, London and New York 1999; Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion*, New York and London 2003, esp. pp. 157-160.

consolidate these images as referents within the ontic grade of the last *sefirah* which possesses a particular character. Consistency of meaning through the *Book Bahir* is difficult to expect or even to claim due to the nature of the text's composition and redaction. Its identity as the *'Book Bahir'* is relatively late, its name devised after its 'publication', and constructed from the first biblical verse interpreted in the text. Evidence of such is provided by the many names given to this text (*Sefer ha-Bahir, Yerushalmi, Midrash of R. Neḥuniah ben ha-Qanah*) and by the fact that the earliest manuscripts lack any heading or title. Modern scholarship has nevertheless welcomed the title '*Sefer ha-Bahir*' to identify the text as a book, and hence commonly uses the compound term of the '*"Book" Bahir*' in the modern sense of a fixed text that contains an intended literary structure, the creative product of the intellectual world and personality of its 'author'.[4] The *Bahir* as a collection of midrashic traditions was written and edited as a midrash, intentionally participating in the rabbinic literary conventions and is thus a fine example of the genre in the Middle Ages, despite any scholarly attempts to dismiss it as such due the content of its ideas, its late date, or pseudepigraphic character.[5] Even if the *Bahir* was conceived as a 'book' in the comments or consciousness of some kabbalists, *de facto* it was not treated and preserved as a book in this modern sense of the term and concept. Moreover, it is all too convenient for scholarship to inadvertently slip from acknowledging the redactional identity of the anthology of textual traditions that was preserved in manuscripts to speaking about the 'work' or 'book' that yields specific doctrines intended by a collective but congruous voice across its various parts and editorial layers of revision. Inasmuch as this chapter seeks to destabilize the common assumptions concerning the literary identification of the *Bahir* as a book, it will freely alternate between the titles *Book Bahir* and

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4 See Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', *Textual Strategies, Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. Harari, London 1979, pp. 141-160; Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image/Music/Text*, edited and translated by Stephen Heath, New York 1968 (reprinted 1977), pp. 142-148.

5 Note the inclusion of the *Bahir* in David Stern's *Parables: Narrative and Exegesis in rabbinic literature*, Cambridge, Mass. 1991 and its total absence in *Darkei ha-Midrash ve-he-Aggada*, Givataiim 1991, two volumes. Similarly, see the related monograph which includes discussions of parables throughout the history of Jewish literature including Kabbalah and Hasidism without mention of the *Bahir*: Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, translated from the Hebrew by Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1999.

Bahir in referring to the textual anthology that was transmitted according to this identity in numerous manuscripts.

The methodological complexity not only reaches backward into its early redactional history, but forward through the dissemination of complete manuscripts and through its later transmission history when changes and marginal glosses were interpolated into the text. In other words, the meaning of the traditions must be considered within the *continuum* of the modifications made throughout the extensive process of the text's composition, redaction and transmission. Although the fluidity of the text decreased over time, its later metamorphoses, through small additions and deletions, narrowed the possible range of meanings that could be derived from its language so that it would better accord with the crystallizing theosophic lexicon of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This inquiry will therefore revisit the questions of composition, symbolism and gender in this foundational text of Kabbalah, namely, from an understanding that the later codification of kabbalistic symbols had yet to take place.

To state my conclusions at the outset, the *Bahir* has been grossly misinterpreted by errors based on a lack of knowledge or the proper use of the manuscript witnesses, an idealistic conception of the *work* of the *Bahir*, a synchronic view of the gradual development of kabbalistic symbolism, and finally, a basic misunderstanding of gender as a category for assessing the intended and received meanings of the masculine and feminine as employed in this collection of traditions. As will be shown, not only is 'the' *Shekhinah* not the pivotal image of divine femininity in the *Bahir*, but the traditions collected in this text *were not generated from* a construction of femininity, but rather from a description of the sexual union that occurs within the divine theosophy. Amidst a misplaced enthusiasm by modern scholarship to locate the feminine in this early kabbalistic text, and thereby also to identify the feminist key which gendered the tenth grade as feminine, the term *Shekhinah* was overread as the central name and concept of the feminine grade above, and was seen to have been feminized by the kabbalists. Instead, in the case of the *Bahir*, it is more appropriate to speak of the sexualization of the divine hypostases as male and female, *Shekhinah* being one of the many images that received a feminine valence in the mythic depiction of her coupling with her masculine mate above.

This case study will serve, therefore, as an important, even if limited, methodological exercise in reading a text on its own terms, divorced from the particular trajectory of meanings, and the resulting symbolic order that was consolidated and canonized in the kabbalistic schools of the following

generations. Needless to say, the implementation of this methodology comes very late in the history of Kabbalah scholarship, where scholars world-wide have analyzed texts within particular historical and literary contexts. Put simply, 'the Kabbalah' as a synchronic order of symbols and ideas *does not exist* in the serious study of medieval Jewish mysticism,[6] certainly amongst methodologically attuned academics, and (even) amongst many kabbalistic adepts and practitioners, from the Middle Ages until today.

This phenomenon marks a curious turn in Kabbalah scholarship, which began, certainly in the works of Gershom Scholem,[7] as a concerted effort of legitimizing the academic study of a religious body of literature through the tools of philosophy and history. *The present study emerges out of a certain critical embarrassment, whereby scholarship has become more invested in a particular religious meaning of kabbalistic symbols than the kabbalistic authors who produced the texts under discussion.* Undoubtedly, the medieval kabbalists believed in the divine reality of the theosophic order they described in their works. Nevertheless, from a very early stage, they wrote out of a self-awareness and sensitivity that other texts and schools differed in their interpretations, symbolism, and often, authority. While noting their own internal differences, they also understood the degree to which they participated in a collective discussion using a common technical language. And while one cannot compare the historical perspective of a academic today to that of a medieval kabbalist, we can nevertheless point to the concerted and possibly self-aware efforts of medieval kabbalists to integrate the works and symbols of previous generations of kabbalists into their writings.

A sub-category of this phenomenon is the later adaptation or inclusion of additional rabbinic terms and language into the rubric of theosophic symbolism. Even with the question of self-awareness and rhetoric aside, on the whole, while the kabbalists may have been reading their system *out of* rabbinic texts, there are certainly instances where the kabbalists were reading their ideas and symbols *into* these same sources. At times, a fine line exists between distinguishing the forcing of such a correspondence and the layering of a mythic enhancement onto the text, in effect amplifying the suggestion of the earlier source. The same relationship may be argued between earlier and later kabbalistic sources, between continuity, the gradual development of symbolism

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[6] See the similar comment by Gershom Scholem, 'Kabbalah and Myth', *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, translated by R. Manheim, New York 1960, p. 89.

[7] Daniel Abrams, 'Defining Modern Academic Scholarship'.

and the conscious effort to present an inner consistency of symbolism by codifying symbols in encyclopedic reworkings of canonical texts.

Similar historical and interpretative questions can be asked about the growing, but intermittent, attention of the kabbalists to the sexuality of the divine. In this chapter, I will have to consider the appropriateness of methodologies about gender and the function and awareness of such thinking in the *Bahir*, separate from what the modern reader can achieve from reading these medieval texts with contemporary interests and thought patterns in mind. My point is not to privilege one over the other. Medieval texts contain keys and guidelines which direct and limit the reader to sound or valid readings that can be extracted from the text by the academic reader. This is not to say that a consensus amongst scholars can be expected, nor am I suggesting a modernist view that the text contains a specific meaning or plainly presents the author's or text's intention to the reader. Moreover, leaning to a more post-modern sensibility, I appreciate that the meanings and interpretations that today's readers extract from their interaction with the text, employ concepts and language that were not formulated (as such) by the medieval authors and their reading audiences. However, between these poles it may be possible to identify a high degree of correspondence between a sensitivity to a particular subject within a text and the modern scholar's discussion about that same topic.

In the present inquiry, I will ask whether the *Bahir* identifies or uses the category of femininity in presenting such images. Put more simply, is the divine feminine an artificial construct, provided by the present-day scholar to address current themes, or is such a category operative in the *Bahir* in its medieval setting? The degree of correspondence between the medieval sources and the modern discourse that interprets and frames the ideas that emerge from an interaction between the scholar and the text, can also be considered in this light, on the question of gender in the *Bahir*, and indeed in all later kabbalistic sources. Here, we must ask whether the text must be aware of the construct it offers in order to claim that it is not just the invention or impression of the modern reader. Certainly, if the *Bahir* were to discuss femininity (*niqbbiyut*) and place feminine images under such a discussion, as do later kabbalistic authors (such as Cordovero, to name one of the most prominent codifiers of kabbalistic symbolism), the matter would be readily clear even to the skeptic. But the text's awareness of itself, and to the moves it makes conceptually need not be flagged in blatant terms in order to demonstrate that the work aims at achieving the new concept and the influence that it did have on later works of the kabbalistic tradition. A lesser claim would be that the author(s) and text

have inadvertently crossed into new territory, associations and interpretations that produced a critical mass of innovations that can only be appreciated in retrospect by the historian of ideas.

Considering gender along these same concerns is a more difficult task. Gender has become a sophisticated, critical tool in scholarship that can and should be used in adducing meaning from kabbalistic texts replete with language and symbolism that calls out for a careful interpretation of the sources that employ these hermeneutics. As an understatement, some of my colleagues are not convinced, expressing their opposition either openly or through a noticeable silence on such matters in print. Many scholars thus dismiss gender as an inappropriate tool for engaging theosophic texts, pointing either to the conclusions of particular studies with which they disagree, or find gender as a whole distasteful in light of what they think *should* be read out of the sources, thereby dismissing the enterprise entirely. What continues to astound me, however, is the dismissal of gender as a passing fashion of Jewish studies, when nearly every line of most major kabbalistic texts are replete with explicit discussions of masculine and feminine imagery. Accordingly, major monographs are published without any mention of this character of theosophic literature, leaving the impression amongst countless readers (including scholars of Jewish history, Jewish thought, etc), who rely solely on secondary literature in their appreciation of kabbalistic literature, that the sexual imagery and tools of gender studies are the ephemeral preference of a handful of scholars who wish to interpret the sources toward a predetermined end. I am confident that in time, the intensity of emotion surrounding these issues will subside and the appropriateness of these tools in reading kabbalistic sources (in good measure) will be accepted. My question here, however, is the degree of distance between modern discourse and the language of the sources.

To understand the specific nature and use of gender in Kabbalah scholarship requires us to distinguish gender from feminism. For my purposes here, gender relates to the appreciation of how the masculine and feminine character of the divine interact in the dynamic theosophy above, and further, how the kabbalist interacts with these grades from a similarly typed position. *That is, for Kabbalah scholarship, gender is the skill of how to read the references to the masculine and the feminine in these texts.* Feminism, by contrast, refers more generally in this discussion to the current theoretical program of interpreting texts and social constructs in order to positively recast the role and status of the feminine as an attribute of actual women, primarily in order to affect social change. Certainly, there are common goals and theoretical

sources that are common to gender and feminism. However, the appreciation of gender as a tool for the better understanding of a kabbalistic texts does not *necessarily* involve attention to social history or a program for social change, even if this may be a (desired) by-product of such studies. Gender is important, at the very least, for interpreting kabbalistic works in their textual context, specifically the sexualized language and imagery used in countless theosophic texts to describe the *sefirot* and their relation to the world. In short, the use of gender is the implementation of a *skill* in properly reading a kabbalistic text in the academy today.

1. *Condensation and Displacement: The Production and Use of Symbols*

I intentionally employ the Freudian term of 'condensation', appropriated from its original use in dream interpretation,[8] in order to explain the process by which the term *Shekhinah* gradually became the identifying signifier in kabbalistic texts for most all feminine imagery of the divine, unifying[9] or absorbing under this name other dependent appellatives for an aspect of being in the world Above. According to this understanding, we can speak of the transformation of *Shekhinah* into a symbol in kabbalistic texts when this image of the divine became a central and proper name that identified a specific grade of being under which other images also became known. In the special case of the kabbalists, as believers in a theosophic order that constructs divine ontology – as distinguished from academic scholars who write out of a critical distance that sets aside personal faith claims when offering historically positioned interpretations – the image and referent collapse into equivalence such that the image is a symbol, directly naming the (actual) object.[10]

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[8] Agnes Petocz, Freud, *Psychoanalysis and Symbolism*, Cambridge 1999, see esp. pp. 87, 119, 134; Joel Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language*, New York 1998/2004, pp. 11-14, 57-68.

[9] Following Freud's language that various elements of a dream are condensed into a single unity or into new unities. See for example, Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, New York 1980, p. 359; Idem, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, tr. James Stachey, New York 1965, p. 20.

[10] I am aware that in the pervasive understanding of Freudian symbolism, the symbol only represents something other than itself. Here I am using symbol in the sense that the gap that is collapsed in the religious mentality of the kabbalists, directly naming the grade of being Above. See Charles Rycroft, 'Is Freudian Symbolism a Myth', *Symbols*

While disparate and competing images of God from earlier Jewish texts nevertheless referred to the divine as well, the first kabbalistic texts pointed to a different structuring of divine ontology that is distinguished from the intended object of signification by earlier authors. Kabbalistic authors invested a new signification in their use of the same terms and created a new inter-relationship between signifiers, such that a semiological system emerged *within the text* that afforded the expression of the theosophic grades and thus an equivalence between the text and the divine order.[11]

We can therefore say that the earliest kabbalistic texts, as evidenced by some of the textual layers of the *Bahir*, mark the convergence of semiotics and epistemology, in that the adoption of the literary culture of images of the divine, inherited from earlier rabbinic traditions, was marshaled to forward a specific code signifying the reification of a stratified and sexualized godhead. *Shekhinah* became condensed as the symbol for 'the' *Shekhinah* when textual images were woven into the mythic fabric of a belief system, identifying the object of divine ontology. This was achieved as the imposition on the text of a symbolic register that was known to the later kabbalists who used it to integrate multiple sources of a growing library of theosophic texts.

Eventually, through a literary process covering the greater part of the thirteenth century, nearly all feminine images were interpreted to refer 'back' to the tenth grade of the divinity, reversing the trajectory of condensation, so that new images were then adopted, identified and created as referents for *the Shekhinah*. The production of new images and the later ascription of additional feminine images from classical Jewish texts to the identity of this divine grade known as 'the' *Shekhinah* should therefore be understood as the 'displacement' of the symbol across the ever-growing register of theosophic symbolism. It is here that we can point to the over-determination of meaning imposed upon the object of belief in such theological systems and interpretive categories, where

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and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism, ed. I. Lewis, London, New York, San Francisco 1977, pp. 129-140. See further, Petocz, *Freud, Psychoanalysis and Symbolism*, p. 208.

[11] See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, translated by A. Lavers, London 1972, pp. 111-113. Despite my different qualification of the relevant terminology of signification, I have employed myth here in its relation to semiotics as a type of speech as outlined by Barthes (Ibid., pp. 109-131). See further, Victorino Tejera, *Semiotics – From Peirce to Barthes: A Conceptual Introduction to the Study of Communication, Interpretation and Expression*, Leiden 1988, pp. 156-159.

all feminine images found in kabbalistic texts are attributed to *Shekhinah* as a living symbol and according to this literary referent.

It is appropriate to compare this hermeneutic process to that of condensation for Freud and metonymy for Lacan, as disparate images of the divine feminine were collected and focused on the term and being of the *Shekhinah*. For the adept or learned reader of this symbolic register, additional images of the feminine then could be *produced* by the kabbalistic author and interpreter, under the assumption that they are derivative of this aspect of divine Reality, and so function in the literary aspects of these psychoanalytic systems as displacement and metaphor, reversing the hermeneutic process described above. The interpretive process, therefore, moves from the production of disparate images to certain attempts to consolidate them into a system, which yields or demonstrates the existence of a religious and literary culture based on a broad-based acceptance of a particular symbolic register, and through which genres of literature could be produced. In this stage of its development, the symbol can be said to exist, in the full array of its terminology, because the main function of a symbol is to *identify* the object or meaning that is recognized within a readership. As will be discussed more fully below, I offer this definition of the symbol as the operative use of the term in scholarship about theosophic Kabbalah, and not from within a discussion of semiotics in general.

My aim, therefore, is to break down the edifice of this integrated, and at times, reductive symbolic matrix, and appreciate the literary layers in their historical contexts in which the term *Shekhinah* first appeared as a name for the tenth grade of divine being amongst the kabbalists. It will then be possible to track the stages in the reception of these *images* in this early period of kabbalistic literature and the production of new images in other kabbalistic documents. Images are thus sharply distinguished from symbols according to their localized use. Images are transformed into symbols when they are positioned within an intentionally inclusive system that describes the theosophic order. The basis of a historical and literary outline will thus be created, documenting when and where the characteristics associated with *Shekhinah* in later Kabbalah first became linked, and interlinked, with other images produced independently in the works of the first kabbalists and in the even earlier rabbinic corpus. In the following review of scholarship's understanding and use of the term symbol, my position will become clear, that the term and concepts associated with the symbol in Kabbalah scholarship are inappropriate for understanding the use of appellatives for the sefirot in theosophic texts.

2. *Myth and Symbol: Positioning the Subject*

It is commonplace in Kabbalah scholarship to speak of symbols and symbolism in describing both the mapping of the divine theosophy by the kabbalists and their linguistic order, often blurring any distinction between the ontic object that is being described and the linguistic referents that fill the pages of kabbalistic works. Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby adopted a definition of the symbol as the representation of that which cannot be expressed.[12] Divine transcendence was thus assured, lending itself to a philosophic appreciation of kabbalistic traditions. To be sure, even these scholars wrote from time to time about a continuum of being from the transcendent reality to the created world and (then to) the text which captures and re/presents these ontological layers. Nevertheless, these scholars placed the greater emphasis on the necessary divide that separates the supernal from the textual.

Scholem's insistence on a divide that separates the subjective apprehension of the mystic from the Absolute Reality on his description of the mediating function of the symbol places his scholarly program firmly within the German romantic tradition. When writing about the history of Jewish mysticism, Scholem described this gap as the *abyss* which the mystic seeks to traverse in his experience. Symbolically, theosophic literature offers a linguistic code which, according to Scholem, captures a sense of the transcendent, expressing (something of) what cannot be expressed, and pointing to the divine reality that lies beyond the purview of human experience.[13]

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[12] Isaiah Tishby, 'Symbol and Religion in Kabbalah', *Netivei 'emunah u-minut*, Ramat Gan 1964, pp. 11-22 [Hebrew]. See p. 3, where Tishby writes: 'The symbol is the representation of an unseen thing or process which, in and of itself, is never revealed and cannot be directly expressed' [my translation]. The second article in this volume, '*le-veirur netivei ha-hagshamah ve-ha-hafshaṭah ba-qabbalah*', pp. 23-29, was published in English as 'Myth versus System in Kabbalah', *Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Joseph Dan, New York, Westport and London 1989, vol. 2, pp. 121-130.

[13] Nathan Rotenstreich, 'Symbolism and Transcendence: On Some Philosophical Aspects of Gershom Scholem's Opus', *Review of Metaphysics* 31 (1977), pp. 604-614; idem, 'Symbolism and the Divine Realm', in: Gershom Scholem, *Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, vol. 2, Tel Aviv 1986, pp. 39-41 [Hebrew]; Joseph Dan, 'From the Symbol to the Symbolized: Toward an Understanding of Gershom Scholem's Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 5 (1986), pp. 363-385; Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem and Levinas*,

Scholem's analysis of *the symbol* casts kabbalistic literature as a corpus which captures and conveys theosophic knowledge. His understanding of the self-understanding of the kabbalists converges with the scholarly enterprise of describing the doctrines expressed in texts in order to chart a history of ideas. Here, however, the ideas which are conveyed through symbols are frozen in time, awaiting the modern scholar to give them a voice in the modern discourse of the academy. Even when translated across language and time, the idea and its symbol is understood as static entity.

The romantic assumptions which grounded Scholem's historical and conceptual methodology were identified by Moshe Idel in his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* as an attempt to reposition the field in order to appreciate kabbalistic symbols in terms of experience. Idel emphasized the dynamic nature of the kabbalistic theosophy, which was not intended, nor understood, by the kabbalists to contain concepts and dictate doctrines, but presented the adept with an invitation to act with theurgic practices that would affect the supernal order. Through ritual life, invested with theosophic knowledge learned from the esoteric reading of canonical texts, the kabbalist used symbols as the vehicle of his experience in connecting to and affecting the divine world.[14]

In an article on the anonymous fourteenth-century kabbalistic classic, *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, Avraham Elqayam argued that the work contained two stages in the development of the author's thought.[15] The first is marked by a Neoplatonic belief in theosophic realism (objectivism), and in the second, following a turn to Maimonidean transcendence, the author voiced a theosophic nominalism (subjectivism). For our purposes in the present discussion, Elqayam's observation is significant in that he discusses the author's

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Bloomington and Indianapolis 1991, pp. 102-115; Moshe Idel, 'The Place of the Symbol in the Thought of Gershom Scholem', *Jewish Studies* 38 (1998), pp. 43-72 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Function of Symbols in Gershom Scholem', *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought*, Philadelphia 2010, pp. 83-108.

[14] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven and London 1988, pp. 222-234; idem, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*, New Haven and London 2002, pp. 289-293.

[15] Avraham Elqayam, 'Between Referentialism and Performativism: Two Approaches in Understanding the Kabbalistic Symbol', *Da'at* 24 (1990), pp. 5-40 [Hebrew]. Compare to the earlier study by Gershom Scholem, 'Problems of the Book *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* and its Commentaries', *Qiryat Sefer* 21 (1945), pp. 284-295 [Hebrew].

assessment of the structural function of theosophic symbols (apparently understood in their appreciation as linguistic referents). Although a direct and absolute correspondence between the linguistic referent and the divine ontology is not maintained, intentionality allows for a theurgic effect of the linguistic referent on the divine theosophy.[16]

In another study, devoted to 'Definition of the Symbol' in R. Joseph Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orah* and the later reception of his formulation, Boaz Huss further explored the theurgic implications of kabbalistic views of language.[17] In an apparent polemic aimed at contemporary rationalists who devalued language as human conventions, Gikatilla argued that the confluence of terms to denote both divine and human entities was rooted in the theurgic potential of the human body to fulfill its sacred function and serve as a vessel that could draw down and contain efflux from the corresponding grade of divinity above.

These particular texts, *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* and *Sha'arei Orah*, are positioned historically within a long-running debate on the epistemological status of the *sefirot* as vessels or essences of the divinity.[18] This discussion is more than a parallel subject to the question of symbolism, but substantiates the force and potential of a term to refer directly to a grade of divine being. It is here that earlier scholarship, advanced mainly by Scholem, treated this question outside of the historical development of kabbalistic thought, seeking definitions of symbolism and language.[19]

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[16] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[17] Boaz Huss, 'R. Joseph Gikatilla's Definition of Symbolism and its Versions in Kabbalistic Literature', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 13:1 = *Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*, ed. R. Elior and J. Dan, Jerusalem 1996, pp, 157-176 [Hebrew].

[18] See the discussion and references to the relevant scholarship in Daniel Abrams, *R. Asher ben David*, pp. 25-27 [Hebrew].

[19] Scholem, 'The Name of God'; idem, 'Zehn unhistorische Sätze über Kabbala', *Geist und Werk; zum 75. Geburtstag von Dr. Daniel Brody*, Zürich 1958, pp. 209-215 (reprinted in *Judaica III: Studien zur jüdischen Mystik*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 264-71; Hebrew translation in: Scholem, *Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Tel Aviv 1986, vol. 2, pp. 32-37); David Biale, 'Gershom Scholem's Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms on Kabbalah: Text and Commentary', *Modern Judaism* 5 (1985), pp. 67-93 (reprinted in *Gershom Scholem*, ed. H. Bloom, New York 1987, pp. 99-123); Joseph Dan, 'Beyond the Kabbalistic Symbol', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 5 (1986), pp. 363-385 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'A. Abulafia G. Scholem and W. Benjamin on Language', *Jüdisches Denken in einer Welt ohne Gott: Festschrift*

As exemplified by these two central works of Spanish Kabbalah, theurgy explains a major component of the kabbalistic preoccupation with the sefirotic order, its various cognomens and correspondences to the material world and the human body. Theurgy, nevertheless, falls under the rubric of a large discussion of how the kabbalists affirmed the contiguous nature of reality, Above and Below. Once again, the scholarly pursuit for the definition of the kabbalistic symbol falls back on Scholem's assumptions that the supernal realm is inadequately expressed by the symbol, ultimately preserving the otherness and transcendence of the divine while at the same time legitimating mystical literature and life as the only sufficient window to the supra-sensible reality.

The necessary tension between these poles was re-presented by Yehuda Liebes in his study, 'Myth vs. Symbol in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah'.[20] Liebes sought to rehabilitate prior conceptions of myth as applied to the interpretation of kabbalistic sources, arguing for the recognition of mythic language that affirms the continuity between Above and Below, and noting instances where the symbol refers to the parallel correspondence between the two realms.

In his monograph, *Language, Eros, Being*, Elliot Wolfson critiqued this definition as inappropriate for the textual landscape of the *Zohar* and many theosophic texts, where technical terms such as *dugma* combine rather than set apart the ontological realms.[21] From the self-understanding of the kabbalists, mental reality is captured by the textual images recorded in their works, and these linguistic referents, as signposts of what is called up in consciousness and intention, are contiguous with divine ontology. While not stated in such theoretical terms, the kabbalists would reject any dichotomy between material and supernal reality on these grounds.

While I find Wolfson's argument compelling and faithful to the spirit and message of zoharic literature, here I would like to bring his conclusion to bear

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für Stéphane Moses, Berlin 2001, pp. 130-138; Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, New York 2003; Daniel Weidner, 'Reading Gershom Scholem', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006), pp. 203-231.

[20] Yehuda Liebes, 'Myth vs. Symbol in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah', *Myth in Judaism*, ed. H. Pedaya, Jerusalem 1996, pp. 192-209 [Hebrew]. An English translation appeared a year earlier in: *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, pp. 212-242.

[21] Ibid., pp. 36-40.

on the specific context of textual scholarship with which I am dealing in this study. My aim is to introduce the varying factor of the reader's expectations when reading the text to appreciate how a term becomes a signifier of a signified reality, whose definition changes. In these changing historical contexts of reception and textual revision, a work does not, and cannot, contain a meaning. Rather, meaning is motivated by the reader who processes the language of the text in conceptual terms that mark the place and trajectory of the terminology and belief structures at any given point in the development of kabbalistic thought and literature. Returning to the hermeneutic process of condensation and displacement, which I argue is necessary in order to understand when and how 'the' *Shekhinah*, as a concept and object of belief in the ontic mapping of the world Above, came to be among the kabbalists, one needs to first reject the assumption of a unified linguistic/symbolic order in each of the first generations of kabbalistic literary production.

Unlike structuralism and postmodernism, here meaning is not found beyond the text or in within the text (and its participation with other texts of a similar order), but in the application of a theoretical structure that forms an interface between the believing kabbalist reader and the obscure text that emerged in the first stage of kabbalistic literary production. The identification of 'the subject' as he who mentally consolidates diffuse images into a symbol that linguistically captures various beliefs and condenses them into one symbol, offers the opportunity to use the richness of a text to reflect a divine reality.[22]

Each of these authors contributed to the contextualized understanding of the kabbalistic symbol in studies devoted to major works in the Early Kabbalah. The theurgic and performative nature of the symbol was thus further elucidated, including the role of the speech-act and intentionality in these kabbalistic works' relationship to language. Some constructive criticism can nevertheless be offered at this juncture in positioning these studies within the growing body of scholarship in the field of Jewish mysticism on the nature of kabbalistic symbolism.[23]

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[22] Again, Scholem's legacy of grounding the field in a methodology of intellectual and social history has largely focused attention on *the* meaning of a text in its period and not on the changing meaning of a text throughout history by later kabbalists who understood the work in different light. On the changing role of the subject in the interpretive process see Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, New York and Oxford 1983.

[23] See further: Boaz Huss, 'NiSAN: The Wife of the Infinite; The Mystical

To be sure, the term symbol (*semel*) is not found in kabbalistic literature. Instead, as discussed in part in the studies mentioned above, we find such natural Hebrew terms as *kinnui*, *dugma*, *dimui*, *merkavah*, *kisse*, *'eivar* and *shem*, amongst others. Indeed, I would suggest reversing the dependence of the related aspects of the question, and frame the function of language as a topic in the service of kabbalistic epistemology and a phenomenology of their expressed understanding of the experience of the divine. In my estimation, language served as the legitimizing measure of the correspondence between mental life and a deeply rooted anxiety concerning mystical solipsism, meaning that the mystic was cut off from the root of his thought in the divinity, and through mental reality he could attach himself to the supernal realm. In the kabbalistic texts discussed in the relevant scholarship, the return back to the romantic discourse of symbolism obscures the discussion of the sources more than it offers a contribution to that ongoing debate. The turn of focus I am suggesting here calls for a retreat from philosophical questions inspired by German Idealism and neo-Kantian inquiries into the position of the subject in formulating an epistemologically sound assessment of the sefirotic theosophy. Instead, I propose a study of the ways the various kabbalists re-wrote the early texts about the divine theosophy, tracking their use of language as the signifiers of the divine objects brought to life in these texts.

I do not assume, therefore, that there is a (single) definition of 'the kabbalistic symbol' that needs to be uncovered by academic scholarship. Rather, I recognize that the term symbol is foreign to their lexicon and that there is a more than significant gap between the ideational construct of the symbol throughout the various orientations of modern readers and the operational function of the cognomens of divine entities in reifying the language of canonical Jewish sources by the kabbalists. I have thus appropriated the term symbol for use in this study to mark those junctures in the *development* of kabbalistic literary activity where terms were intended to collect recognized images from biblical and rabbinic texts in order to refer to a grade of Divine Being. This definition, I believe, is responsive to both modern conceptions of symbolism and the historical function of texts in the religious phenomenon known as Kabbalah.

Hermeneutics of Rabbi Isaac of Acre', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 155-181.

3. *Misplacing Clarity: An 'Open Book' Emerging from Ashkenaz (Not Provence)*

The *Book Bahir* first circulated amongst Jewish esotericists in the beginning of the thirteenth century. One of the first figures to mention the work was R. Meir ben Simeon of Narbonne, who polemicized strongly against the heresies he identified in the text. A close reading of his comments shows that he carefully distinguished between his unnamed contemporaries in Provence and the *Book Bahir*, which he stated was written for them by individuals outside of their circle. Following Scholem's claim now many decades old, many have attributed its composition, or the major redactional effort, to the kabbalists of Provence, the social circle of esotericists headed by the son of R. Abraham ben David, R. Isaac the Blind, considered to be the first known kabbalists.[24] This claim, however, is misleading as all 'proofs' offered by Scholem which place the *Book Bahir* in this Provençal circle have been shown to be the enthusiastic reading of Scholem to offer a linear argument of historical continuity between the major trends in Jewish mysticism, connecting the *Bahir* to Provence and later, to Gerona.[25] Scholem certainly was not ignorant of the evidence to the contrary, as his nuanced and layered scholarship can also be cited to support the opposite claim. But even as Scholem cited other evidence, it has become convenient in recent years to mark the appearance, publication and the (presumably) final redaction of the *Bahir* within this Provençal circle. The *Book Bahir*, nevertheless, was never cited by the Provençal circle proper (even if some of its language is recognizable in the works of R. Asher ben David). The kabbalists of Provence relied on kabbalistic sources, many presumably oral, from another geographic and ideological realm and did not take their key from this text. The *Book Bahir* was integrated into the larger symbolic and literary framework at a relatively late stage of activity by R. Ezra and R. Azriel of Gerona. To be clear, the state of scholarship today offers no positive evidence for the acceptance and use of the *Bahir* by the first kabbalists in Provence. Either they never had the work, or stronger, the *Bahir* passed through Provence and they ignored it, relying instead on their own brand of Kabbalah and its separate authority.

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[24] See especially Haviva Pedaya', 'The Provençal Stratum in the Redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990), pp. 139-164 [Hebrew] and Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 18-19 [Hebrew].

[25] On the repositioning of the *Book Bahir* in recent scholarship see my entry to the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Detroit 2007, vol. 3, pp. 62-63.

The *Book Bahir* originated in Germany, but as far as can be ascertained today, outside of the Qalonimide circle that founded German Pietism.[26] Be that as it may, two late representatives of this pieitist tradition, R. Efraim bar Shimshon and R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, each quote from non-theosophic recensions of the *Bahir*, even if only clearly the first figure clearly cited the book by this name. The second figure, R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, cited his version of the *Book Bahir* and quoted from a non-theosophic text termed *'Sod ha-Gadol'*. Here too, Scholem very enthusiastically suggested that this work was the very same work mentioned centuries earlier in Babylonia, but never quoted there, as *Raza Rabba* by the ninth-century Karaite, Daniel al-Kamusi.[27] Once again, the literary evidence of the origin(s) of the *Book Bahir* is deflected back to Ashkenaz, this time from late antiquity to medieval Ashkenaz, instead of from France to Ashkenaz. Finally, the Castilian Kabbalist, R. Isaac ha-Kohen, who traveled to Provence, speaks of the movement of the fragments of (the) *Bahir* from the 'Sages of Ashkenaz' to the esotericists of Provence 'who sought after [*radfu*] all types of written esotericism', acknowledging the disarray and multiple sources which existed in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The literary document that emerged as the received text of the kabbalists in Gerona is best represented by early manuscripts and the external evidence of the period, including citations and commentaries by the earliest kabbalists. The *Book Bahir* does not profess an originary moment, nor even a single clear manuscript tradition which would anchor textual research. The earliest dated witness is the much celebrated Munich manuscript copied in 1298, which informed Scholem's German translation (even if he 'corrected' his text according to 'better' readings from other sources). The earliest textual witnesses of the *Book Bahir* are hence dated to nearly a century after its complex early history (and pre-history) of composition and revision. Not only have the earliest layers of its transformation from an Ashkenazi to a Spanish theosophic midrash been lost, but we do not even possess the earliest full text that served the first kabbalists in Spain.

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[26] Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 8-14, 23, 27-29.

[27] See Ibid., pp. 27-29 where I showed that there is no evidence to substantiate Scholem's claim of link to the Orient. See more recently Ronit Meroz, 'A Bright Light in the East – The Babylonian Stratum in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Da'at* 49 (2002), pp. 137-180 [Hebrew]; Jordan Penkower, 'The Dating of Sections on Biblical Accentuation from *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Kabbalah* 14 (2006), pp. 329-346 [Hebrew].

In numerous studies, I have argued for a textual methodology that appreciates the life of a text through its textual history, contextualizing the many transformative differences in the version and character of a text as it moves through time and communities that copied, read, and rewrote the text to whatever degree.[28] The *Bahir* is one such text whose life can be well documented from the Early Kabbalah to the present day. This work which, with some qualification, can be considered an 'open book',[29] continues to change through the twentieth century when new textual traditions are created by synthesizing manuscript traditions to form a new text for popular consumption.

In my 1994 edition of the *Bahir*,[30] I published the Hebrew text of the earliest dated manuscript witness for the first time, offering a transcription and

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[28] After editing a synoptic edition of the first kabbalistic work composed in Castile, ('*The Book of Illumination*') I edited an historically layered presentation of all the textual sources of and about the *Book Bahir*. This was then followed by a presentation of what was arguably written (with intent) as the first book-length kabbalistic work, edited according to three surviving recensions, including various recensions to the commentaries to the Account of Creation composed in Provence: *R. Asher ben David*. The processes of composition, redaction and reception by Ashkenazi figures is more complex, as exemplified by the early pre-kabbalistic esoteric work of the *sod ha-'egoz*, and the Pietist commentary to Ezekiel's chariot, composed by R. Eleazar of Worms, each undergoing later theosophic reworkings: see Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation in Medieval Germany: A Study of the Sod ha-Egoz Texts*, Tübingen 1997; see also the volume edited by Asi Farber and myself in which the various recensions or literary attempts of R. Eleazar are presented sequentially and followed by the Castilian theosophic re-writing of the work, *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar of Worms*.

[29] Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Open Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature: The Problem of Authorized Editions', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), pp. 5-16 and reprinted in idem, *Creativity and Traditions: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature and Thought*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England 2006, pp. 194-200; Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Interferences', Ibid., pp. 33-52. See also: *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality & Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000.

[30] Abrams, *The Book Bahir*. See also the reviews by Boaz Huss, *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), pp. 333-340 [Hebrew]; Annelies Kuyt, *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 22 (1995), pp. 197-199; and Charles Mopsik, *Études Augustiniennes* 42 (1996), pp. 204-206, reprinted in *Chemins de la cabale: Vingt-cinq etudes sur la mystique juive*, Paris and Tel Aviv 2004, pp. 325-330.

facsimile of the relevant manuscript folios and presented variants from a Vatican manuscript which contained a separate recension of the *Bahir*. The volume did not, however, present this transcription and set of variants as *the* critical edition, restoring 'the original', but couched this version within a greater context of early citations and other testimonies about the text and its fluid transmission. The point that I believe was missed by many who consulted the 1994 edition is that the *Bahir* can only be appreciated seriously from within its reception history. Even Scholem, who described its complex origins, worked with an idealistic conception of the work that resided behind the various witnesses. Scholem reluctantly spoke of the author of the *Book Bahir* ('*ba'al ha-bahir*'), pointing to the text's complex history. I will cite one brief passage from Scholem's work to illustrate the expressed tension between his desire to analyze the work as a whole and his conviction that different and perhaps competing traditions were collected and redacted by different figures:

> We shall call him the author, even though I do not believe that there is an author of the *Bahir* [*eineni ma'amin she-yesh ba'al ha-Bahir*]. I think that the book is comprised of different strata, which is the product of different authors [*meḥabrim shonim*], and that its editing in Provence changed it and added something, such as the ideas of R. Abraham bar Ḥiyya. But the bulk of the book [*'iqqar ha-sefer*] displays no such signs, and its main subject matter concerns one thing: the powers of the Holy One, blessed be He, and their activities.[31]

Nevertheless, in his most important writings on the subject, Scholem functionally worked with a static impression of the received text, adopting the Munich manuscript as the closest surviving version of the published, and hence, finalized version of the work. Scholem consulted citations of the *Bahir* from other kabbalists, not in order to destabilize the text and better reflect its history, but to restore the partially corrupt text of Ms. Munich to the ideal work which was disseminated in the early thirteenth century. My strong claim is that scholarship, without exception, has ignored the textual fluidity of the transmission history, appreciating it at best as the history of the work's corruption, which can be critically used to restore the ideal text, non-existent in any one witness. The alternative approach, that I offered in 1994 sought to present the full range of textual testimonies in order to destabilize a single witness and respect the complexity of differences in text and meaning, before

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[31] Gershom Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah ve-Sefer ha-Bahir*, edited R. Schatz, Jerusalem 1986, p. 146.

and after its dissemination.

One of the failings of my edition, in the context of its reception amongst scholars who read Scholem's studies and relied for years exclusively on Margolioth's edition of the *Bahir* for the Hebrew text, was that it served as a hypercorrection to Margolioth's edition in offering the manuscript used by Scholem. This effect on scholarship may be compared to the publication of select manuscripts to the Hekhalot literature by Peter Schäfer in the *Synopsis*, from which many scholars felt relief that someone had finally relieved them of the need to engage in tedious manuscript work, *de facto* canonizing the newly printed transcription(s) as the authoritative voice for scholars of what lies in medieval manuscripts.[32]

Today, I realize how the advances made in 1994 kept me from seeing the full ramifications of the methodology I sought to develop. Indeed, the volume was successful in that it executed for the first time in the field of Jewish mysticism, a historically layered edition based on a methodology of reception history, that presented various sources and textual witnesses (manuscripts of the *Bahir*, citations, printed editions, commentaries, etc). But in so doing, I gave too much prominence to the Munich manuscript itself and overlooked the complexity of its ontology.[33] Subsequently, I wrote that the Munich manuscript itself served as a type of critical edition in that two additional scribes corrected the text with intra-linear and marginal glosses. I then transcribed all the data on the page, presenting it opposite its facsimile. In each case of a correction or intervention by the first, second or third hand to the initial copying of the *Bahir*, regardless of it source, I reached an interpretive conclusion whether to amend the base text, critically noting its location on the page and recording the prior reading in

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[32] See chapter 1. On the relationship between the manuscripts which separately preserved the *books* of the Hekhalot literature to those which contain an editing of the whole frame or range of that of that corpus see: *Übersetzung der Hekhalot Literatur I §§1-80*, in Zusammenarbeit mit Ulrike Hirschfelder und Gerold Necker, herausgegeben von Peter Schäfer und Klaus Herrmann, Tübingen 1995, pp. xliv-xlix. See also Klaus Herrmann and Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, 'Magische Traditionen der New Yorker Hekhalot-Handschrift JTS 8128 im Kontext ihrer Gesamtredaktion', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 17 (1989), pp. 101-149.

[33] D. C. Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, pp. 26-63. Greetham's book is a landmark study and statement of the state of field of textual scholarship. The application of his methodology in the study of kabbalistic manuscripts and the history of ideas based on these texts will advance immeasurably the study of Jewish mysticism.

the notes below, or alternatively left the first recorded version and relegated the other reading to the notes. In all cases, though, all information was recorded, and the text presented in the edition was synthetic, 'restored' to the ideal work that could be reconstructed from the given data on the page, but based upon my sense of how the text *should* read given my acceptance of the collective effort of the various scribes who produced a *document* for my transcription. This method assigned a privileged role to the modern editor, whose mission it is to sort through the surviving manuscript witnesses, take a stand, decide which reading is best for any given passage, and create an eclectic and composite version of the text that will presented before the reader.

The paradigm shift in my methodology today is to appreciate and preserve in the presentation of an edition, the archeology of the manuscript itself, which contains three separate traditions (a point for which I criticized Schäfer in 1996).[34] The new edition which I have been at work on, will isolate the first

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[34] See my criticism in the revised version of this study in chapter one. See further Ra'anan Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism*, Tübingen 2005, p. 27: 'Abrams is surely correct that the *Synopse* represents a highly selective sample of Heikhalot texts. And, indeed, the manuscripts chosen for this edition do not necessarily represent the "best" witnesses to the individual literary compositions that they contain. Most importantly, Abrams rightly insists that some – or perhaps many – of the texts gathered in these manuscripts existed in recognizable forms well prior to their transmission to European centres of Jewish culture in the Middle Ages. His assessment, however, misses an essential point: Schäfer simply never claimed that research should be limited to evaluating Heikhalot literature as it is initiated in the relatively few manuscripts gathered in the *Synopse*. Rather, in his writing, he treats his own edition as not more than a valuable gateway into the enormous pool of European medieval manuscripts – and his synoptic method as nothing other than a practical strategy for presenting an enormous amount of material in as clear a way as possible. That some have enshrined the *Synopse* as a definitive edition of Heikhalot literature only testifies to their great desire to establish an authoritative textual basis for their work. [...] [R]esearchers must, wherever possible, seek to observe earlier processes of literary composition and crystallization'. While the methodological warnings offered by Schäfer are duly noted, the Hekhalot manuscripts published in the *Synopsis* are more telling of the medieval editing and transformation of the texts than the textual quality of these works from antiquity. See his early conclusions in Schäfer, 'Tradition and Redaction'. The methodology of this article should be compared to his later monograph, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Albany 1992, in which he reversed course on these questions, functionally identifying the *books*

scribe's textual tradition and, with prejudice, will isolate the later attempts to revise the text, *even when these changes improve or 'correct' poor readings*. I must admit in this context that I had resisted this method in the past, and do so today, with some ambivalence, because it is the role and duty of the editor to make decisions which influence and serve the reading audience even if limited to a particular end. In the past, my loyalty was to the critical reader and I navigated what I believed to be a balanced path between the demands of readability and the critical presentation of complex data in multiple sources. So, that, in preparing the 1994 edition, I initially punctuated the entire *Bahir* text according to the norms of modern Hebrew grammar, imitating the edition of Avigdor Shinan to *Exodus Rabbah*,[35] and only at a later stage in its preparation returned to the conventions of standard midrashic editions.

The demands of scholarship today, I believe, are to present multiple versions in their ontological context, re/presenting what was recorded with minimal decisions being made on behalf of the modern editor. These ideas and methods have been developing in my thinking for some time as I have edited many texts in the interim, each with its own complex history and character. A new edition of the *Bahir* is certainly needed and much of the work needs to be re-done in light of these advances in perspective.

Even though I intended to ground the interpretative aspects of the presentation of the earliest sources *as they were* in my 1994 volume, by including a facsimile of the Munich manuscript and the first printed edition, and further, by separately listing countless citations from the *Bahir*, my transcription of the Munich manuscript interpolated the corrections made by

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found within these running compilations of traditions, and outlining the ideas found in each of the discrete books of the Hekhalot literature. Boustan returns to the above argument, in the same formulation in: Ra'anan S. Boustan, 'The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact', *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2007), pp. 130-160; see esp. pp. 148-149. In response, I would reiterate, that I acknowledge Schäfer's voiced intentions and warnings to others and to this extent agree with Boustan. My point is, nevertheless, that Schäfer ignored his own warnings and treated the manuscripts as books in his own monograph that followed, and, that the project was destined to limit the scope of textual analysis and methodology by the choice of these manuscripts, predicting the reception it had amongst others in the field.

35 Avigdor Shinan, *Midrash Shemot Rabbah: Chapters I-XIV: A Critical edition Based on a Jerusalem Manuscript, with Variants, Commentary and Introduction*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1984 [Hebrew].

later hands – even if their source on the page was critically noted as marginal or interlinear additions and changes. The edition constructed from the Munich manuscript alone is therefore an amalgam of textual traditions recorded by different hands and does not exist in any one source, even if in this case they were all collected on the same physical page. To a significant degree, my editorial decisions presumed an ideal sense of the work, even if I took my (academic) cue from the historical record of the manuscript itself in preparing a scholarly edition. Today, therefore, I would go so far as to count my 1994 transcription of the Munich manuscript within the history of *new* texts of the *Bahir* that have been created (and) which find their place within the larger history of the work's transmission and publication. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the transcription and variants presented opposite the facsimile pages of the Munich manuscript (pp. 118-227) *do not* constitute *the* edition, as many scholars have presumed in oral comments and in print. Rather, this chapter is one layer of the historical record of all known testimonies of the textual history of the *Bahir* as listed and discussed in detail in the volume. With all of its methodological failings, the volume as a whole presented the first critical edition of a kabbalistic text based on a methodology of reception history, intentionally refusing to integrate *all* data into one proposed restoration of the Urtext, the single best text, or the sense of how the text of the idealized 'work' should read.

The integrative method of reading the Munich manuscript was largely reproduced or imitated, and taken to a further extreme, in Saverio Campanini's more recent re-issuing of the *Book Bahir* according to the Munich manuscript without the presentation of a facsimile.[36] This volume is structured around an edition of the Latin translation, prepared most likely from the Munich manuscript, or a nearly identical copy of it, and which had a significant impact on the formation and development of Christian Kabbalah. Campanini's edition of the Hebrew text includes a chapter listing errors and differences with my 1994 edition, although unfortunately he did not distinguish between these two categories for the reader. The Hebrew edition once again integrates the textual traditions of all copyists found on the page of the Munich manuscript, this time working backwards, for the most part, from the way the text was read and translated generations later into Latin. Campanini boasts to have presented the

[36] *The Book of Bahir: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, The Hebrew Text and an English Version*, edited by Saverio Campanini with a foreword by Giulio Busi, Torino 2005.

first edition that may be considered 'critical', in that his edition presents variants from three manuscripts of the Munich family (*only*), while my edition (understood as pages 118-227 of the 344 page study) presented variants from only one manuscript of a different family. In so doing, he apparently sought to present uniformity within one trajectory of its transmission history, or lay out before the reader a statistical array of errors and corrections by later copyists for the reader's edification. Such a method, however, brings various interpretations and reactions to bear upon a particular tradition and avoids the possibility of appreciating each witness on its own terms, negating the benefits of reception history.

In other words, considering the character of the manuscript witnesses of the *Bahir* (and their transmission history), as well as the advances in methodology in understanding the rich and complex nature of this text, his edition may indeed be an unfortunate regression in the editing of the *Bahir* as the text that was produced, edited and copied by the early kabbalists. In order to work backwards historically from the choice of manuscript(s) used by the Christian Kabbalists, Campanini's edition ignored the other families of manuscripts, the external readings preserved in kabbalistic works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, integrated many scribal corrections of other hands found on the same page of the Munich manuscript, and further consolidated variant readings from other manuscripts of the same family at the bottom of the page, in an attempt to offer the modern reader a sense of the 'work' of the *Bahir*.

In order to advance the research of the textual traditions of the manuscript witnesses, I am currently preparing a new edition of the *Bahir*, which will be based on a methodologically more sensitive presentation of the various traditions recorded in the Munich manuscript, and compare them to the full text of the *Bahir* as found in a number of manuscripts from other families of the *Bahir*'s reception and transmission history. A description of the manuscripts to be transcribed and a detailed rationale for the revisions in methodology will appear in the forthcoming study. Nevertheless, a qualification of what reception history means for textual scholarship will elucidate the scope of the present inquiry. Reception history can be subdivided into the metamorphoses of the textual quality, readings and forms, in manuscript and print as it moves through time, literary contexts and communities of readers, copyists, commentators and printers. Alternatively, reception history could be understood as the effects a work has on the communities of readers who adopt, sanctify, canonize and otherwise relate to the work in some ritual or religious context. The first focuses on the vicissitudes of the textual versions of a work,

charting the changes of what was physically recorded in various media, with the cultural and religious relationships to the work being the backdrop against which these changes happen. In the second sense of reception history, changes in cultural and religious life are evaluated across the history of the life of a text, with the quality of the work remaining static or marginal to the interests of how it affected various communities of readers. Elsewhere, I have written about these interests in Marxist terms, distinguishing between the production of literary versions and the forms in which they appear and their consumption by later communities. Certainly, one can speak of an interface between the two in that the meanings that register in the various communities of readers prompt the changes made in the texts. At the same time it can be said that the textual changes that emerge within the transmission history of a work often affect the production of new mindsets no less than they mark those developments.[37]

4. *Choosing a Methodology: Philology with Gender*

For the present inquiry, our concern is the proper use of this appreciation in choosing a methodology that will serve the history of ideas. Our question concerns the character and place of *Shekhinah* as the divine feminine within the earliest textual traditions known as the *Book Bahir*. At issue is whether scholarship has properly determined the *Bahir* to be the incipient work and literary moment in the production of kabbalistic works to forward this idea and make it a central or essential property of medieval Jewish mysticism. As we shall see in the following pages, just as glosses were interpolated into the work, so too the later understanding of the *Bahir*, beyond the original mindset of its first group of authors, gradually helped form an impression of what the text was about. This view took on its most extreme form in modern scholarship where the *Bahir* was seen to revolve around the idea of a feminized deity.

The term '*Shekhinah*' appears in three textual clusters in the *Book Bahir*,

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[37] Reception history is generally considered to be an aspect of reader-response theory, as forwarded for example by Hans Robert Jauss in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, tr. Timothy Bahti, Introduction by Paul de Man, Minneapolis 1982. On reception history of the manuscript texts of the *Zohar* and its literary form until its printing, see chapter four. A different methodology and series of questions is explored by Boaz Huss, who charts the history of how and when kabbalists referred to the *Zohar* as a book. See Boaz Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and the Construction of its Symbolic Value*, Jerusalem 2008 [Hebrew]. See now my study, 'The Cultural Reception of the Zohar'.

§§ 49-51, 85, 115-116 (following the paragraph division established by Scholem and which I adopted in my 1994 edition). Much attention will be devoted to these passages shortly, but first a few words should be offered about the constructs of the feminine under which *the Shekhinah* has been considered in modern scholarship. The academic study of Kabbalah does not necessarily begin with Scholem, even if in this case, his detailed analyses overwhelm any other discussion in a similar discourse and almost exclusively inform the work of all those who came after him. Scholem's work on the *Bahir* and the *Shekhinah* is found primarily in three works, his annotated German translation of the text (1923), his thematic analysis of the *Bahir* in *Origins of the Kabbalah* published in its fullest form in English posthumously in 1987, and his rather late essay on the *Shekhinah* delivered in German at the Ascona lectures in Switzerland, first published in 1953.[38]

Although acknowledged and mentioned briefly throughout his corpus, Scholem never devoted any extensive discussion – and certainly not an article or book – to the sexual dynamics of the *sefirot*. The most sustained discussion on this subject in Scholem's corpus is perhaps his article on the *Shekhinah*, which he delivered at the celebrated Eranos lecture series where he presented major themes of the field for an audience of religious studies, mainly on symbolism.[39] The case could be made, with much justification, that Scholem was seeking the Jewish archetype of the feminine and sought to present his findings in terms of religious studies to that audience.[40] It was in this context

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[38] Gerhard Scholem, 'Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der kabbalistischen Konzeption der Schechinah', *Eranos Jahrbuch* 21 (1953), pp. 45-107 (reprinted in *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit: Studien zu Grundbegriffen der Kabbala*, Zürich 1962, pp. 135-192 under the title: '*Schechina*; das passiv weibliche Moment in der Gottheit'. Later appeared in the revised Hebrew format of the German volume as translated by Joseph Ben-Shlomo, '*Shekhinah*', *Pirqei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Qabbalah u-Semaleha*, Jerusalem 1976, pp. 259-307 and in English, translated from the German by J. Neugroschel, edited and revised according to the 1976 Hebrew edition, with the author's emendations, by J. Chipman: '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, New York 1991, pp. 140-196.

[39] Steven Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, Princeton 1999, pp. 86-99.

[40] See Joseph Dan's comments in his foreword to Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 6-12; Wolfson's criticism in his *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 67, 479-480 n. 96; Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, New Haven and London 2005, pp. 55-57.

that Scholem was functionally working with an idealist construction of divine feminine in kabbalistic sources and so mapped out the history of 'the feminine element' in the godhead.

Scholem spoke of sex, not gender. Further, he limited his discussion to the world Above, not social relations or the implications of a sexualized theory of the divinity as a prescriptive program for Jewish life. In his autobiography he boasted how his advisor, Immanuel Löw, approved the dissertation that he was hardly fit to appreciate, because he appreciated Scholem's sensitivity to the sexualized production of the fruit of the date palm trees that he identified in the *Book Bahir*. Scholem's interest in the image of the feminine focused primarily on sexual coupling, the syzygy, following the term he often used to point to the Greek roots of antiquity in an attempt to show phenomenological and historical parallels to Gnosticism. Even as the discovery of the 'Nag Hammadi Library' would antedate most of Scholem's work on the *Bahir*, from the texts and polemics which were available, Scholem compared such gnostic myths as the fallen Sophia to that of the *Shekhinah* as the hypostatic daughter within the Godhead, far removed from the highest levels of being in her place as the final grade of divinity.[41] Although Scholem used the term 'feminine' in characterizing the '*Shekhinah*', he most often meant female, referring to the biological marker of the female genitalia in the characterizations offered in the *Bahir*: the West that receives light, the 'field' and 'vessel' which receives the male seed, the date fruit, and finally the woman within the familial relations, mother, daughter and lover as metaphors for a dynamic in the theosophic realm.[42] Nevertheless, Scholem's writing defies any gross generalization and he at times even referred to the feminine archetype.[43] Suffice it to say that in his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Scholem was mainly interested in the assignment of a cluster of earlier midrashic images to a specific place within the divine theosophy of the *Book Bahir*.

> The application of such images to a *middah* of God conceived as feminine and the consequent entry into the world of Gnostic symbolism was one the most far-

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[41] See Pheme Perkins, 'Sophia as Goddess in the Nag Hammadi Codices', *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. K. King, Philadelphia 1988, pp. 96-112; Deirder J. Good, *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature*, Atlanta 1987.

[42] In the sexualized language and thematic context of the *Bahir*, *'aḥoti*, is best rendered as lover, instead of sister, as did Scholem and many others.

[43] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 162, 167. For Scholem's relationship to Jung's thought see above, p. 145 n. 40.

> reaching developments in the formation of Kabbalah. It is difficult to say whether we should consider this process as the breakthrough of ancient, mythical images and 'archetypes' into a world where they had been mere metaphors or as a renewed historic contact with a Gnostic tradition that had never ceased to make use of these images. The condition of the oldest extant texts does not allow us to decide between these two alternatives – if, indeed, they are genuine alternatives and not, as may well be the case, mutually reconcilable possibilities. A closer investigation of this symbolism will reveal how profound were the metamorphoses of the imagery of the Aggadah in the process of the formation of ideas concerning the last *sefirah*.
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> In particular, three of four concepts that go far beyond anything found in the older Aggadah are identified with each other in the *Bahir*: the bride, the king's daughter or quite simply the daughter as such, the Shekhinah, and the ecclesia of Israel. In addition, there is the symbolism of the earth which conceives. The first four concepts are employed interchangeably in the *Bahir*; and that is entirely new. In Talmudic literature the *Shekhinah* is never a symbol of the feminine; still less is it identical with the ecclesia of Israel, no matter how frequently and readily the latter is personified. The *Shekhinah*, in Talmudic literature, is always simply God himself, that is, God insofar as he is present in a particular place or at a particular place or at a particular event. This 'presence' or 'indwelling' of God is precisely rendered by the Hebrew term *Shekhinah*.[44]

Scholem appreciated the sexualization of the theosophy, which typed the last grade as feminine, and to which he extended the more common term of later Kabbalah, the *Shekhinah*, even where the term did not appear. He nevertheless was not interested in essentializing femininity or even considering its role outside of the specific context in which its female character appeared. With all of Scholem's sensitivity to text and history, we cannot attribute to him a foreshadowing of the later scholarly appreciation of gender. But this is also to his credit, as he focused on the sexual aspect, and did so appropriately, without confusing sex and gender. Scholem's main interest was the new turn in kabbalistic symbolism as contrasted with rabbinic literature.

Returning to his article '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', Scholem offered similar comments on the 'earliest sources of the Kabbalah, in which, albeit in a halting and clumsy manner, a new concept of the Godhead that begins to be developed'.[45] Here, Scholem again identified the new idea of

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[44] Ibid., p. 163.

[45] Scholem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', p. 157.

Kabbalah as the 'female element': 'This presentation of the *Shekhinah* as the female element – simultaneously mother, bride, and daughter – within the structure of the Godhead constitutes a very meaningful step, with far-reaching consequences, one which the kabbalists attempted to justify by Gnostic interpretation'.[46] Scholem continued this line of thought by considering two reasons for the entrance of the female element in the *Bahir*. The first is the prior conception of the *Shekhinah* 'as a vessel, receiving all other *sefirot*', and the second is the identification of *Shekhinah* and *Kenesset Yisrael*, which 'necessarily triggered an eruption of the feminine into the sphere of the Godhead; the rest followed automatically'.[47] Even here, throughout Scholem's detailed analysis of several passages from the *Bahir* concerning the 'female element', he framed his discussion under the rubric of the *Shekhinah*, playing with the later condensation of feminine imagery into a unified symbol.

Scholem's discussion in *Origins of the Kabbalah* is, in my opinion, much more telling of the role and function of the feminine. Not bounded by the exploration of the feminine element on its own, Scholem was able to contextualize the sexual, not just the feminine. Thus, a reading of the relevant sections in *Origins of the Kabbalah* reveals that Scholem understood the feminization of the *Shekhinah* primarily as her sexualization. The *Shekhinah* is feminine as part of a larger narrative of the sexualization of the divine theosophy, the *hieros gamos*. The masculinization of the corresponding potency Above was no less important to Scholem in these same discussions. Scholem did not shy away from describing the phallic symbolism in the *Bahir*, such as in his presentation of §71 where the righteous is described as the pillar or column which is either becomes strong or grows slack:

> A column goes from the earth up to heaven, and its name is righteous, after the [earthly] righteous. When there are righteous upon earth, it is strong, but when there are not, it grows slack; and it bears the entire world, for it said: 'The righteous is the foundation of the world'. But if it is slack, the world cannot exist. That is why [it is said in the Talmud, *Yoma* 38b]: Even if there were only a single righteous man upon earth, he would maintain the world.[48]

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[46] Ibid., p. 160.

[47] Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[48] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 153. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, Oxford 2003, p. 259, where this same passage is sanitized of its phallic and sexual character. See further Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish*

5. *The Current Gender Debate*

In revisiting Scholem's analysis, I am touching upon a major issue that has occupied scholarship for more than a decade. With growing intensity and a more clear investment in a particular hermeneutic stance, the agenda of the discipline has been carved out of such readings. At stake is the validity of the cultural lenses through which sound analyses of the primary sources are rendered. Unfortunately, many scholars seem to believe that gender as a critical tool of interpreting sources comes to Kabbalah research as a late attempt of certain scholars to join the fashion of what has become popular in other fields since the 1980s and not that the field has embraced a critical and sophisticated language that can appreciate the nature and function of kabbalistic symbolism. However, within the academic discussions that do engage the question of the masculine and feminine in kabbalistic sources, there has been a debate about how far one can *or should* go in applying sexual symbolism, particularly when it comes to an emphasis on masculine, meaning phallic, and not feminine symbolism.

Frank discussion that celebrates women's experiences, subjectivity, and sexuality are thus seen as a culturally positive contribution to scholarship, whereas that of the male, are seen as an inappropriate misreading of the sources. In other words, the particularly American interest in feminism has presupposed that sexual symbolism in classic sources could *and should* serve the cultural interests of offsetting the androcentric and phallogocentric biases of the earlier authors and audiences of these texts. But while some might value the aims of gender studies as part of a greater project of cultural criticism and the creation of scholarly building blocks for an alternative, feminist Jewish theology, the academic community cannot feign naïveté in reading these very texts with modern and post-modern tools, and so must ask whether the balance has been upset between a sober evaluation of primary sources in their context and the benefit of hermeneutic tools which offer new insights into these sources. On the one hand, we can state that a corrective has long been overdue in identifying the feminine elements within Jewish traditions about the divine. On the other hand, the identification of the 'feminine element' cannot be argued at the expense of appreciating the sexual character of kabbalistic theosophy, understanding, of course, that the *Shekhinah* is feminine in her sexual role that engages the masculine, and so too the phallic aspect of the ninth *sefirah*, *Yesod*.

Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders, Budapest and New York 2005, p. 81.

Many years have passed since Scholem's contribution on the feminine element in the Godhead and before the subject was re-examined. These later studies turned from the sexuality of the divine feminine to a more abstract and disembodied concept of femininity, separated as it were, from the masculine. The collection of articles devoted to this effort are in a large part due to the rise of gender studies in the academy and Jewish studies in particular, and the attempt of some academics to embrace social or traditional, feminist agendas and further them through the application of new critical tools. Many such efforts were less than successful on many levels and contributed little to a serious appreciation of the text or a sophisticated engagement and development of gender as a theoretical framework for engaging the text. Of note in this context is a brief German study that reviews feminine images in the *Book Bahir*,[49] avoiding embodied imagery and not distinguishing between the term and the concept/being of the *Shekhinah*. The author aptly appreciates the dynamic between the higher and lower feminine hypostases, mother and daughter, and the dynamic between transcendence and immanence in a midrashic response to biblical verses.

The eclipsing of the sexual aspect of the femininity of the *Shekhinah* in the *Book Bahir* dates back to Arthur Green's oft-cited study, 'Bride, Spouse, Daughter: Images of the Feminine in Classical Jewish Sources'.[50] Green suggests that the male, religious community introduced feminine symbolism to avoid the homoerotic result of the growing 'intimacy' between the male mystic and the male divinity: 'What I propose is simply this: in the search for the kind of intimacy, tenderness, and warmth that such people wanted to express in talking about the relationship between God and Israel, they could not remain in the domain of the all-male universe where they lived their public lives. There is no way, without turning to images of the feminine, or without thinking of the relationships between men and women, that most men can express the degree of love, passion, and warmth that the spiritual life may arouse in them'.[51] After

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[49] Marianne Wallach-Faller, 'Die jüdische feministische Theologie auf der Suche nach einem weiblicheren Gottesbild: weibliche Aspekte Gottes im *Buch Bahir*', *Aus zweier Zeugen Mund: Festschrift für Pnina Navè Levinson und Nathan Peter Levinson*, hrsg, von Julius H. Schoeps, Gerlingen 1992, pp. 236-245.

[50] Arthur Green, 'Bride, Spouse, Daughter: Images of the Feminine in Classical Jewish Sources', *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, ed. S. Heschel, New York 1983, pp. 248-260.

[51] Ibid., p. 250.

reviewing rabbinic sources, Green turns to the feminized *Shekhinah* of the kabbalists, beginning with the *Book Bahir*. He cites §90 of the *Bahir* concerning the matron of the king and a princess who came from a faraway place. Green then explains that, 'The *Shekhinah*, the mysterious woman, queen or princess, hidden or coming from a place beyond is the only one we see, the only one we greet. [...] The *Shekhinah* is the God we know. Surely that *Shekhinah* stands in relation to a transcendent deity, whether described in male terms or in terms of more pure abstraction, but our knowledge of that is only through her. Blessed is she and blessed is her place'.[52]

My criticism of Green's rather early study, relative to his other contributions on the *Shekhinah* and related topics, stems from what is characterized center-stage and from what is absent. As learned from his own comment, the choice of this passage from the *Bahir* served the ends of transcendence, albeit in comparison to a more 'transcendent deity, whether described in male terms or in terms of pure abstraction'. I would like to point out two methodological difficulties with the selection and the brief comments which foreshadow a host of studies by Green and others in the following years. Green here is working toward a theology that characterizes the mystical path of the kabbalist toward the highest reaches of divine ontology, beyond the concrete and linguistic symbols of the material world. As evident in later studies and implied already here, the *Shekhinah* is the central nerve and counterexample to such a theology of transcendence, being the only aspect of the divine that the kabbalists truly know. But here too, according to Green's characterization, the kabbalists' *knowledge* of the *Shekhinah* is not sexualized, despite the sexual sense with which the term is commonly employed by the kabbalists. Green extends transcendence to the *Shekhinah* in the *Bahir* by selecting a passage which places Her far from any epistemological claim. Moreover, the choice of this passage from the *Bahir* is rather curious, as the term *Shekhinah* does not appear in it. That is to say, that the passage and ensuing discussion are subsumed within a larger analysis of the (concept or perhaps the *being* of the) *Shekhinah* in kabbalistic literature as a whole.

This point cannot be overemphasized, and is key to reading the *Bahir* as the incipient text of theosophic symbolism. The *Bahir* is all too often read through the lenses of how later kabbalists first understood the terms found in any theosophic context. The *Bahir*, however, is best placed somewhere between the

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[52] Ibid., pp. 256-257. The last sentence returns to the verse from Ezekiel cited in §90.

rabbinic world (and the midrashic genres in which it participates) and the emerging theosophic symbolism that *later* grew out of this collection of enigmatic traditions. My point here is that scholarship's search for the important myths of Kabbalah approach the individual traditions from within a synthetic understanding of a larger myth that was appreciated only at a later stage. Stated more sharply, *in its attempts to uncover and reconstruct kabbalistic myths, scholarship at times creates them*, even if they are synthetic composites made up of authentic traditions which had a life of their own their atomistic states. This of course cannot be cited as a general rule, as the scholar may offer an insight to the aggregate myth from which the parts are taken, or alternatively, that the variations reflect a core myth implicit to the thinking of various figures. Here, we might consider the view of Claude-Lévi Strauss who considered 'the gross constituent units' of a myth, saying that a myth includes all its variants.[53]

In the case of the *Bahir*, we cannot assume that all images of the feminine point to parts of the same myth, nor can we assume that all images of the feminine are necessarily linked to (the) *Shekhinah*. Once again, *Shekhinah* is a term which may or might not point in every early kabbalistic text to a theosophic grade of the *sefirot*. The challenge to the serious reader of the *Bahir* is to resist the temptation to apply the theosophic register of later Kabbalah to this enigmatic text. Similarly, past scholarship has treated the *Bahir* as a book, reading one passage through another in order to adduce its meaning and contextualize any given tradition. While the *Bahir* does have an overall identity in conforming to a certain ideational framework and orientation, I offer as the challenge and ideal of a more sophisticated, scholarly program that will advance the field of study, that the extent to which traditions can be interpreted without explicit reference to parallel terms and phrases (even if the reader is consciously conforming to his or her sense of the entire text), the more nuanced and grounded these readings will be for future studies.[54]

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[53] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth' *The Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955), pp. 428-444, reprinted as chapter 11 of his *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, New York 1963, pp. 206-231, esp. pp. 210-211. On the function of variation in Strauss' theory of myth see Marcel Hénaff, *Claude Levi-Strauss and the Making of Structural Anthropology*, tr. M. Baker, Minneapolis 1998, p. 138.

[54] The inner coherence of the work is a subject for further research. Nevertheless, I would state at this juncture, that whatever the pre-history of the work all traditions from

The same methodological sensitivity that can be applied to interpreting each passage on its own terms can be extended to terms and concepts such as the feminization of *Shekhinah*. To be sure, *Shekhinah* is not the overarching name for the tenth grade of the divinity in the *Bahir* and is not necessarily feminized in each instance. Moreover, it would be spurious to conclude that all feminine images of the divine are condensed around a single ontological grade or image. Indeed, in many later kabbalistic texts, *Shekhinah* becomes the inclusive name for a host of feminine symbols, but not here. The formal application of this method of reading was attempted by Isaiah Tishby in his editions of R. Ezra of Gerona's *Commentary to the Aggadot* and in his anthology of zoharic texts, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*.[55] In the first, he provided an index and annotations identifying the *sefirah* referred to by each referent, and in the second he annotated the text with notes at the bottom of the page, which by and large interpreted the text through an identification of the *sefirot* that were masked by the *Zohar*'s pseudepigraphic need to adhere to rabbinic language. Here, the assumption was that the kabbalistic author was working with a specific map of the heavens that when decoded offers an essential insight into the author's intention.

The debate about the proper understanding of the *Bahir* and the appreciation of *Shekhinah* as feminine in this and other kabbalistic texts unfolds into a larger question about psychology and hermeneutics. What tools are appropriate for uncovering meaning? In a later review of Elliot Wolfson's *Through a Speculum that Shines*, in which phallic symbolism constitutes the object of the mystical gaze of the kabbalist, Green protests to 'a new Freudian orthodoxy, where all symbols are revealed as reducible to their "true" genital

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that process are contained, with significant variations, within the surviving manuscripts of the text in circulation amongst the kabbalists. As noted above, the addition of the title *Sefer ha-Bahir* in late manuscript witnesses and the addition of the title with a later hand to the earliest manuscripts that lack any title. And despite the later affirmation of the identity of the work by kabbalists, I will claim here that all (!) of the passages recorded in the name of the *Bahir* outside of the transmission history of what was conceived by the kabbalists as the surviving midrashic compilation of R. Neḥuniah ben ha-Qanah, none of them mark the character of the traditions found in the text known as the *Book Bahir*. See the annotated list in my edition, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 48-54 and Ronit Meroz, 'A Passage Attributed to the *Bahir*', *Kabbalah* 7 (2002), pp. 319-326 [Hebrew].

55 See Yehuda Liebes, 'New Directions in the Study of Kabbalah'.

meanings'.[56] Holding off as yet on any substantive discussion of this book, Green is consistent in shunning away from embodiment in favor of transcendence. Just as the *Shehkinah*'s femininity is defended against its ontic absorption into the masculine and the transformation of Jewish mysticism into a homoerotic dyad, Green also evades any corporeal image of the divine feminine. Where Wolfson locates *Shekhinah* within *Yesod* by focusing on the integration of *'Aṭarah* (corona) into the divine phallus, Green responds by explaining this same appellative for the *Shekhinah* as the teleological aim for her ascent to the first *sefirah*, *Keter* (Crown), preserving her transcendent character, and again, shying away from any sexual characterization. Such that in the chapter on the *Bahir* in his book, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*, he states, 'The very heart of Kabbalah will be the ascent of the tenth *sefirah* to reunion with the first, or the assertion that the two crown on either end of the kabbalistic pleroma are in fact one, made so once again by the merits of human prayer and deed'.[57] It seems to me that Green's earlier review of Wolfson book and the monograph on *Keter* are interrelated in that the review discounts the centrality of *'Atarah* as related to, and onticly placed within, the divine phallus, allowing for an overarching counterthesis in his book of what amounts to 'the very heart of the Kabbalah', namely, that the lower crown (*'Atarah*) is raised to the supernal crown (*Keter*) without the corporeal and sexualized imagery.

6. *The Shekhinah and the Virgin Mary*

More recently, Arthur Green and Peter Schäfer each published studies on the *Bahir*, claiming that the *Bahir* introduced the idea of the feminized *Shekhinah* in response to the veneration of Mary found in twelfth-century Provence.[58] This

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[56] Arthur Green, 'Kabbalistic Re-vision', *History of Religions* 36 (1997), pp. 265-274, cited on p. 270.

[57] Idem, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1997, p. 149.

[58] Arthur Green, '*Shekhinah*, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in its Historical Context', *AJS Review* 26 (2002), pp. 1-52 (A Hebrew translation was issued as a volume of *Yeriyot* and reviewed by Yehuda Liebes in his article, 'Is the *Shekhinah* Indeed a Virgin', *Pe'amim* 101-102 (2005), pp. 303-313 [Hebrew]); Peter Schäfer, 'Tochter, Schwester, Brayt und Mutter – Bilder der Weiblichkeit Gottes in der Frühen Kabbalah', *Saeculum* 49 (1998), 259-279; idem, 'Daughter, Sister, Bride and Mother: Images of the Femininity of God in the Early

claim was first suggested by Raphael Patai in his study, *The Hebrew Goddess*, an often neglected work, which in many senses was a scholarly achievement far ahead of its time. In these studies, Green and Schäfer did not focus exclusively on the term *Shekhinah*, but use the term generally to refer to the feminized quality within the godhead. In a lengthy note, Green addressed the three passages which use the term *Shekhinah*, noting that in the third (§§115-116) *Shekhinah* is not necessarily feminine.[59] This note aside, the study compares the feminine grade of divine ontology of the medieval kabbalists in general, as a faith-community, to medieval Christian traditions about the feminine concerning the Song of Songs and images of Mary. The premise of the study is that the apparent parallels in the mind of the modern scholar who interprets the meaning of the two bodies of literature will lead to a conclusion about historical influence, whether that be literary, cultural or some other form of inter-religious interaction. Unfortunately, no evidence has been provided for such cooperation or even for the casual exchange of ideas on such an esoteric subject. What can be claimed with certainty, however, is that the *Bahir* does not focus on the Song of Songs nor do the feminine images emerge as interpretations to those biblical verses.[60] Moreover, as has been noted, these authors project back onto the *Bahir* the later kabbalistic conception of the *Shekhinah*, assuming that the nexus of images were attached from the inception of kabbalistic sources as marked by the appearance of the *Bahir*. Finally, the Kabbalah of Provence, where the veneration of Mary was assumed to have influenced their contemporaries in the Jewish, rabbinic community, *was not based* on the *Book Bahir*, which was first written and took shape in Ashkenaz.

Schäfer's study suffers from these same methodological oversights.[61] His article on the topic which was reworked into the sixth and concluding chapters of his book form the heart of a sweeping historical review of feminine divine imagery in Judaism, beginning with the bible and concluding with the *Book*

Kabbalah', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68 (2000), pp. 221–242; idem, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*, Princeton 2002.

[59] Ibid., p. 16 n. 68, referring also to his translation in *Keter*, pp. 145ff.

[60] Compare further Arthur Green, 'The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism', *Orim: A Jewish Journal at Yale* 2 (1987), pp. 49-63.

[61] For further criticism in light of the argument in this chapter see Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, New York 2007, pp. 477 n. 45, 478 n. 51, 479 n. 58.

Bahir. Schäfer attempts to show that on the question of feminine, divine ontology nothing like the *Bahir* existed in Jewish and Jewish esoteric literature prior to its composition. Schäfer maps out a wide range of feminine and sexual images of the divine from the *Bahir*, mapping out far more than what bears the name '*Shekhinah*', including various images of mother, daughter and sister. All are included under the title and discussion of *the Shekhinah* in the *Book Bahir*, cohering to the later kabbalistic assumptions, which condense feminine imagery into the lowest, feminine grade of the divine theosophy.

The most extensive discussion of the divine feminine in the *Book Bahir* can be found in the works of Elliot Wolfson. His studies have engaged the topic from a wide range of perspectives, including comparisons with Hellenistic, Gnostic, and early Christian sources, and detailed analysis of many passages which display the rich array of meanings that can be adduced from this early kabbalistic source.[62] Most significant to the present study are the extensive discussions of the function of gender in the *Bahir* in his recent monograph *Language Eros Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*. Wolfson describes the androcentric perspective of the authorial/redactional voices in the text of the *Book Bahir*, and adduces the particular applications of the concept of divine androgyny, based on the ontological containment of the feminine within the masculine. In accordance with this central thesis, he states that 'from the kabbalist's vantage point, there is one gender with two sexuated instantiations'.[63] As becomes clear from Wolfson's analysis of various Bahiric traditions,[64] the work shows a sustained effort to contain, restore and unite the feminine with the masculine, as part of an androcentric and often phallocentric orientation. Wolfson is careful not to label all the feminine images as constitutive of (the) *Shekhinah*, nor does he claim that the feminine is cast from within a construction of femininity. Prominent in his analysis are the early roots, displayed in context in the *Bahir*, of the mythic process toward ontic union between the various limbs of the (divine) anthropos, as well as sexual coupling Above and Below. With an eye toward the sexual condition of Being, he unpacks the masculine character of androgyny in a mythic account of

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[62] See Elliot Wolfson, 'The Tree That Is All', *Along the Path*, pp. 63–88; idem, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Poetics Today* 19 (1998), pp. 147-176; Idem, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth and Death*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2006, especially, pp. 137-155.

[63] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 147.

[64] See especially pp. 146-167.

restoration and completion.

In the most recently published study on this topic, Carola Goetzen Krieg, revisited the question of Scholem's isolation and inquiry of the 'Feminine Element' in an article entitled 'The Feminine Aspect of God in the *Book Bahir*'.[65] The article presents a basic description of the *Bahir* and some of its feminine images with a subdivision devoted to images of Queen, princess, bride and daughter. No thesis is offered regarding the concept and term '*Shekhinah*' in terms of its feminine character, neither sexually, nor in regard to modern theories of gender. The feminine aspect of God is identified as that which mediates between God and the people, receiving from Above and having influence on the people. The clearest statement can be found in the last few lines of the article where the author concludes that, 'The last *sefirah*, the *Shekhina*, can only be understood in interplay with the male principle. In the life-threatening environment for the Jewish communities in the Middle Ages, and in Provence in particular, the task of the *Shekhina* has to be understood in liberating Israel from captivity. Also in the light of such historical circumstances, the aim of the *Shekhina* is to complete Israel's redemption by creating new souls from the mutual relationship between the male and female principle so that the son of David may come'.[66]

7. *Did the Bahir Introduce Sexual Symbolism to the Jewish Mystical Tradition?*

Scholem's study on the *Shekhinah* is based on an overarching agenda that grounds his historical program for the study of Jewish mysticism. Scholem surveyed the full range of Jewish literature beginning with the Hebrew Bible and apocrypha and concluding with early modern kabbalistic texts. He did not explore pre-kabbalistic literature in order to contrast it with the new phenomenon of the Kabbalah in the beginning of the thirteenth century, which contributed the feminized (or sexual) aspect of the divinity. Rather, Scholem's interest was to show the merging of a particular form of hypostatization and sexual symbolism. Scholem's analysis therefore downplayed or discounted the possibility that either element existed separately at an earlier period of Jewish

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[65] Carola Goetzen Krieg, 'The Feminine Aspect of God in the *Book Bahir*', *Bodies in Question: Gender Religion, Text*, ed. Y. Sherwood and D. Bird, Aldershot (Hants), UK and Burlington, VT 2005, pp. 15-28.

[66] Ibid., p. 25.

literature and thought. Put differently, for Scholem the development of the *Shekhinah* as an independent *and* feminine being formed the 'new concept of the Godhead' which marks the beginning of the Kabbalah. Scholem defined the older definition of *Shekhinah* as an expression of the divine presence, ontologically indistinguishable from God Himself: 'Thus the *Shekhinah* is always God Himself, insofar as He is present in a specific place or at a specific event. In other words: we are dealing with an expression – qualified in hyperbolic images – for God Himself, one verging on hypostatization'.[67]

Here, too, we might question this assumption as being derived from the kabbalists. The problem can be approached from a number of vantage points. From a scholarly perspective, many studies have ben published in recent years, in effect, deconstructing the sexualized hypostasis of the kabbalistic view of the *Shekhinah*, showing the various stages and separate sources that came together in this particular concept of the *Shekhinah*.[68] Further, we might also wonder whether the kabbalists were indeed aware of their new interpretive key, as they reread rabbinic texts and (gradually, and eventually) wrote differently about the term *Shekhinah* when they projected their kabbalistic understandings back onto the ancient texts. Finally, a host of studies have been published in recent years, which independent of the term *Shekhinah*, have pointed to sexual images of the divine prior to the Kabbalah.

The beginning of this rich history of feminine divine imagery is found in the Hebrew Bible and continues on through the Talmud, Hekhalot literature, and the works of the German Pietists and other Ashkenazi esotericists contemporaries of the first kabbalists. Most all of these studies are strikingly absent from the discussion of Schäfer and Green. A detailed review of the history of feminine images of God beginning in the Bible would take us too far a field and in itself would amount to an impressive volume of sources and scholarship.[69] Put bluntly, it is untenable to claim that any sexual symbolism

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[67] Scholem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', p. 148.

[68] Abrams, 'Fragments of *Sefer Shaqod*'; Moshe Idel, 'Intention of Prayer in the Beginning of Kabbalah: Between Germany and Provence', *Porat Yosef: Studies Presented to Rabbi Dr. Joseph Safran*, ed. B. and E. Safran, Hoboken 1992, pp. 5-14 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah'.

[69] Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*; Mayer Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies*, Atlanta 1992; idem, 'Review of Schaefer: Mirror of His Beauty', *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 11 (2004), pp. 24-27; W. Wifall, '*El Shaddai* or *El* of the Fields', *Zeitschrift für die altetestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980), pp. 24-33; David Biale,

found in the *Bahir* appears suddenly, out of the blue, without a rich history of parallel images and a growing discussion of sexual metaphors within the godhead in contemporary Ashkenazi sources. Most striking is the '*Sod ha-Egoz*' text, falsely attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms, which interprets the makeup of the throne world, based on Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot, through a sexual description of the anatomy of the walnut, a tree which reproduces through the mating or pollination of the female tree by the male tree.[70] In the text itself, the fruit of the walnut is described as male and female, arguably a description of female genitalia, much like the description of the fruit of the date palm in the *Bahir*. In the authentic works of R. Eleazar of Worms,[71] the German Pietist further describes similar traditions based upon sexualized and feminine imagery concerning the circular shape of the divine throne. Finally, R. Abraham ben David (d. 1198), the first known kabbalist, and father of the first known figure to write a kabbalistic commentary to *Sefer Yeṣira*, transmitted to his students the 'secret of the androgyne [*du-parṣufin*]' in which the rabbinic

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'The God with Breasts: *El Shaddai* in the Bible', *History of Religions* 21 (1982), pp. 240–256. On Rabbinic and Hekhalot images see Jacob Nacht, *Feminine Symbols in Ancient Sources, Our Modern Literature and the Literature of Other Nations*, Tel Aviv 1959 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah', *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*, ed. D. Kraemer, Oxford 1989, pp. 197–224; idem, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 22-42; Elliot Wolfson, 'Female Imaging of the Torah: From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol', *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism*, Albany 1995, pp. 1-28, 123–140; David Halperin, 'A Sexual Image in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and Its Implications', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6, parts 1-2 (1987), pp. 117-132. On German Pietism, see Wolfson, 'The Image of Jacob Engraved upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists', *Along the Path*, pp. 1-62; idem, 'The Face of Jacob in the Moon: Mystical Transformations of an Aggadic Myth', *The Seduction of Myth in Judaism: Challenge and Response*, ed. S. Daniel Breslauer, Albany 1997, pp. 235-270.

[70] Scholem, *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, p. 72 [Hebrew]; Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, p. 94; idem, *Sexual Symbolism*, p. 5 n.12. See further in my *The Female Body of God in Kabbalistic Literature: Embodied Forms of Love and Sexuality in the Divine Feminine*, Jerusalem 2004, pp. 68-70 [Hebrew], where I reversed my interpretation of this tradition in the *Sod ha-'Egoz*, arguing now for the intended image of female genitalia through the depiction of the fruit of the walnut. In the *Bahir*, the date-palm is explicitly described as the vagina, and does not mean that the trees reproduce sexually. See Wolfson, *Language Eros, Being*, p. 151.

[71] See Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism*, pp. 50-51.

description of divine attributes is recast as a sexual relationship within the Godhead.[72] By all scholarly accounts, the teaching of R. Abraham ben David predates and is considered to be independent and prior to the composition of the *Bahir*.

It would be appropriate here to distinguish between the panoramic review of the corpora of all Jewish mystical literature prior to the *Bahir* from an interest in the history of ideas, and a more specific inquiry into the precedents just prior to the *Bahir*, which served as possible channels of influence to the production of this work. For the later category, we turn to twelfth and early thirteenth-century Ashkenaz where a wide range of mystical literature was produced, most of it still remaining in manuscript form. The last twenty years of scholarship has basically deconstructed the rather singular form of the social 'circle' understood by Scholem to have produced the esoteric library that emerged from Ashkenaz.[73] Scholem followed the lead of the later manuscript copyists who compiled texts from various circles, giving the general impression of uniformity to the reader of these codices. Since these early days of scholarship, various circles have been identified and the works carved out of the edifice of what was assumed to be the works of the Qalonimide circle of German Pietism, most of which were attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms. These include the works of the 'Unique' or 'Special' Cherub Circle,[74] the various recessions of *Sod ha-Egoz*, and most recently the numerous works of Neḥemiah ben Shlomo.[75]

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[72] See the discussion of Idel on the stated earlier knowledge of binitarian structure of the world above in the text of R. Abraham ben David: Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 62, 72.

[73] On the reassessment of the kabbalistic circle and textual communities see Elliot Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Medieval Jewish Mysticism', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 166-224. See also Boaz Huss, 'Zoharic Textual Communities of Safed', *Shefa Tal: Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture Presented to Bracha Sack*, Beer Sheva 2004, pp. 149-169 [Hebrew].

[74] For a history of the scholarship on these important texts see Daniel Abrams, 'A History of the Unique Cherub': A Review Essay of Joseph Dan, *The Unique Cherub' Circle; a School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany'*, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 90 (2000), pp. 397-404.

[75] Moshe Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings of a Forgotten Ashkenazi Prophet, R. Neḥemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005), pp. 183-196;

I would like to return to a particular passage, dismissed by Scholem, as constitutive of the kabbalistic view of the *Shekhinah*. Scholem was keen on separating *German Pietism* from the *Origins of the Kabbalah*. This divide was ideologically motivated due to his conviction that the Kabbalah began with the *Bahir* and continued on linearly with the first kabbalists in Provence and Gerona. This agenda had a strong influence on generations of researchers who learned of the historical frame of Jewish mysticism according to the presentation in Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, in which the discussion of (the) *Origins of the Kabbalah* – from the *Bahir* through the Kabbalah in Gerona – was removed and presented in separate monograph.[76] The latter volume reviewed the throne mysticism of the Hekhalot literature, followed by the pre-kabbalistic circle of the Rhineland esotericists who were active through the beginning of the thirteenth century. The following chapters then skip to the Ecstatic Kabbalah of R. Abraham Abulafia and the *Zohar* at the end of the thirteenth century. In his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Scholem all but removed any mention of the Pietists, concretizing this division.[77]

One of the interesting links, at least phenomenologically, is the tradition presented by one of the last representatives of the German Pietists, R. Eleazar ha-Darshan. Scholem had cited partial expressions of this tradition, whereby *Shekhinah* 'throws herself down before the Holy One, blessed be He'. This 'late midrash' expands upon a passage in *Midrash Mishle* where *Shekhinah* displays

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idem, 'The Commentaries of Neḥemiah ben Shlomo to the Forty-Two Letter Divine Name', *Kabbalah* 14 (2006), pp. 157-262 [Hebrew].

[76] First published in Jerusalem 1941.

[77] Scholem did include an important appendix on R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan from the Hebrew version, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, Jerusalem 1948 in his *Origins of the Kabbalah* (1987). He did, however, make passing references in *Origins of the Kabbalah* to the works of R. Eleazar of Worms. (e.g., pp. 98, 101, 103, 112, 183-187). More interesting is the citation of Eleazar's adverbial use of *'Ein Sof* (On the development of this terminology and idea see now Sandra Valabregue-Perry, *Concealed and Revealed: 'Ein Sof' in Theosophic Kabbalah*, Los Angeles 2010 [Hebrew]). In a recently published study, Moshe Idel has convincingly shown that the 'Proto-Kabbalistic' text attributed to Eleazar of Worms, which mentions the tenth kingdom and *Shekhinah*, is actually a kabbalistic text mistakenly placed in the circle of the Pietists. As intimated to me by Moshe Idel in conversation, in hindsight it can be said that Scholem here overemphasized the connection of the Pietists to the beginning of Kabbalah, when (in the same volume), he underemphasized any possible connection between their ideas and literature and the early Kabbalists. On this matter, see below, chapter 5, note 141.

a degree of autonomy in speaking before the Holy One, blessed be He, in protest. Scholem remarks that 'The variant found in the later midrash, which is alien to the parallel ancient passages, could only have emerged after the *Shekhinah* had already been hypostatized as a quality of God, by groups of unknown later aggadists'.[78] Scholem has here claimed some precedent for the emerging kabbalistic theosophy, and listed a pietistic tradition as part of that connective tissue on the subject of the *Shekhinah*, but devoid of any feminine symbolism.

In two studies, I published the fuller text of R. Eleazar from better manuscripts. In this version, the pieitist author warns that,[79] 'One should be careful not to pray and bow except to the Holy One, blessed be He, and not to *Shekhinah*, for indeed *Shekhinah* herself (*'aṣmah*) prays before the Holy One, blessed be He, as was explained above'. This tradition comes strikingly close in content to the mythic structure of theurgy and theosophy that we find in the *Bahir* and which is central to later Kabbalah. Tracking this particular tradition, Scholem rightly pointed to *Midrash Mishle* where the Attribute of Judgment speaks before God, and to a lost tradition from a version of the midrash *Alpha-Beth of R. Aqiva*, where *Shekhinah* prostrates herself before the Holy One, blessed be He. This final text, I argued later my study about the female body of God, may offer a gendered recasting of the corporeal identity of *Shekhinah*, where her lesser status is marked by embodied supplication understood as sexual submission before the Holy One, blessed be He, as masculine.[80]

8. *The Erotic Language of the Book Bahir: Exegesis or Eisegesis?*

A serious and responsible reading of the *Book Bahir*, as with any kabbalistic work interpreted from within the scholarly study that relies on historical context and philological analysis, must seek the internal keys that the text provides. Reading a work on its own terms is of course extremely difficult when it is the incipient text of a movement that takes on later forms that develop and depart from the intentions initially set out in this first literary effort. As a field which was founded against the background of caution and often antagonism

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[78] Scholem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', p. 153

[79] Daniel Abrams, 'The *Shekhinah* Prays before God'; idem, '"The Unity of God" of R. Eleazar Ha-Darshan'.

[80] Idem, *The Female Body of God*, pp. 26-28.

shown by traditional, cultural and scholarly communities, the academic study of Jewish mysticism is still laden with agendas and sensitivities concerning the implications of what is uncovered in the meanings and texts researched in the field. Put sharply, it is not coincidental that Kabbalah was first explained and legitimized within the academy from within a largely philosophical and historical framework. Clearly, the early development of the field and its reception in and outside of Jewish studies is a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to any one factor. It is, however, obvious that a great disparity exists between the sexualized language of the kabbalistic texts and the first seventy years of academic studies about these texts. Even today it is possible to read lengthy monographs which analyze theosophic texts that are silent on the sexual symbolism found therein.

At issue is whether scholars who employ sex and gender as a hermeneutic of kabbalistic texts are appropriately disclosing the meanings that significantly and necessarily resonate within these texts and the thought of the kabbalists who composed them, or whether the current demands and expectations of this discourse of religious studies are being read *into* these texts, coloring the character of the terminology with a sexual valence that is being artificially imposed on these works. This question is best appreciated when considering scholarship that is written in a language other than Hebrew, whereby the act of translation forces the interpreter to take a stand on the word plays and additional inferences and allusions that are operative in the work.

In the case of the *Book Bahir*, the reader can take the symbolism of the tree as an organic or even as an agricultural image that masks the Neoplatonic unfolding of the divine hypostases, or the reader may interpret the tree as a subtle mask for the sexualized and procreative aspects of the divine theosophy. To illustrate the point, some examples of the sexualized lexicon of the *Bahir* are in order. My claim is not that these terms do not have other meanings which go back to their biblical and midrashic usages, nor that one could make (some) sense of the midrashic language of the *Bahir* without reference to sexual categories. Rather, my contention is that biblical and rabbinic language is being intentionally recast in the context of this text to euphemistically explain the sexual dynamic of the divine theosophy. My impression is not that the authors were seeking a transformation of rabbinic discourse, but rather that they were already reading such texts in this light and offered their own enthusiastic recasting in a pseudepigraphic, midrashic key to express themselves. That is to say, they lacked a strong self-awareness to their program and its result. This explains the character of this first kabbalistic text as one that is not crafted with

the uninitiated reader in mind. One such example of the way the language was transformed in the *Bahir* is §43 which is a recasting of a parable from *Song of Songs Rabbah*.[81]

> A parable of a king who was in his innermost chamber. And from where [do we arrive] at the number of chambers as thirty-two? And each chamber has its own path [for reaching its entrance]. Is it fitting for this king to gather all into his chambers by way of his paths. You would say that it is not fitting for him to reveal his pearls,[82] treasures, precious things and gems? You would say 'No'. What did he do? He touched the daughter and contained all the paths within her and within her garments. And anyone who wants to enter inside should look here. And she married the king and further, she was given to him as a gift. And sometimes out of his love for her he calls her 'my lover' [*'aḥoti*, literally, sister] because they [once came] from one place [*mi-maqom eḥad hayu*]. But sometimes he calls her 'my daughter' because she is his daughter, and sometimes he calls her 'my mother'.

This passage has often been cited as the most prominent example of feminine imagery in the *Book Bahir*, apparently mapping out the various roles and identifications of *Shekhinah*. It would be convenient to explain these relations as the place of the tenth *sefirah* in respect to various key hypostases Above and Below. Accordingly, inasmuch as all *sefirot* share in the divine ontology, drawing their being from the highest source above the theosophy, they are equals, siblings, and the last sefirah is called sister.[83] As the lowest feminine *sefirah*, she is termed daughter, mirroring the highest feminine *sefirah*, *Binah*, which is often considered the mother in the divine theosophy. As the lowest *sefirah* who governs the material world below, she is called mother.

A closer look at the language of the parable reveals that the ontic status of *Shekhinah* is not the subject of the text. The author clearly intended to map out the perspective of the king, as one of the powers that relates to this feminine power. The king's love prompts him to call her *lover*, a more apt translation of *'aḥoti* than sister, following the precedent set out by the Song of Songs, *'aḥoti*

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[81] *Songs Rabbah* 3:11; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 169; idem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', pp. 162-163. See also Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom', p. 159; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 161.

[82] The copyist of Ms. Zurich corrected his first transcription of *peninav*, pearls, to *penimav*, inner (secrets).

[83] On this theme see Moshe Idel, 'The Kabbalistic Interpretation of the Secret of '*Arayyot* in Early Kabbalah', *Kabbalah* 12 (2004), pp. 89-199 [Hebrew].

kallah (4:10, 4:12, 5:1). This cognomen is given by the king to state the way he feels about her, a clearly sexual relationship, considering the way he touches her in the preceding lines. The illicit sexual relationship is acknowledged by the text, which plainly states that she is also his daughter and so retains this title and name. And while she is not confirmed as being his mother, he calls her his mother, for reasons which remain unclear to me.

While the underlying imagery and language from the rabbinic midrash might have mapped out the different feminine images attributed to Israel, the *Book Bahir* transforms these images into their sexual valence in relation to the King. This appreciation runs counter the way scholarship has understood this passage and the overall sense of the traditions of the *Book Bahir*. Scholem for example claimed that, 'We find here the most significant imagery of the symbolism of the feminine gathered in one piece. Only one thing is lacking: except for a single passage, (S §90; M 131), *Sefer ha-Bahir* avoids referring to daughter as wife. The explicitly sexual sphere of female symbolism *is here quite clearly and visibly rejected*, certainly not by chance, otherwise, all of the essential motifs are expressed here'.[84] This claim has been left unchallenged in subsequent scholarship on the *Book Bahir*, with the noted exception of the studies of Elliot Wolfson.

9. *'Shekhinah' as a Technical Term in the Book Bahir*

The complexity of the *Bahir's* composition, redaction and transmission does not permit a holistic interpretation of its various traditions unless one were to speak of the redactional voice of the finalized document or the received text within a particular community. As first argued by Scholem, the *Bahir* we have in manuscript displays various layers of redaction and a structural disunity far beyond what we might expect of a midrashic text. Nevertheless, Scholem abandoned the paragraph-by-paragraph analysis he adopted in the early twenties and devoted the next fifty years to a thematic analysis that he published in various forms, revising and expanding this discussion until the posthumous publication of *Origins of the Kabbalah* in its English version.

Scholem attempted to navigate between the pitfalls of contextualizing each textual-block and appreciating the integrity or identity of the work as a whole.

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[84] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 163 (emphasis added). Passage divisions cited refer respectively to the German translation by Scholem, which were adopted in my Hebrew edition), and those of Margolioth, who offered his own divisions of the text.

There can be no hard and fast rule for demarcating what is a unique tradition that stands out from the rest of the edited work and what finds its place within the rubric of images that type the *Bahir's* style and message. I am convinced, nonetheless, that the study of the *Book Bahir* can offer the serious reader a sense of what does belong to the text and what was added or attributed to it at a later time, or from a different circle. The point is more easily demonstrated when considering traditions in other books, cited in the name of the *Book Bahir*. Scholem presented a list of such passages as an appendix to his German translation of the *Book Bahir*. An annotated presentation of the Hebrew texts, with a few additional passages, were included as a chapter in my edition, and one further citation offered by Ronit Meroz.[85] In my opinion, none of these passages emerged from the literary efforts that produced the traditions found in the *Bahir* as preserved in the manuscript copies of the '*Book Bahir*'. A separate study would be required to demonstrate this claim, comparing and contrasting the style and content of each citation against the rich texture of the 140 passages found in the *Book Bahir*. At present, I make this claim in order to illustrate that the *Bahir*, as an edited work, can leave the modern academic reader with a misleading impression of its thematic (although not its literary) integrity.

On the question of the *Shekhinah*, Scholem built much of his argument of the *Bahir*'s theosophic transformation of rabbinic symbolism on the re-identification of *Kenesset Yisrael* as the *Shekhinah*, thereby merging these terms into the feminine hypostasis.[86] For Scholem, this association constitutes the connective tissue that transforms the symbolism of rabbinic tradition into the mythic drama of kabbalistic theosophy. Here we might pause and reconsider whether this claim holds true generally for the *Bahir*, or to put differently, if we were to recast our gaze at the *Bahir* and *Shekhinah*, independent of the move from Rabbinism to Kabbalism, would we still be focused on this problem and would we arrive at the same conclusions?

If indeed the *Bahir* works *from* a belief and constructed symbolic order of the divine feminine, then these passages could be but scant examples of what

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[85] Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 48-54; Meroz, 'A Passage Attributed to the *Bahir*'.

[86] See Moshe Idel, 'Rabbinism Versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 281-296; idem, 'On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah', *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning: Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleşu's Sixtieth Anniversary*, ed. Mihail Neamţu and Bogdan Tátaru-Cazaban, Cluj 2009, pp. 65-110.

constitutes the *Shekhinah*. If, however, the category of the feminine in the divine theosophy is gradually constructed by the text through such interpretations, then we might consider that the sexualized feminization of the *Shekhinah* as an important cognomen of this divine grade is, on its own, a key building block of the edifice of kabbalistic symbolism which was later taken for granted.

In a lengthy footnote to his study on the *Shekhinah* and Mary, Arthur Green offered a survey of the senses in which the term *Shekhinah* is interpreted in the *Bahir*. Although the femininity of the *Shekhinah* in the *Bahir* forms the basis of his comparison with Christian traditions of the period, his conclusions are that the term *Shekhinah* does not display the feminine images more commonly assumed to exist in early kabbalistic works. His comment begins with a search for the association made famous in Scholem's article.

> The term *kenesset yisra'el* is interestingly rather rare in the *Bahir*. In #46 *kenesset yisra'el* is the force that judges and punishes Israel, based on "I will punish you sevenfold for your sins" (Lev. 26:28). Therefore, *kenesset yisra'el* says, "do not imagine that I will seek mercy for you." Thus *kenesset yisra'el* and the actual people of Israel are clearly distinct from one another. *Yisra'el,* without *kenesset,* is the term used for the actual Jewish people in #26, 94, 107, and elsewhere. The term *shekhinah* appears several times in the *Bahir*. In #50 *shekhinah* is identified with the first sort, the less harsh sort, of *tsedeq,* based on association with the verse "righteousness will dwell in her" (Is. 1:21). Since that verse clearly refers to Jerusalem, we see that the associative cluster Jerusalem/Righteousness/*Shekhinah* is already in place in the *Bahir*.[87]

My sense is that both Scholem and Green approach the *Bahir* in pursuit of associations that were dominant and central to other bodies of literature, with an eye toward the possible mythological status of the rabbinic term for the people, which is quite prevalent for later kabbalists as the hypostatic grade of theosophy (and additionally serves a secondary and modern interest when compared to the typological exegesis of the Song of Songs in medieval Christian circles). Neither of these interests should hold our attention for too long when reading the three sections in question, as they are for the most part artificial to the discourse of the midrashic passages in the *Bahir* that employ the term *Shekhinah*. While I do not wish to underestimate the importance of tracking the first appearance and use of associations that characterize the fuller worldview

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[87] Green, '*Shekhinah*, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs', p. 16.

and hermeneutics of a literature that developed at a later time, as well as locate those associations within the history of ideas, this interest can be overstated when considering the text outside of the larger historical concerns and may misconstruing the contextual appreciation of the texts in this incipient stage of kabbalistic thought.

Scholem's division of the *Bahir* into 140 passages is on the whole insightful, explaining the way he understood the text. Margolioth's overdetermined, round number of 200 is telling of a desire amongst some editors (and readers) to expect and 'identify' the intended structure of the text which it most certainly lacks.[88] Scholem's passage divisions were used throughout his publications and serve as an important anchor for scholarly reference.[89] Nevertheless, in some cases it is better to speak of text-blocks that do not correspond to any one paragraph according to Scholem's divisions. Indeed, an interesting point in the textual history and transmission of the manuscripts to the *Bahir* is the spacing which divides the paragraphs, beginning with Ms. Munich 209, offering a small, but possibly significant, key to understanding how the passages were read in different communities of readers.

In the following section of the this chapter, annotated translations of the three text blocks that contain the term *Shekhinah* will be presented in order to contextualize the first technical use of the term in a kabbalistic text. This exercise is admittedly limited and skewed in that the images will be analyzed in isolation of the other passages contained in the edited work known as the *Bahir*. The three text blocks will be translated and discussed according to two early manuscripts, Ms. Munich 209, dated 1298 and Ms. Zurich 172 copied in Italian script in the fourteenth century.[90] A transcription of the original Hebrew

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[88] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 50-51 n. 1.

[89] In my 1994 edition I offered a chart detailing the correspondence between the passage divisions in Scholem's and Margolioth's editions, my Hebrew text following those found in Scholem's German translations. This chart was apparently reproduced in the new Chzech translation of *Origins of the Kabbalah*: Gershom Scholem, *Počátky kabaly*, Praha 2009, p. 306.

[90] Ms. Zürich, Zentral Bibliothek, Heid. 27 [172], fols. 62a-80a (Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts #2515). See N. Allony and E. F. Kupfer, *List of Photocopies in the Institute, Part II, Hebrew Manuscripts in the Libraries of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 120-121, #1454. A fuller discussion and description of this manuscript is provided in Idel, *R. Menaḥem Recanati*, pp. 72-75 [Hebrew].

of the three sections, as found in these two manuscripts, is presented in an appendix to this chapter. Although copied later than the earliest dated manuscript, Ms. Zurich lacks certain glosses that were entered into the Munich manuscript, proving that the dissemination of even one family of manuscripts does not display a linear trajectory and that historical primacy does not necessarily offer a better text. One such example is the absence of a gloss referring to the '*Shekhinah*'.

10. Righteousness as Israel's Shekhinah (§§49-51)

Later kabbalistic works identify *ṣedaqah*, *ṣaddiq* and *ṣedeq* as the sixth, ninth and tenth *sefirot* respectively. Each term not only identifies a particular grade and position in the divine theosophy, but also a particular role and character of that *sefirah*.[91] In reading the *Bahir*, we must be careful not to project these understandings back onto the earliest traditions, even, and especially when, these terms are understood in some theosophic sense. In such cases, the common identification of a *sefirah* might lead the modern reader to jump to the conclusion that all of the accompanying images of later traditions should be read back into that term.

Much of the text-block of §§49-51 is structured around interpretations to Hab. 3:2, and other verses which contain the term *ṣedeq*. It then proceeds along interpretive lines, to other verses that contain the term *ṣedeq*, culminating in a parable about this divine attribute. A close reading of the passage will show resistance to unifying the meaning of the term *ṣedeq*, which has various meanings in the *Bahir*, this amidst the interpretive effort to establish the hypostatic quality of *ṣedeq*. The term *Shekhinah* appears in §§50-51. I have included a translation of §49 in order to present the fuller context of the discussion of the key verse of Ḥabaquq 3:2.

> [§49] Another matter: 'Renew them in these years' (Hab. 3:2).[92] A parable. To what can this be compared? To a king who had a fine gem (*margalit*, fem.) and she was the (most) beloved in his kingdom. In his time of joy, he would embrace her and kiss her, and place her on his head and he would love her. Ḥabaquq

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[91] See also the obscure reference to *ṣedeq* in the tradition of R. Abraham ben Isaac, 'This is what I received from my fathers: when *ṣedeq* reaches half of the throne of Glory, redemption immediately comes to Israel'. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 204.

[92] The verse may possibly have been understood as 'Your actions [are achieved] from within [or: through] the years'.

> said to him: Even though the kings are with you, this gem is loved in your world. Therefore 'renew them in your years' (Ibid.). And what is the meaning of the term 'years', as it is written, 'And God said, "Let there be light and there was light"' (Gen. 1:3). And light is none other than [the] day, as it is written, 'And the great light dominated the day and the lesser light dominated the night' (Gen. 1:16). And 'years' are [made up of] days, as it is written, 'Renew them in these years', [that is], within this gem which gives birth to 'the years'. And [so] it is written, 'From the East I will bring your seed' (Is. 43:5). And the sun shines from the East. But you said that the gem is [the] 'day'. I did not say [anything] except 'it was night, it was morning, the first day' (Gen 1:5), as it is written, 'On the day the Lord made earth and heaven' (Gen. 2:4).

This text block opens with a theosophic recasting of the verse from Ḥabaquq in which the flow of time is expressed by its renewal in years, which is then translated into the emanative flow that creates and maintains the *sefirot*. This move is achieved by breaking down the years into days, and through the verse from Genesis, days are understood to be created and constituted by light. It is here that the gendered duality within the complex theosophic monism is established, so that the corresponding darkness, night, and the lesser light of the moon are all offered as images of the corresponding feminine grade. Her femininity is read through the parable of the king and his gem, a parallel construction of the sexualized couple. The gem, we are told, is loved and when the king is aroused – 'in his time of joy' – he relates to her sexually as described in the somewhat (and intentionally) reserved expressions of the kiss and the embrace, followed by the more curious locution of placing her 'on his head', 'and [or: so] that he could love her' [*ve-'ohev 'ota*]. My impression is that these acts detail the progression of the sexual interaction between the masculine king and the feminized gem, making these phases euphemisms.

Out of his love for her he wishes 'to renew her' as prescribed by the verse from *Ḥabaquq*, which is then interpreted as the streaming of light through the days and years, which are appellations for the hypostatic beings, first referred to as the kings,[93] that apparently mediate between the king and his gem. This we learn from the kings' attachment to the king (*she-ha-melakhim 'imkha*). Against this designation of the gem as the last grade of the divinity, the text also states that the gem gives birth to the 'years', placing her at the top of the theosophic structure, presumably *Binah*, if we were to follow later theosophic symbolism. What is clear, however, is that the light seed flows from the East

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93 Compare to the reference of the ten kings in *Bahir* §19.

and constitutes the days. A parallel might then be suggested between the subordination of the kings to the king and the days accumulating into years. The gem is thus renewed through her being loved by the kings that are found in the king's world.

Thus, in its opening lines, the passage reveals an ambivalence, or even an anxiety on the part of the king regarding the constitution of 'his world'. Even as the (other) kings are said to be with him, the king needs to be reassured, in a statement formulated in the second person, that the gem is also in his world. Looking more closely at this formulation, it seems that a tension exists between the kings and the gem. That is, even though the kings are with the king, this gem is nevertheless beloved (*'ota ha-margalit ḥemdah hi be-'olamkha*), pointing to the competition, jealousy or even the misogyny characteristic of the relations Above. The text, however, states against this grain that she is loved in the king's world, that is, she is loved by the other kings. She should therefore be renewed amongst or by means of the years, understood as the renewal brought on by the kings who are constituted by light, homologized as the seed which comes from the East. While the sexual interaction of the lesser males with this feminine persona, might suggest the later and standardized placement of the lower feminine grade as the tenth *sefirah* in this passage, she also gives birth to the years, placing her causally, if not hierarchically, above the kings. Here too, I will resist identifying the gem as *Binah*, the *sefirah* known in many kabbalistic traditions as the supernal mother, as the reading of the passage does not necessitate such rigid identifications.

The final lines of §49 accord with the general spirit of the *Book Bahir*, both in the ambiguous nature of its theosophic designations and the free style of the midrashic exchanges between the rabbinic figures who themselves are unclear about the doctrines offered by one another. Although this passage is introduced as 'another matter', not attributed to any particular Rabbi, the passage concludes with an objection to the homilist, 'But you said, that the gem was the day', as if the students verbally note the dissonance between what they just heard and previous teachings, presumably the beginning of this very passage. The gem, however, was not equated with the day(s), unless we understand the stated (procreation) of years by the gem as the generation of years by the day(s). The respondent, apparently their teacher, answers that all he has already recited, and thus explained, the two verses from Genesis. I understand the dialogue to consist of a debate about the gender valence of the gem, which the students understood to be masculine, identified as the day. The teacher retorts, however, by way of Scripture, that a 'day' contains both evening and

morning, and that God created the earth and the heavens, both being referents that are typed as complementary and gendered aspects of the divine unity. The gem according to the teacher is therefore androgynous, the feminine love-object of the masculine king, who gives birth to the years, but also contains aspects of the masculine.

Scholem's break between §49 and §50 is somewhat misleading in that the verses offered in the beginning of §50 are the direct continuation of the preceding discussion. On the theme of the duality contained within the day the verse from Psalms 48:12 is cited to show how clouds and darkness shroud the heavens, presenting a revealed layer to the concealed supernal realm.

> [§50] And it is written, 'He made darkness His screen, dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky [*sheḥaqim*] [where his pavilion about him]' (Ps. 48:12). He said to him about this: it is written '[Pour down O skies from above]: Let the heavens [*sheḥaqim*] rain down Justice [*ṣedeq*]' (Is. 45:8). And *ṣedeq* is the Attribute of Justice [which acts] on the world [*middat dino shel 'olam*], as it is written 'Justice, Justice you shall pursue' (Deut. 16:20). And it is written after that 'So that you will live and inherit [the land]' (Ibidem). If you judge yourself you shall live and if not, he will [bring] judgment [upon you] [*yadin 'alekha*][94] and you shall establish [Ms. Munich: *ve-teqayyem*; Ms. Zürich: *ve-titqayyem*] [justice] against your will. And why [is it written] 'Justice, Justice', [that is], twice? He said to him: it is written, 'Out of brilliance before him' (Ps. 18:13). The first *ṣedeq* is the hypostatic [*mammash*: literally, true or actual] *ṣedeq*.
>
> | *Ms. Munich:* | *Ms. Zürich:* |
> |---|---|
> | and She is [the] *Shekhinah* [*ve-hee shekhinah*], | <Ms. Zurich lacks this identification, see below> |
>
> as it is written 'Justice dwells within Her' (Is. 1:21). And what is the second *ṣedeq*? This is the *sedeq* that frightens the righteous. And is this Justice [*ṣedeq*] [equated with] charity [*ṣedaqah*] or not? He said to him: No. What is the quality of *ṣedaqah*? As it is written, 'He donned righteousness [*ṣedeqah*] like a coat of mail' and *ṣedeq* [Ms. Zurich reads alternatively: *ṣedaqah*] is the 'helmet of triumph on his head' (Is. 59:17), and truth is nothing but peace, as it says, 'The beginning of your word is truth' (Is. 39:8). So said Hezekiah: There shall be peace and truth [*shalom ve-'emet*] in my time' (Ibidem), is it possible for a man to say this? Rather, he [Ḥezekiah] said: This same attribute that you gave to David, my father, is half of 'my days', and peace and truth are the other half of

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[94] Formulated according to the strange syntax of *yadin 'alekha,* literally upon you, instead of the biblical '*imkha,* or the rabbinic and medieval accusative, *'otkha*.

> 'my days'. Therefore he mentioned 'my days' and mentioned peace and truth. 'In my days', that all is one, as it is written [concerning] Peace 'it was evening and it was morning, a first day (Gen. 1:5). What is a day? It is peace. So he requested peace as it is written, peace and truth will be in my days', the same attribute that you gave to David, my father, as it is written, 'His throne, was as a sun before me' (Ps. 89:37).

The passage opens with a series of verses that present *ṣedeq* as the clouds in heaven. Water here takes on the form of darkness and the heavens (*sheḥaqim*) exact a measure of justice below as *ṣedeq*. Two forms of *ṣedeq* are thus described, the first identified as the Holy One, and the second as the divine grade that frightens the righteous, administering justice. The doubling of the term *ṣedeq* in the key verse from Deuteronomy affords the opportunity to employ analogical hermeneutics, identifying the first *ṣedeq* as the intentional referent of the biblical text as the hypostasis Above. This leads to a series of interpretations on the term *ṣedeq* and *ṣedaqah*, which leads to a verse in Ḥabaquq and a related parable about disobedient children. The parable's importance for the present discussion is its application in the concluding part of §51 where Israel's *Shekhinah* is mentioned and referred to as a divine attribute (*middah*), explicitly marking the theosophic reading of the parable. The parable offers a complex configuration of the divine personality, which affords the distancing of divine anger from compassion in certain moments as the separate identification of the king and his wife, mother to his children.

> [§51] And what is 'Make them known in the years' (Hab. 3:3). He thus said: I knew that you are the Holy God, as it is written, 'Who is like You, majestic in holiness' (Ex. 15:11). And holiness is in You and You are in holiness. Even so, 'Make them known in the years' (Hab. 3:2). And what is 'make known'? It is that he will be merciful, as it is written, 'God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them' (Ex. 2:25). And what does 'He knew' mean?
> *A parable.* To what can this be compared? To a king who had a beautiful wife and he had many children from her whom he loved and raised. And they became corrupt. He hated them and hated their mother. Their mother came to them [and said]: My sons, why are you[95] such that you [cause your] father to hate me and you. Eventually they showed regret and reverted back to pleasing their father. Their father saw them this way and <Ms. Munich adds: loved them as before and> remembered[96] their mother, as it is written, 'He saw' and 'He

[95] A later hand interlinear added '*osim* into Ms. Munich: 'why do act as you do'.

[96] The marginal gloss in Ms. Munich reads '*ahav*, 'he loved'.

> knew' (Ibid.) and it is written 'Make them known in their years' (Hab. 3:2). And what is 'In anger, remember compassion' (Ibid.). He said: When your sons [*Ms. Zurich reads instead*: my sons[97]] sin against you and you become angry, remember compassion. And what is '[Remember your] compassion' (Hab. 3:2)? <*Ms Zurich adds*: as it is written, 'I will receive him back in love' (Jer. 31:9), as is written, Lord, David remembered that it is written 'I adore you' (Ps. 18:2)>, as it is written 'I adore you [*'arahmekha*] O Lord, my strength' (Ps. 18:2). And you gave him this attribute which is Israel's *Shekhinah* [*shekhinatan shel yisrael*] and remember his son who inherited [what was his] and he gave her to him, as it is written, 'The Lord had given Solomon Wisdom' (1 K 5:26). And remember her father, Abraham, as it is written, 'Abraham my friend [*'ohavi*]', [and] 'Make them known in the years' (Hab. 3:3).[98]

The gendered casting of these emotive positions is unavoidable as *Shekhinah* is identified as the mother. The role of the mother in the parable is to distance the king from his sons and to protect them from his anger which is cast on her as well. She therefore serves as a mediating force *within* the divine personality, which reminds the King that He should remember His compassion, and revert back to love and affection for His children and for their mother. The mother, therefore, not only serves as the feminine protector of the children understood as Israel, the children of the divine. This feminized *Shekhinah* further draws upon the ancient tradition of feminized Wisdom and is given over to the sons (Israel) as it was to Solomon. The apparent gift[99] of Wisdom is given in love to Abraham, following an equation of compassion with love based on the additional meaning of *RḤM*, with that of *'AHV*, which describes God's revelation to Abraham. *Shekhinah* thus functions as the feminine and maternal attribute of divine Wisdom that recalls and restores positive emotions to the divine personality and thus protects Israel from the masculine anger of God. This claim is accomplished through a midrashic reading of the verse from Ḥabaquq, 'make them known in the years', which in this instance is rendered as

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97 Here, I would prefer the reading in Ms. Zürich, in that while his calm the king attributes his sons to himself but in anger, refers to them as the sons of their mother. Compare to Exodus 32:7. See Yochanan Muffs, *Love and Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel*, New York and Jerusalem 1992, p. 12.

98 *Bahir* §§ 50-51; Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom', pp. 170-171.

99 Compare to *Bahir* §43; Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom', 158-159; idem, *Language, Eros Being*, p. 161.

the process of 'making known' or taking into account all the aspects (years) of the divine character so that the complex personality can arrive at an integrated decision and action.

11. The Tree that Bears Fruit §85

The image of the tree (*'ilan*) as the organic and reproductive metaphor of the being and function of the divine theosophy recurs throughout the *Book Bahir*. Although sexualized in its reproduction, the particular passage (§85) which mentions the term *Shekhinah*, does not speak of sexualized couples of male and female trees as in the famous parable of the single female citron (*'etrog*) tree added to the ten male trees. In §85, the tree becomes the organizing structure of the divine world, identified with Wisdom as it continues to feed off its waters. The comparison of the divine to a tree is based on the parallel function of bearing fruit, so that in the theosophic model the sefirotic tree bears the fruit of the souls of the righteous.

> [§85] And what is [this] tree of which you have spoken? He said to him: All of the powers [*koḥotav*] of the Holy One, blessed be He, are [configured] one above the other and they resemble a tree. Just as a tree produces fruit by means of water, so too the Holy One, blessed be He, multiplies the powers [*marbeh koḥotav*] of the tree by means of the water. And what is this water for the Holy One, blessed be He? It is Wisdom[100] [which similarly causes] the [collective] soul of the righteous, which blossom [*porḥin*] from the well [*ma'ayan*] [and fly] to the great channel, and rise and cling to the tree. And what makes them blossom? And what causes them to blossom? When Israel are righteous and good *Shekhinah* resides among them and resides in their deeds, in the bosom of the Holy One, blessed be He, and [He] causes them to be fruitful and multiply [*mafre 'otam u-marbeh*],[101]

Ms. Munich:	*Ms. Zürich:*
and so [she is appropriately] called the *Shekhinah*,	And how do we know that the *Shekhinah* is called water,

> as it is written 'riding through the heavens to help you, and with his magnificence through the heavens' (Deut. 33:26), and it is written, 'and [from]

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[100] Ms. Zurich reads: *ḥakhamim*, the Sages.

[101] A marginal gloss in Ms. Munich adds *'otam*, as found as well in the body of the text of Ms. Zürich. The text reads better without the word and is apparently added by later hands to complete a sense of parallelism in the phrasing.

> the heavens will drip justice (Is. 45:8). And Justice is *the Shekhinah*, as it is written, 'Justice will dwell in her' (Is. 1:21) and justice was given to David, as it is written, 'The Lord will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, for all generations, Halleluja' (Ps. 146:10), and it is written, 'Zion is the city of David' (2 Sam. 5:7).[102]

The passage is replete with subtle associations, identifications and double meanings, motivated in part by the language of the parable, but primarily by the way the images are woven together. The passage begins with what appears to be a declaration of a structured theosophy of the hypostatic traits of the godhead, here termed 'powers'. The repetition of the term *koḥot* in the opening lines plays on the dual meaning of the term in this passage as the hypostatic grades of the divine theosophy which are *strengthened* when they function as reproductive agents of the structure above.[103] The Holy One, blessed be He, is thus compared to a tree whose powers generate the fruits of the tree, the external, reproductive by-product of the organic entity which is nourished from Above by the waters identified as divine Wisdom (*shel ha-qadosh barukh hu*). These clear distinctions break down, as the waters of Wisdom seem to be identified with the Holy One, and are not an additional force supplying sustenance to the tree, which is the Holy One. And even when it seems that the powers constitute the tree, a second meaning to the reproduction (*marbeh*) of the tree in its fruit is implicit. The words *marbeh koḥotav* can also be rendered as strengthening or aggrandizing His powers, which were said to be 'configured one above the other'. Later, the fruits of the tree are identified as the souls of the righteous. However, following the awkward syntax and grammar of the passage, the fruits are identified as the collective soul of the righteous [in the singular, *nishmat ha-ṣaddiqim*], which blossom from this tree. The term blossom, *porḥim*, carries with it a second sense of flying, indicating that the souls, as the fruit of the tree, fall or fly off their base to the world below.

This cluster of images forms the basis of a myth, where the separation of the Soul of the righteous allows for the theurgic practice that unites them to the divine and ensures the continued procreativity of the tree from which the Soul came. Until this point in the passage one could argue that the water, the tree and the fruit are all equated with each other in a symbolic continuum, identified

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[102] *Bahir* §85. Compare to Scholem, 'Kabbalah and Myth', pp. 91-92

[103] On hydraulic images of power in the *Bahir* see Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism: From Rabbinic Literature to Safedian Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 73-74 [Hebrew].

with each other ontologically beyond what the organic image on its own would suggest. In the ensuing myth, the procreation of the tree is sexualized as the male and female aspects which couple in response to the activity of the righteous below. The Soul(s) of the righteous blossom (or fly off) from the well to the great channel, thereby 'rising and clinging' to the tree, in what may refer to a contemplative act such as prayer. The image is nevertheless sexual, suggesting the seminal emission of the phallic grade above. From the lower world, the '[Soul of the] righteous' perform(s) good deeds, presumably the rabbinic framework of the commandments, causing *Shekhinah* to reside amongst them and reside in their actions. This clearly theurgic activity not only provides the resting space for the attachment of the divine to the now-separated offspring, but additionally unites *Shekhinah* Above to the Holy One, resting in His bosom, which I understand to be a euphemism for sexual intercourse Above, especially considering the immediate continuation which states the procreative result of this union, which bears fruit, and reproduces (literally, multiplies) the righteous even more Below. While the language returns to the blessing given in Genesis 1, *pᵉru u-revu*, the original copyist of the Munich manuscript curiously left out the second object so that it reads *u-mafre 'otam, u-marbeh*, possibly meaning that *they* are impregnated as He multiplies Himself in or through them and so gains strength.[104]

Shekhinah is apparently understood here as a sexual term in that the etymology is immediately explained in this context, *de-shekhinah 'iqreit*, suggesting that the dwelling of *Shekhinah* is causally responsible for the incipient fertility. *Shekhinah* is here possibly a euphemism for coupling, literally, 'dwelling with'. Indeed, in context, Her power is expressed or actualized when She dwells below. Another meaning related to the same root of dwelling, *ShKN*, is that She settles the world by inhabiting it with the new souls that She fructifies. These interpretations are reinforced by the supporting verses which are cited to demonstrate the appropriateness of this appellative.

The closing lines of the passage offer scriptural support for the theosophic midrash, all of which resonate with a sexual reinterpretation of the biblical sense of the verses. Riding (*rokhev*) certainly suggests an image of coupling as the masculine aspect of the divine rides Above, presumably in union with *Shekhinah*. The masculine power Above may further be understood according to this verse to produce the seed. In BT Ḥagiga 12b the heaven named

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[104] Curiously, Ms. Zurich refers to them in the feminine (*u-mafre 'otan u-marbeh 'otan*), suggesting perhaps their assimilation into *Shekhinah* as feminine.

'*sheḥaqim* is that in which millstones stand and grind [*toḥanot*] manna for the righteous as it is said: And He commanded the skies [*sheḥaqim*] above, and opened the doors of heaven; and He caused manna to rain upon them for food (Ps. 78:24)'. The product of grinding [*sheḥaqim*] is then identified in kabbalistic sources, such as Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orah*, as the seventh and eighth *sefirot*, imaged as the testes of the male body, producing or grinding, as it were, the food-seed which is emitted from the phallic *Yesod* and so transferred in union to the tenth *sefirah*, *Shekhinah*.[105] Continuing the same technical use of this term for heaven, the following supportive verse in the passage from the *Bahir* offers a similar image of justice [*ṣedeq*] dripping from *sheḥaqim*. In later kabbalistic works, *ṣedeq* is identified with the *Shekhinah*. Here it seems that the intent is to the masculine, seminal fluid produced in heaven, but also playing on the androgynous nature of the divine waters.

We might here consider that the following words, 'and *ṣedeq* is *the Shekhinah*' amount to a *later gloss* that reflects the set terminology of theosophic symbolism that emerged sometime after the theosophic version of the *Bahir* was first formulated and was interpolated into the text of later manuscripts copied nearly a century after its initial dissemination. The text reads well without the phrase, which on its own appears to be a gloss and breaks the flow of the verses cited one after the other. Moreover, it standardizes the later identification *against the meaning found in the passage, when read as a whole*. So, the third verse, 'Justice will dwell in her' (Is. 1:21), is arguably a sexual image of intercourse, whereby *ṣedeq* is the male found inside the female. The phrase *ṣedeq natan le-David* could be read in various ways depending on the sense of the verb. That is, *ṣedeq* could be identified as *Yesod* which gives something to David, or *Yesod* could be paired off with David, coupled to her. Alternatively as in the verse, *titen 'emet le-ya'aqov, ḥesed le-'avraham* (Micah 7:20, and see for example *Bahir* §92), *ṣedeq* could be identified with David as the female. Finally, *ṣedeq* might be identified as the higher source of David, identified here as the fifth *sefirah*, *Gevurah*. The verse that follows offers little to clarify the matter, as the Tetragrammaton is forever Lord over Zion, usually identified as *Yesod* but sometimes, as in *Bahir* §26, the gates of Zion are clearly the feminine, tenth *sefirah*.

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[105] *Sha'arei Orah*, Warsaw 1883, fol. 35a. ודע כי שתי מידות האלו שהם נצ״ח והו״ד, שהם י״י אלהים צבאות, נקראים שחקים. ואלו שני היכלות המכינים מזון לצדיקים ונקראו שחקים. וזהו שארז״ל שחקים שבהם טוחנים מן לצדיקים. ותדע לך בבירור כי בסוד שחקים נמשך המן והטל, וסימן וברדת הטל על המחנה לילה ירד המן עליו.

12. *The 'End of the Shekhinah' (§§ 115-116): The Gendered Continuum of Ontology*

While cast in terms that only somewhat reflect the later kabbalistic terminology, the text block §§115-116 is nevertheless a discussion of the unity between the gendered grades of the divine theosophy. The passage certainly offers unique associations between the divine grades, including the obscure locution *sof ha-shekhinah*, 'the end of the *Shekhinah*' or possibly the external limit to the Divine Presence. Whereas Green claims that *Shekhinah* is not identified here with the feminine aspect of the Godhead,[106] my reading will show that the tradition makes sense only when understood through the union achieved between the male and female counterparts of the divinity and humanity.

> [§115] What is nine? He said to him: The ninth and the tenth are together (*yaḥad*, one) each corresponding to the other, and one is taller its partner [*gavoah mi-ḥavero*] by five hundred years. And they are like two wheels, one is inclined to the North and one is inclined to the West and they journey to the lower land. What is [the] lower? [It is] the last of the seven lands below, and the end of the Holy One, blessed be He's *Shekhinah* [*shekhinato shel ha-qadosh barukh hu*] is below His feet, as it is written 'The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool' (Is. 66:1), and there is the eternity of the world below, as it is written 'forever and ever [*neṣah neṣaḥim*]' (Is. 34:10). What is forever [*neṣaḥ*]? Rather, 'forever' is one. And what is that? It is that which inclines to the West. And the second one inclines to the side of the North. And the third? It is the one that is below. [But] Three? You said there were two wheels of the chariot? Rather, I would say that the end of the *Shekhinah* is also [called] 'forever' [*neṣah*], and so 'forever and ever' [*neṣah neṣaḥim*] [should be understood as], *neṣaḥ* is one and *neṣaḥim*, [is an additional two, making a total of] three.

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[106] In *Keter*, pp. 114-146, Green offers a different translation and analysis than that offered here. Green does not explain the passage in terms of sexual imagery, an interpretation which he returned to in his later article '*Shekhinah*', where he comments (p. 16 n. 68): 'This very important text reflects an early stage in the development of Kabbalistic symbolism, in which the term *shekhinah* is not yet identified with the feminine aspect of the Godhead. See the parable that follows in Bahir #116. See my translation and treatment of this text in Green, *Keter*, p. 145ff. The "elevation" of *neṣaḥ* and *hod* from ninth and tenth place to seventh and eighth in the sefirotic system is a subject that I hope to treat elsewhere'.

> [§116] His students said to him: Our Rabbi, from above to below we know, from below to above we do not know. [They are] not all the same [*ḥad*, or: one], from above to below, as it is from below to above.
> [They said]: Our Rabbi, The one who ascends is not comparable to the one who descends, because the one who descends [does so] running while the one who ascends does not do so. Moreover, the one who ascends can do so by a route other than the one he used to descend.
> He said to them: Go and see. He sat and explained to them: *Shekhinah* is below, just as *Shekhinah* is above. What is this *Shekhinah*? I have said that this is the light that was emanated from the first light which is Wisdom [that] also encompasses [*mesovev*] everything, as is written 'His Glory fills the whole earth' (Is. 6:3). And what does it do?
> A parable. To what can this be compared? To a king who had seven sons and he assigned each one to his station. He said to them: Be seated one upon the other. The most inferior [of the sons] said: I will not sit below and will not distance myself from you. He said to them: I will walk about [*mesovev*] and see you [pl., *'etkhem*] all day, as it says, 'His Glory fills the whole earth' (Is. 6:3). And why is he amongst them? In order to establish and sustain them. And what are these sons? I have already told you, that the Holy One, blessed be He, has seven holy forms and they all correspond to mankind [*'adam*], as is written, in the form of man he created *'adam*, male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27). And they are: The right and left thighs, right and left arms, the torso [down through] the penis [*guf be-verito*], the head – this makes six.
> [The students said]: But you said there were seven?
> [The teacher responded]: His wife is [counted] as the seventh, as it is written 'and the became one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). She was taken from his ribs, as it is written, 'And He took one of his ribs' (Gen. 2:21). He said to them: Not from his ribs. And does he have ribs? No, as it is written, 'and the side [*ve-la-ṣela*] of the tabernacle, which is translated as the side of the tabernacle.[107]

Passage 115 opens with a presentation of the 'correspondence' between the ninth and the tenth, asserting that they are 'together'. My immediate inclination is to read this language as evidence of the sexual union that is commonly found in descriptions of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, the ninth and tenth *sefirot*. The term *ke-neged* could in this context allude to Genesis 2:18, 20 which describe woman's creation as the man's mate. The text then describes one divine potency as taller than the other, following the language used in BT Ḥagiga 13b to

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[107] Scholem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', p. 173; Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom', p. 166 (§116, cited as Margolioth §171).

describe angelic figures. Reverting to *merkavah* imagery, these angelic grades are inclined to the North and the West, concluding their journey in the lower land. While a *precise* identification of these positions in the sefirotic hierarchy would amount to a forced interpretation, the lower land seems to be intended as the last grade of being of the theosophy. Indeed, 'lands' appears as a cognomen for the hypostasis, counting the seven that are blow the coupling for the first sexualized pair. It is here that *Shekhinah* is referenced as the Divine Presence, residing in the (material) world below as the lowest representation or extension of the divinity. While this phrasing, the *Shekhinah* of the Holy One, blessed be He, does not significantly depart from rabbinic traditions and terminology, in the Bahiric context, *Shekhinah* is referred to on its own and still integrated within the collective identity of the divine, the Holy One, blessed be He. The remainder of §115 seeks to explain the verse from Isaiah, justifying *neṣaḥ, neṣaḥim* as a reference to two grades of being and not three. My suggestion is that the passage is wrestling with the dual function and presence of the last grade within the divine theosophy and within the lower world, sometimes defined as such. *Shekhinah* is thus termed *neṣaḥim* to mark this dual function, appearing linguistically in the plural, but in the divine realm, serving as the partner to the male, termed *neṣaḥ*.

Passage 116 continues this very discussion in a lesson between the unnamed Rabbi and his students. The students query their teacher who apparently presented the prior instruction of §115 to them. The students pose their question as if their teacher's prior lesson referred to the theosophic structure as viewed from the downward flow of divine efflux, uniting the ninth with the tenth, and that a difference might exist if considered from below to above. The Rabbi's answer affirms the theme and context of emanation, using imagery of light which is emitted from Wisdom and encompasses everything. It is in this context that *Shekhinah* is located both above and below (reworking an earlier midrashic tradition in a theosophic vein).[108] While in other contexts we may speak of two *Shekhinahs* or Glories,[109] or the fallen daughter of a higher (feminine) Wisdom,[110] here the term *Shekhinah* marks the continuity of divine

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[108] *Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit, Batte Midrashot*, ed. S. Wertheimer, new edition with additions and corrections by Abraham Wertheimer, Jerusalem 1980, vol. 1, p. 30. See Scholem, '*Shekhinah*: The Feminine Element in Divinity', p. 296 n. 59; Green, *Keter*, p. 145 n. 38.

[109] See Wolfson, 'The Image of Jacob'.

[110] On the Hellenistic and gnostic parallels to the *Bahir* see Scholem, *Origins of the*

ontology and the Divine Presence, following the literal meaning of the term, in that the divine light extends through the theosophic structure and down into the lower world. The passage thus equates *Shekhinah* with Wisdom, light and the Glory, as mentioned in the verse.

The ensuing parable of the seven sons, arranged hierarchically, echoes the language of the Rabbi's answer in that the king rejects any claim of a privileged position of one over another, stating that he equally visits (*mesovev*) all the stations, returning to the verse from Isaiah, which thus identifies the king as the Glory. The parable unfolds into a secondary discussion between the Rabbi and the students which equates the king and his sons with the Holy One, blessed be He, and his seven holy forms as the structure of the human body. It is here that *Shekhinah* is feminized and sexualized, as the seventh form which completes the identity and constitution of the *'adam* as the genus of humanity. The *Bahir* passage then adopts a reworking of the tradition in *Genesis Rabbah*,[111] which seeks to harmonize the two creation stories in Genesis, recasting the man's rib as the side of the androgynous being that was separated out to create and delineate the (masculine and) feminine. Sex and gender thus emerge out of the original unity, a relation that exists according to the Rabbi, in the theosophic realm when viewed from the human perspective of contemplation about their nature, or from Above, from within the downward descent of the light that 'establishes and maintains' all of the grades of the divine ontology and is contiguous with the lower world in which *Shekhinah* resides.

This is indeed a remarkable tradition that presents one of the first concentrated kabbalistic discussions of theosophy, emanation and gender as it

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Kabbalah, pp. 81-96; Green, *Keter*, pp. 141-142; Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*'.

[111] See Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, Leipzig 1923, p. 125; idem, Origins of the Kabbalah, p. 141; Moshe Idel, 'The World of Angels in Human Form', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3 [1-2] = *Studies in Philosophy, Mysticism, and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Dan and J. Hacker, Jerusalem 1986, p. 31; idem, 'On the Problem of Research in the Sources to the *Book Bahir*', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 [3-4] = *Early Jewish Mysticism*, ed. J. Dan, Jerusalem 1987, pp. 60-61; Elliot Wolfson, 'Woman – The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophic Observations on the Divine Androgyne', *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Identity and Culture*, ed. L. Silberstein and R. Cohn, New York 1994, pp. 166-204, esp. p. 171. Abrams, *The Female Body of God*, pp. 74-75.

explicates the relationship between transcendence and immanence. *Shekhinah* is clearly homologized as the feminine, completing the anthropomorphic structure, after the full account of the limbs or (sexual) organs and the male sex, in the androcentric cataloging of human anatomy that recognizes the woman only after its own self-accounting. Woman is thus a constituent part of the category and definition of humanity, a distinction that is argued as well through the parable of the sons, in which the lowest son objects to his diminished position, understood as the theosophic position of the lowest and feminine *sefirah*.

13. *Later Glosses and Accretions to the Manuscript Witnesses: The Transformation of the Text of the Bahir*

Scholarship since Gershom Scholem has worked with a romantic and idealistic understanding of the work known as the (*Book*) *Bahir*. The object of study of the *Book Bahir* was rarely, if ever, the actual manuscripts that survived, following the oddities and surprises that emerge from any particular manuscript copy. Scholem based his dissertation on Ms. Munich 209 which was copied in 1298, beginning his work with a sound textual anchor. One might think that given its early date relative to the many other copies produced in the following centuries, Scholem felt free to ignore the later transmission history. But this is not the case. Scholem modified the text in his translation in accordance with other testimonies when he did not approve of the reading in Ms. Munich. The point here is not that Scholem appreciated the complexities of reception and transformation, but relied on the assumption that his philological sense could uncover the *original* work that was *hidden* behind the corruptions and errors produced in its transmission.

In his *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Scholem did not analyze the book in a paragraph-by-paragraph commentary, but approached the work through a thematic analysis of his choosing. *Origins of the Kabbalah* is arguably Scholem's greatest scholarly achievement, his finest volume and most nuanced treatment of a body of texts. Scholem was aware of the complex authorship and editing which produced the *Bahir* and wrote about its history at great length. Nevertheless, his thematic treatment engages the work synthetically, assuming the internal integrity of the work. This is not to say that he compares any two passages with methodological abandon, but one must wonder whether it is possible to combine the worldview and symbolic structure found in one passage with that of another. The case of the *Bahir* is not as extreme as that of the Talmud or a midrashic anthology, which collected traditions from various

sources, albeit deriving from the same milieu. Nevertheless, any analysis must be vigilant against assuming the harmony of the collection of passages.

In my edition, I developed a methodology based on reception history, presenting a unique type of edition of a kabbalistic text, layering the manuscript witnesses, external citations and passages attributed to the *Bahir*, the first printed edition, commentaries and scholarly literature of the *Bahir*. Viewed separately, the attuned reader could navigate through the *different* readings of any particular passage and preserve the particular context of the literary tradition. *This methodology is based on the observation that the text never ceased changing*. Even though Scholem's discoveries proved the existence of a pre-kabbalistic version in Ashkenaz, the theosophic version, as represented by the Munich manuscript, marks one rather late stage in the development of the text, a non-linear process which has continued on to this day. As I have argued more succinctly in the first chapter regarding kabbalistic works in general, the lines are blurred between author, copyist and reader, the last feeling free to interpolate his written comments into the manuscript before him. A complex but organic process of transmission keeps the text in flux along with an assumption of the kabbalists and modern scholars alike that 'errors' should be removed and 'corrections' added in order to improve the text and restore the original intention of the author and his work.

My working assumption has been to shift the weight from identifying 'errors' to noting 'differences', as markings of how the text was received and sculpted by those who studied and transmitted the documents. The unfortunate irony of the field is that since 1951, scholarship has relied on the edition of Reuven Margolioth who integrated four late manuscript witnesses to produce a new text. A bizarre claim has been made by many that his text (and paragraph numbering) has become canonical, and so should be used even in lieu of Ms. Munich (and the different paragraph numbering Scholem used in his German edition and throughout his studies), because Margolioth's edition is widely available in an affordable edition and reprinted with *Tiqqunei Zohar* by Mossad ha-Rav Kook. It is clear to me, however, that Margolioth's edition is a recent layer in the history of the literary production and transformation of the text of the *Bahir*. His version is important as the most recent part of that process, and not as a presentation of a particular early moment in the process of the formation of the text or its earliest source.

In broad strokes, the basic difference between the medieval and rabbinic tradition of textual transmission (which continues to this day in certain communities) and the philological-historical methodology of the academic who

prepares a critical edition is that the former freely modifies or amends the text under the understanding the he is further contributing to its ideal and useful state, while the latter sees himself or herself outside of the historically layered transmission process and seeks to capture and re-present the earliest or best readings that have been frozen within the interpretive process and recorded within particular manuscript witnesses. To be sure, these abstract poles do not always fit the actual mentality and editorial work of the traditional and critical scholars respectively. From medieval through modern times, manuscript copies and printed editions have cited variant readings and have preserved, at times, the textual layers of their sources. Similarly, it would be an exaggeration to claim that the academic editor does not contribute an additional layer to the textual history of a work. The eclectic edition, to name but one prominent form of scholarly editions, functionally integrates various manuscript traditions into a composite text, even if the various sources are duly noted. Nevertheless, with these reservations in mind, there is a fundamental difference between the two types of scholarship which that become more prominent in recent years with the appreciation of reception history as a critical tool for assessing the historically placed accretions of text and meaning in the manuscripts.

The various manuscripts of the *Bahir* may therefore best be compared to the various snapshots in a photo-album that record the growth and development of person's life, only that in this case the progression is not (temporally) linear. Here we can distinguish between major and minor differences of editing, recensions and the interpolation of smaller comments and glosses. In my edition, I identified a Vatican manuscript that preserves a different recension of the *Bahir*. Many manuscripts join the Vatican manuscript in preserving this second recension. Smaller changes were entered into the manuscript copies as evidenced foremost by the Munich manuscript itself, which contains marginal comments by two other hands.

When reading the comments found in later manuscripts, from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it may be reasonable to assume that the small comments not found in the text of the Vatican manuscript (and those like it) were added later. But in reversing this method with earlier manuscripts from before the fifteenth century and identifying phrases found only in Munich, we may identify even earlier additions to this text from 1298. This is not to say that a single source or Urtext can be uncovered or that it even existed. Rather, this methodology more humbly seeks to record and appreciate the reactions to the textual versions that existed before its various readers responded with marginal comments, remarks that would later become part of the text. This revised text

would then have been read by even later kabbalists who were influenced by the meanings they understood from this later version, possibly adding additional comments or commenting elsewhere, based on this later understanding. A major goal of textual scholarship is thus to identify the various glosses, and work backwards from later versions, instead of working (exclusively) forward from a single early and authoritative source.

One small but highly significant example of this may be found in §117 regarding the sexuality of the worlds above and below. Certainly *zakhar* and *neqevah* are operative terms in the *Book Bahir* and form a central role in many of its traditions. The feminine is discussed in the context of its coupling with the masculine, and often in terms of bodily imagery, as a vessel or that which has an opening, presumably to receive the male seed and from which to give birth to offspring. In this medieval context, the feminine is rarely isolated in a discussion of its own. One such exception is §117, placed on the tails of the parable about the male trees (*'ilanin zekharim*) and the female citron tree (*'etrog*). Here, the polemical point is made that one cannot forget the female as the male cannot exist (*le-hitqayyem*) without her, 'For the upper and lower worlds cannot exit without her. And what is the meaning of her being called '*neqevah*'? Because her orifices are wide (or: open, *reḥavim*) and she has more orifices than a man. And what are they? The breasts, the womb and the vagina'. The Zurich manuscript lacks the words, 'and the upper world', possibly limiting the intent to the procreative forces of coupling in the world below alone. While this might be an oversight on the part of the copyist, it remains a curious example of what might have been the underlying appreciation of sexual procreativity that was applied categorically to the upper realm as well in the development of the thinking and writing of the *Book Bahir*.

14. From Condensation to Displacement: The Reception of Bahiric Language and Parables in Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah

The students of R. Isaac the Blind in Gerona were the first kabbalists to cite the *Bahir* repeatedly or extensively. Amongst the first figures to refer to the *Bahir* by name or paraphrase it without citation are, respectively, R. Meir ben Simeon and R. Asher ben David. They additionally paid no specific attention to the term *Shekhinah*. Even in the following generation, and as noted by Moshe Idel in the introduction he composed for my edition,[112] the earliest works of R. Ezra of

[112] Idel, 'Introduction', in Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 1-4.

Gerona lack any use of the *Bahir*, pointing to its late use and reception by this early figure. Even the later Geronese figure, R. Azriel, who reworked R. Ezra's *Commentary to the Aggadot* into a work of a different character did not reflect much on the passages cited, but instead sought to integrate this source within the library of works at his disposal. Similarly, a review of the works of their contemporary, R. Jacob ben Sheshet, yields little more evidence (such that his works are on this point), a mark of the growing canonical status of the *Bahir* within the first kabbalistic writings.

What is lacking in all of these examples is an expressed awareness by these later kabbalists that the Bahiric images are somehow separate from the theosophic symbols developed in their own writings. To be sure, an appreciation of the stylistic differences that mark the historical and conceptual characteristics of the various schools of kabbalists that developed in the Middle Ages is the defined task of professors, not kabbalists. Nevertheless, the proliferation of different symbolic systems in the first centuries of kabbalistic literature prompted some kabbalists to remark in writing on their privileged position to present and interpret the esoteric tradition. Some discussions include brief comments and lengthier arguments about the authenticity or 'truth' of their Kabbalah over against that of others. More specifically, the historical and symbolic mapping of their collective literary efforts in the thirteenth century is an important key for the particular case-study of the reception of the *Bahir* and the crystallization of the symbolic register that, on the whole, unified various esoteric schools into the family of kabbalists that could participate in a collective discourse.

It is important to distinguish here between 1) the conceptual (or scribal) modifications of the text of the *Bahir* in the transmission history of its manuscripts, 2) the modification of passages cited in later works, 3) the incorporation of unmodified passages from the *Bahir* into a new symbolic rubric of later kabbalistic works, and 4) reflective comments about certain passages from the *Bahir* that reveal the conscious effort by the later kabbalist to appropriate an early image for a new systematic presentation of theosophic symbolism. The bulk of this essay has explored the first phenomenon, while my 1994 volume, *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts*, mapped out the history of the second and the third.[113] In the final section of the present study, I would like to outline the importance of future inquiries based

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[113] Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 64-103, 287-336.

on this methodology.

Kabbalistic works in the first two centuries of their literary production exhibit a wide range of styles and genres. As mentioned above, the *Bahir* makes little effort to justify itself, teach the uninformed reader, or intentionally structure its own symbolic register into a consolidated key that could be reapplied by later authors. Quite the opposite is the case, as the *Bahir* relishes its own obscurity both in form and content.[114] Later kabbalistic works reversed this intent, seeking to systematize the evolving kabbalistic library by mapping gradually larger structures, layer by layer, throughout its own history in order organize and re-present the doctrinal and experiential orderings of divine ontology in the wake of countless literary creations.[115] Many texts and their images became part of the later kabbalistic canon precisely because their exclusion was threatening to the medieval, rabbinic mindset, which granted validity to the truth claims of other learned rabbinic figures who expressed the supernal realms by means of an engagement with literary images that described the kabbalistic theosophy.

Two major literary styles emerged in the last third of the thirteenth century, mosaic and creative works, as discussed by Moshe Idel in his study of R. Menaḥem Recanati.[116] In the first, the author collects and samples for the reader, or most probably, for himself, extended passages from earlier works. In the second, little or no reference is made to the existing library of kabbalistic sources and the work often maps out the heavens, offering freely lifted material from classical works, or utilizing the divine ontology as its literary frame, or biblical and rabbinic texts as its guiding structure instead of the works of other kabbalists. Amongst the more prominent mosaic authors in the Early Kabbalah are R. Isaac of Acre, R. Menaḥem Recanati and R. Menaḥem Ṣiyyoni. These celebrated kabbalists encountered new esoteric works and systems that significantly departed from the types of thought they learned in earlier years,

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[114] The open dialogue between the literary figures of the *Bahir*, who express uncertainty and ignorance of esoteric doctrines is evidence, I would argue, of the self-awareness of its authors to its unique and new mentality.

[115] Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 29.

[116] Idel, *R. Menaḥem Recanati*, pp. 24-32. For further reflection on the historical positioning of the composition of certain types of works in the thirteenth century see idem, 'The Kabbalah's "Window of Opportunities", 1270-1290', *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. E. Fleischer, G. Bildstein, et al, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 171-208.

for the most part due to their geographic distance from kabbalistic centers. The most influential kabbalist of the second order of kabbalistic literary creativity and characterized perhaps by his experiential orientation is R. Joseph Gikatilla. His work, *Sha'arei Orah*, codifies theosophic symbolism as it maps the ten *sefirot* from the human perspective, taking the reader through the rungs of divine ontology from below to above. Gikatilla avoids all citations of prior kabbalistic sources by name, even if the erudite reader can readily identify passing allusions with relative ease.[117]

Much can be explained in this case by attributing Gikatilla's unique experiential emphasis to the lasting impression his ecstatic teacher, R. Abraham Abulafia, left upon him. Yet, Gikatilla's worldview is based in this work upon a clear belief in the ontological structure which underlies his writing. It would not be an exaggeration, in my view, to explain the noted tension between the encyclopedic program of this work, and the clear resistance to refer to any literary sources as the product of his epistemological claim that these grades of divine being exist, hence his codifying efforts merely overlay and structure the literary images onto this edifice. Gikatilla serves as a powerful example of a disdain for historical consciousness and any perceived competition on the part of other kabbalists to offer a better mapping that subsumes the works of other.

Returning to Recanati for the sake of comparison, we note the recurrent citations he makes from the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*. These distinct methods of citation can be noted in terms of the use of these passages in their reception history. In the first, the *Bahir* is cited in order to offer texts and images that contribute to the understanding of the Torah or the commandments and to fill in the mosaic for a comprehensive study of Kabbalah. In the second, passages from the *Bahir* are produced to standardize earlier systems or stated more passively. Recanati applies the symbolic norms of his day, explicitly naming the theosophic markers in a text through pointed comments and explicit identifications that transform an ambiguous text into a clear demonstration of how the earlier text supports the later use of technical terminology. A clear example of the process of the narrowing of the possible interpretations of *Shekhinah* in the reception of the *Bahir* can found in Recanati's *Commentary to the Torah*. While many passages are cited without intervention or comment, others are presented as examples of a particular understanding. For example,

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[117] Moshe Idel, 'Historical Introduction', *Joseph Gikatilla, Sha'are Orah: Gates of Light*, translated by A. Weinstein, San Francisco 1994, pp. xxiii-xxxiv.

after presenting §43, which concludes with the references to sister, daughter and mother, Recanati adds a comment identifying these feminine images as referents to the *Shekhinah*, an identification not made explicit in the *Bahir*.

> And by inference (*remez*) here to the heart (or: *lev*, numerically equivalent to 32). This is a reference (*remez*) to the *Shekhinah* which comprises the 32 paths. And her being with the King in his inner chambers refers to the beginning of emanation (*qodem ha-'aṣilut*). Therefore, he calls her my sister, because they were emanated from a common source. And sometimes (he calls her) my daughter (because) she is the daughter of Abraham our father, peace be upon him.[118]

The passage places Recanati in the early history of kabbalistic symbolism, with comments that synthesize related images and identify them for the writer and his presumed audience. This process began sometime in the thirteenth century and reached its peak in the fourteenth century, as exemplified by the works of R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid, who added the sefirotic identifications interlinearly in kabbalistic texts. This technique reappears in later kabbalistic literature and exegesis as part of efforts to consolidate and map new orders onto older texts.

Here, mention should be made of kabbalistic lexicons such as *'Arkhei ha-Kinuyyim*, and *Qehilat Ya'aqov*.[119] We might consider such efforts to be theological in that competing traditions whose origins are found amongst authors of different religious mentalities were harmonized into a larger synthetic order of meaning that grants this new statement a desired position of authority. We can further note the different tone and literary style in the encyclopedic efforts of Cordovero and the scientific language in the writing style of R. Ḥayyim Vital, each in its own way commanding the reader to submit to the authority of the author or text. Such a stance is antithetical to the spirit of the *Bahir*, which is radically free in its innovative insight and exploration of new and uncodified understandings it develops within the accepted norm of midrashic discourse, an inherently non-systematic literary form. By way of comparison, the *Zohar* consciously returns to this literary form with great

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[118] R. Menaḥem Recanati, *Commentary to the Torah*, Venice 1523, fol. 15a-b.

[119] Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 112-114. Some of the latest reverberation of these codifying efforts are Pereṣ Elihayu, *Ma'alot ha-Zohar*, *Mefteḥot Shemot ha-Sefirot*, Jerusalem 1987, and *Milon 'ivri-qabbali* by Eliyahu bar Ḥayyim Ḥalfon, published in Nof Ilan 1998.

relish for its own creativity and innovation.[120] While the *Zohar* was not composed along strict literary guidelines, and was compressed into book form in the sixteenth century, the *Bahir* also shows no conformity to a literary structure, such as a midrashic interpretation to the narrative framework of Scripture. Moreover, the *Bahir*'s innovative spirit seems to suffice itself with the modest contribution of some twenty or so folios in manuscript, whereas the textual quantity and writing style of the zoharic corpus leaves the impression that an interpretive key has been developed (and) with which the author(s) can continue to produce endless takes on themes and biblical sections, at times returning to the same biblical section with a fresh interpretive effort. Both works, however, share in a healthy dose of hermeneutic self-confidence that teases the reader with ambiguous language, open-ended parables and constructions of earlier images in its new mentality. Apparently with intent, both works seek to develop a particular skill of reading in its audience, a move that was not necessarily successful throughout the history of their reception. So while the *Bahir* does not begin the process of symbolic consolidation by offering associations that form the starting point of the theosophic signification, its method did not, and arguably could not, have foreseen the more rigid codification of such technical language. This process begins within the *Bahir* itself, such as in §§ 3-4, where the term *berakhah* is offered in associations that collect and combine various images, forming the building blocks of what will later be the edifice of theosophic symbolism. The process was then accelerated by interventions in the texts, its later reception and the encyclopedic efforts to map kabbalistic symbolism as a whole.

15. Conclusion

Through a case-study of the term *Shekhinah* in the *Bahir* this chapter has suggested a new theory of the self-understanding and production of the theosophic symbolism of the early kabbalists. The kabbalistic symbol has been shown to be the reification of a term as an accepted and recognized signifier of a divine grade of ontology. While not a necessary characteristic of the transmission history of all kabbalistic texts, in this founding text of theosophical Kabbalah, such terms became symbols through a process of the

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[120] See Moshe Idel, 'The *Zohar* as Exegesis', *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. S. T. Katz, Oxford 2000, pp. 87-101; Yehuda Liebes, 'The *Zohar* as a Renaissance', *Da'at* 46 (2001), pp. 5-12 [Hebrew].

textual redaction, revision and reception of literary images that are condensed over time into a linguistic register that identifies the object of experience and interpretation. In these cases at least, the kabbalistic symbol, emerges out of the transmission and production of kabbalistic works. And as shown in this study, some kabbalistic symbols first arise as critical glosses in the reception history of the earliest kabbalistic texts, as later copyists, themselves kabbalists and students of the works, responded in writing to the earlier layers of the text with marginal glosses and interlinear comments that re-write and re-signify the images as divine symbols.

Methodological advances in textual scholarship can thus help Kabbalah scholarship redirect its focus from the idealized text of a work and the idea located in a historically positioned moment of composition, and instead pursue a history of the ideas and language of a text through the reception history of actual manuscripts. This methodology, therefore, calls for a reorientation of the object of study in the field from the study of works to texts, *according to the language recorded in actual manuscript witnesses*. To be sure, kabbalistic experience and ideas are not simply recorded in texts, but are lived out textually through the life of the manuscripts and their histories. *Kabbalah is therefore better understood as a hermeneutic and textual process in which composition, transmission and interpretation* cannot be neatly separated.

Through the case-study of *Shekhinah* in some early manuscripts of the *Bahir*, I have offered here one small example of the convergence of philology and theory, which I trust will serve as a better model for textual scholarship within the study of Jewish mysticism. This study has shown that the hermeneutic process occasioned here by the major and minor textual changes that comprise the various layers of this midrashic text, eventuated in the reification of the feminine grade of the divine, commonly referred to by later kabbalists as the *Shekhinah*. Even if the condensation of various feminine images began in the *Bahir*, the full rubric of symbolism that distinguishes theosophic, kabbalistic literature since the middle of the thirteenth century cannot be attributed to its earliest text.

The hermeneutic *process* that generated the diffuse images in the later stages of the literary production of kabbalistic works began with the reification of certain appellatives of the divine, such as *Shekhinah*. The early kabbalists, so I claim, moved from the collection of existing feminine and sexualized images of the divine (and the production of yet more such images) to the condensation of these images in 'the *Shekhinah*' as the tenth ontic grade of the sefirotic system, which existed according to their faith claims, independent of the texts

which expressed Her existence. Further images were later generated through kabbalistic exegesis of classical texts, and through the production and interpretation of their own growing corpus. However, we might best view the identification of many images with 'the *Shekhinah*' as the later displacement of the *concept* of, and belief in, the *Shekhinah*, onto a wide range of old, and sometimes new images. The move from the *crystallization* of images into a uniform symbolic register, therefore, afforded the impetus for a systematic *production* of richer and more complex texts at a later stage. This process is based upon the recognition of a divine entity that became the ruling concept that subsumed within it the prior history of conceptual and textual differences when speaking about God in a wide range of images.

With the advantage of historical and critical distance, it is fascinating to observe that much of modern scholarship has taken on the faith claims of the later kabbalists when evaluating the earliest text, presumably in a sincere effort to identify with the worldview of the kabbalists and understand the works. In so doing, however, much of the early stages of the *interpretive process, which is Kabbalah*, has been eclipsed, stages which can still be identified within the pages – and literally, between the lines – of the manuscripts. These textual witnesses record the production and transmission of these written traditions as they were preserved and re-imaged, in subtle but decisive ways, since the beginning of the thirteenth century. With these new tools in hand, scholarship can better appreciate the complexities of the *construction* of the theosophic and feminine symbol of the *Shekhinah* within the earliest texts, and therefore apply a more nuanced reading of the sources from the manuscript witnesses, independent of the later interpretations and faith claims.

16. Passages from the Bahir that Contain the Term 'Shekhinah' According to Ms. Munich 209 and Ms. Zurich 173

Additions of the second scribe in Ms. Munich are noted in a separate font. Interlinear additions are inserted within horizontal lines, and marginal glosses within pointed brackets.

כתב יד מינכן	כתב יד ציריך
49. דבר אחר פעלך בקרב שנים משל למה הדבר דומה למלך שהיה לו מרגלית טובה והוא חמדת מלכותו ובעת שמחתו מחבקה ומנשקה ושמה על ראשו ואוהב אותה. אמ׳ לו	49. ד״א פעלך בקרב שנים חייהו מלה״ד למלך שהיה מרגלית טובה והיא חמדת מלכותו ובעת שמחתו מחבקה ומנשקה ושמה על ראשו ואוהב אותה אמ׳ חבקוק

חבקוק אע״פ שהמלכים עמך אותה המרגלית חמ״דה היא בעולמך על כן בקרב שנים חייהו ומאי משמע לישנא דשנים דכתי׳ ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור ואין אור אלא יום דכתי׳ את המאור הגדול לממשלת היום ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה והשנים הם מימים הה״ד בקרב שנים [חייהו] בקרב אותה המרגלית המולידה השנים והא כתי׳ ממזרח אביא זרעך והשמש זורחת ממזרח ואמרת שהמרגלית היא יום ~~אם~~ [אני] לא אמרתי אלא ויהי ערב ויהי בקר ‹יום אחד› הה״ד ביום עשות ״י אלהים ארץ ושמים.

50. והא כתי׳ ישת חשך סתרו סביבותיו סכתו חשכת מים עבי שחקים. אמ׳ ליה כתיב ביה ושחקים יזלו צדק וצדק זו מדת דינו של עולם שנא׳ צדק צדק תרדוף וכתי׳ בתריה למען תחיה וירשת אם תדין [את] עצמך תחיה ואם לאו הוא ידין עליך ותקיים בעל כרחך. ומאי צדק צדק תרי זמני אמ׳ ליה דכתי׳ מנגה נגדו צדק ראשון צדק ממש והיא שכינה דכתי׳ צדק ילין בה וגו׳ ומאי צדק שני זה צדק שמפחיד את הצדיקים והאי צדק הוי צדקה או לא אמ׳ ליה לא. מאי טעמא צדקה כד״א וילבש צדקה כשריו[ן] וצדק הוי כובע ישועה על ראשו ואין ראשו אלא אמת שנא׳ ראש דברך אמת ואין אמת אלא שלום שנא׳ כי אם שלום ואמת יהיה בימי. כך אמ׳ חזקיה כי אם שלום ואמת יהיה בימי איפשר לאדם לומ׳ כן אלא כך אמ׳ אותה מדה שנתת לדוד אבי היא חצי ימי ושלום ואמת חצי ימי על כן הזכיר ימי והזכיר שלום ואמת ובימי שהכל אחד הה״ד שלום ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום מה היום שלום אף הוא בקש שלום דכתי׳ שלום ואמת יהיו [בימי] באותה

אע״פ שהמל[אכים] עמך אותה המרגלית חמדה היא בעולמך. על כן בקרב שנים חייהו מאי משמע לישנא [67א] לישנא דשנים הוא דכתי׳ ויאמר אלהי׳ יהי אור ויהי אור ואין אור אלא יום דכתי׳ את המאור הגדול לממשלת היום והשנים הם מימים הה״ד בקרב שנים בקרב אותה המרגלית המולידה השנים והכת׳ ממזרח אביא זרעך והשמש זורחת ממזרח ואמרת שהמרגלית היא יום אני לא אמרתי אלא ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הה״ד ביום עשות י׳ אלהי׳ ארץ ושמים.

50. והכתי׳ ישת חשך סתרו סביבותיו סוכתו חשכת מים עבי שחקי׳ אמ׳ ליה ושחקים יזלו צדק וצדק זו מדת דינו שלעולם שנ׳ צדק צדק תרדוף וכת׳ למען תחיה וירשת אם תדין עצמך תחיה ואם לאו הוא ידין עליך ותתקיים בעל כרחך. ומאי צדק צדק תרי זמני אמ׳ ליה דכתי׳ מנוגה נגדו צדק ראשון צדק ממש דכתי׳ צדק ילין בה ומאי צדק שני זה צדק שמפחיד את הצדיקים והאי צדק הוי צדקה אי לא אמ׳ ליה לאו מאי טעמ׳ צדקה כד״א וילבש צדקה כשריין וצדקה הוי כובע ישועה על ראשו ואין ראשו לא אמת שנ׳ ראש דברך אמת ואין אמת לא שלו׳ דכתי׳ כי יהיה שלו׳ ואמת בימי כך אמ׳ חזקיה כי אם שלו׳ ואמת יהיה בימי אפשר לאדם לומ׳ כן לא כך אמ׳ אותה מדה שנתת לאבי דוד הוא חצי ימי ושלו׳ ואמת חצי ימי על כן הזכיר ימי והזכיר שלו׳ ואמת ובימי שהכל אחד הה״ד שלום ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום יום אחד מה היום שלו׳ אף הוא בקש שלו׳

המדה שנתת לדוד אבי דכתי׳ כסאו כשמש נגדי.

51. ומאי בקרב שנים תודיע כך אמ׳ ידעתי שאתה האל הקדוש דכתי׳ מי כמוכה נאדר בקדש וקדש בך ואתה בקדש אעפ״כ בקרב שנים תודיע ומאי תודיע תרחם כד״א וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים ומאי וידע מלה״ד למלך שהיה לו אשה |נאה| והעמיד ממנה בנים חבבן וגדלן. יצאו לתרבות רעה שנאן ושנא את אמן. חזרה אמן עליהם אמרה להם בני למה אתם |עושים| כך שאביכם שונא אתכם ואותי עד שנחמו וחזרו לעשות רצון אביהם. ראה אביהם כך אהבם כתחלה וזכ״ר ‹בגליון: ״ואהב״› אמם הה״ד וירא וידע וכתי׳ בקרב שנים תודיע. ומאי ברוגז רחם תזכור אמ׳ בעת שיחטאו בניך לך ותכעס עליהם רחם תזכר. ומאי רחם אותו שאמ׳ ארחמך י״י חזקי ונתת לו המדה הזאת שהיא שכינתן של ישראל וזכור בנו שירשה ונתתה לו דכתי׳ וי״י נתן חכמה לשלמה וזכור אביה אברהם דכתי׳ אברהם אוהבי ובקרב שנים תודיע.

51. ומאי |דכתי׳| בקרב שנים תודיע כך אמ׳ ידעתי שאתה הא׳ הקדוש דכתי׳ מי כמוכה נאדר בקדש וקדש בך ואתה בקדש ומאי תודיע תרחם כד״א וירא אלהים את בני ישרא׳ וידע אלהי׳ ומאי וידע מלה״ד למלך שהיה לו אשה נאה והעמיד ממנה בנים חבבן וגדלן ויצאו לתרבות רעה שנאן ושנא אמם חזרה אמם אליהם בני למה אתם כך שאביכם שונא אותי ואתכם עד שנתנחמו וחזרו לעשות רצון אביהם. ראה אביהם כך אהבם וזכר אמם הה״ד וירא וידע וכתי׳ בקרב שנים תודיע. ומאי ברגז רחם תזכור אמ׳ בעת שיחטאו בניי לך ותכעס עליהם רחם תזכר. ומאי רחם תזכור אותו ‹שאמ׳ רחם ארחמנו שנ׳ ה׳ זכור דוד שאמ׳ ארחמך› שנ׳ ארחמך י׳ חזקי ונתת לו המדה הזו שהיא שכינתן שלישרא׳ וזכור בנו שירשה ונתתה *למ* לו שנ׳ וה׳ נתן חכמה לשלמה וזכור אביה אברהם דכתי׳ אברהם אוהבי ובקרב שנים תודיע.

85. ומאי הוי אילן דאמרת אמ׳ ליה כל כחתיו של הקב״ה הן זה על גב זה והן דומין לאילן. מה אילן זה על ידי המים מוציא פירותיו אף הקב״ה על ידי המים מרבה כחות האילן. ומאי ניהו מים של הקב״ה הינו חכמה והינו נשמת הצדיקים שפורחין מן המעין אל הצנור הגדול ועולה ודבק באילן ועל ידי מה פורח על ידי ישראל כשהן צדיקים וטובים שכינה שרויה ביניהם ושרויה במעשיהן בחיקו של הקב״ה ומפרה אותם ומרבה |אותם| דשכינה איקרית וכתיב רוכב שמים בעזרך ובגאותו שחקים

85. ומאי הוי אילן דאמרת אמ׳ ליה כל כחתיו של הב״ה הן זה על זה והן דומין לאילן. מה אילן זה על ידי המים מוציא פירות אף הב״ה על ידי המים מרבה כחות האילן. ומאי נינהו מים של הב״ה היינו חכמים והינו נשמת הצדיקים שפורחין מן המעין אל הצינור הגדול ועולה ודבק באילן. וע״י מה פורח ע״י ישר׳ כשהם צדיקים וטובים שכינה שרויה עמהם ושרויה במעשיהם בחיקו של הב״ה ומפרה אותן ומרבה אותן. ומנא לן דשכינה אקראת |מים| דכת׳ רוכב

וכתי׳ ושחקים יזלו צדק וצדק |זו| שכינה דכתי׳ צדק ילין בה וצדק נתן לדוד דכתי׳ ימלוך י״י לעולם אלהיך ציון לדור ודור הללויה וכתי׳ ציון עיר דוד.

115. תשיעי מאי הוי אמ׳ ליה תשיעי ועשירי הם יחד זה כנגד זה והאחד גבוה מחברו חמש מאות שנה והם כעין |שני| אופנים ו|ה|אחד נוטה לצד צפון והאחר נוטה לצד מערב והולכין עד הארץ התחתונה. מאי תחתונה אחרונה שבשבע ארצות למטה וסוף שכינתו של הקב״ה תחת רגליו שנא׳ השמים כסאי והארץ הדום רגלי ושם נצחונו של עולם למטה דכתי׳ לנצח נצחים. מאי לנצח נצחים |אלא| נצח חד הוי ומאי ניהו זה הנוטה למערב ושני לו |הוי| זה הנוטה לצפון ‹הסופר השני הוסיף ״צד׳ מעל המלה גדי לגרוס: ״לצד צפון״› ושלישי |לו הוי| זה של מטה. שלישי והאמרת שנים ‹המ״ם הסופית נמחקה על ידי הסופר הראשון כדי לגרוס ״שני״› אופני המרכבה אלא אימא סוף השכינה הוו גם כן נצח והינו לנצח נצחים נצח חד נצחים תרי |הרי| תלתא.

116. אמרו לו תלמידיו ר׳ מלמעלה למטה ידעינן מלמטה למעלה לא ידעינן ולא חד הוי מלמעלה למטה |כמו| ולמטה ‹במקור ״וממטה״ והאות מ׳ שונתה לאות ל׳ על יד הסופר הראשון› למעלה. רבנו אינו דומה העולה ליורד שהיורד יורד במרוצה והעולה אינו כן. ולא עוד אלא שהעולה אפשר |לו| לעלות על דרך אחרת שלא ירד. אמ׳ להם צאו וראו. ישב ודרש להם שכינה למטה כשם ששכינה למעלה. מאי שכינה זו הוי אומר זה האור הנאצל מאור הראשון שהוא חכמה גם הוא מסבב הכל שנא׳ מלא כל הארץ כבודו. ומאי עבידתיה הכא מלה״ד למלך שהיו לו שמים בעזרך ובגאותו שחקים וכת׳ ושחקים יזלו צדק |ומאי| וצדק זהו שכינה דכת׳ צדק ילין בה וצדק נתן לדוד דכתי׳ ימלוך י״י לעולם אלהי׳ ציון לדור ודור.

115. תשיעי מאי הוי א״ל תשיעי ועשירי הם יחד זה כנגד זה והאחד גבוה מחבירו חמש מאות שנה והם כעין שני אופנים והאחד נוטה לצד צפון והאחר נוטה לצד מערב והולכין עד הארץ התחתונה מאי תחתונה אחרונה שבשבע ארצות למטה וסוף שכינתו של הב״ה תחת רגליו שנ׳ השמים כסאי והארץ הדום רגלי ושם נצחונו שלעולם למטה דכת׳ לנצח נצחים ומאי לנצח נצחים אא נצח חד הוי ומאי ניהו זה הנוטה למערב ושני לו זה הוי הנוטה לצד צפון ושלישי זה הוי [76א] שלמטה שלישי והא אמרת שני אופני המרכבה אא אימ׳ סוף השכינה הוי גם כן נצח והיינו נצח נצחים נצח חד נצחים תרי תלתא.

116. אמרו לו תלמידיו רבינו מלמעלה למטה ידעינן מלמטה למעלה לא ידעינן. ולאו חד הוי מלמעלה למטה ומלמטה למעלה. רבינו אינו דומה העולה ליורד שהיורד יורד במרוצה והעולה אינו כן ולא עוד אלא שהעולה איפשר לו לעלות על דרך אחרת שלא ירד אמ׳ להם צאו וראו ישב ודרש להם, שכינה למטה כשם ששכינה למעלה מאי שכינה זו הוי אומ׳ זה האור הנאצל מן האור הראשון שהוא חכמה גם מסובב הכל שנ׳ מלא כל הארץ כבודו ומאי עבידתיה הכא, מ״לה״ד שהיו

שבע בנים ושם לכל אחד מקומו. אמ׳ להם שבו זה על גב זה אמ׳ התחתון אני לא אשב למטה ולא אתרחק ממך אמר להם הריני מסובב ורואה אתכם כל היום [והו] שנא׳ מלא כל הארץ כבודו ולמה הוא ביניהם כדי להעמידן ולקימן. ומה הם הבנים כבר אמרתי לכם שז׳ צורות קדושות יש לו להקב״ה וכלם כנגדן באדם שנא׳ כי בצלם אלהים ברא את האדם זכר ונקבה ברא אותן. ואלו הן שוק ימין ושמאל יד ימין ושמאל גוף בבריתו וראש הרי שש. ואת אמרת שבע שבע הוי באשתו דכתיב והיו לבשר אחד. והא מצלעותיו נלקחה דכתי׳ ויקח אחת מצלעותיו [כו׳]. אמ׳ [להם] אין מצלעותיו. ואית ליה צלע (אין) כד״א ולצלע המשכן ולסטר משכנא.

לו שבע בנים ושם לכל אחד מקומו אמ׳ להם שבו זה על גב זה אמ׳ התחתון אני לא אשב למטה ולא אתרחק ממך אמ׳ להם הריני מסובב ורואה אתכם כל היום והיינו מכה״ב ולמה הוא ביניהם כדי להעמידם ולקימם ומה הם הבנים כבר אמרתי לכם ששבע צורות קדושות יש לו להב״ה וכלם כנגדם באדם שנ׳ בצלם אלהי׳ ברא אותן זכר ונקבה ברא אותם ואילו הן שוק ימין ושמאל יד ימין ושמאל גוף וברית וראש הרי שש. והא אמרת שבע שבעה הוי באשתו דכת׳ והיו לבשר אחד. ואף מצלעותיו נלקחה דכת׳ ויקח אחת מצלעותיו אמ׳ אין מצלעותיו ואית ליה צלעין אין כד״א ולצלע המשכן ומתרגמ׳ ולסטר משכנא.

Chapter 3

The Textualization of Orality
*The Reception and Interpretation of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Traditions**

> There are hints and secrets of the Torah which cannot be known for many generations. And the prophets, who were like angels, said that if you give them books, how will they know the hints? If they are concealed, give it to them in explicit form so that the readers may know. And the Holy One, blessed be He, said that the righteous, after a certain number of years, will know that he should reveal these secrets which were not known before. Such a person will make a book from this matter and another person, from those matters.
>
> – *Sefer Ḥasidim*, Ms. Parma H 3280, fol. 139a, §1514

1. *Preserving and Interpreting Esoteric Traditions and Texts*

One of the most central problems for the understanding of the development of the Early Kabbalah is the role of orality in written esoteric works. Two trends mark the origins of the Kabbalah as told by the first Kabbalists: the oral transmission of traditions that begin with the revelation of Elijah to R. Abraham ben David of Posquièrs and the continued preservation of ancient oral traditions that date back to the revelation to Moses at Sinai. These two explanations concerning the literary emergence of kabbalistic thought in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries mirror modern scholarship's approach to the Early Kabbalah.

Gershom Scholem accepted the general historical framework indicated by

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the revelation of Elijah, arguing that 'gnostic' myth influenced the Rabbinic world of medieval Europe, thereby creating the impetus for the Kabbalah. For Scholem, the Kabbalah was therefore a new and innovative system of thought that emerged for the first time in medieval Europe due to the penetration of foreign sources.[1] Alternatively, Moshe Idel has pursued a more conservative historical approach, accepting as a working hypothesis the predominant claim of most kabbalists that traditions have been transmitted orally for generations. In numerous studies, most notably his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*,[2] Idel has tried to trace the history of an ideational structure of kabbalistic thought within Jewish texts. His phenomenological approach has lead to comparisons between kabbalistic thought and various Jewish texts that predate the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Against this background, a major focus of research on the writings of the Early Kabbalah has become the role of orality and the authenticity of claims concerning pre-existing (oral) traditions. The methods of uncovering these sources and/or the questioning of their veracity vary. However, more interesting in my view is the dynamic between written and oral traditions amongst students of a given figure. It is the aim of this chapter to begin to define a typology for the interpretation of (a kabbalistic) text, based on received traditions and compare it to the similar efforts of contemporary figures who wrote without having received any oral instruction, approaching a given text as a written document alone. Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman Gerondi (Nahmanides), 1194-1270, and his extended school will form the test case for this study due to the central role of orality in his works and those of the following generations who sought to understand or comment on his corpus.[3]

2. *Nahmanides and his Stand on the Dissemination of his Kabbalah*

Thirteenth-century Kabbalah is marked by a variety of trends and schools, each one unique in its own orientation, literary style, and relationship to non-

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[1] See his *Origins of the Kabbalah*. See also Idel, 'Rabbinism Versus Kabbalism'.

[2] New Haven and London 1988.

[3] Compare to the juxtaposition of the historical outline of the emergence of the school of Rabad (including Isaac the Blind, Ezra and Azriel) to that of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* in Ms. Montefiore 354, fol. 19b. This text was cited and discussed briefly by Scholem in his study, 'New Fragments from the Writings of R. Azriel of Gerona', *Studies in Memory of Asher Gulak and Samuel Klein*, Jerusalem 1942, p. 203 n.1 [Hebrew].

initiates. Nahmanides presided over one the main schools of Spanish Kabbalah, which retained a prominent role for at least three generations.[4] Until most recently, scholarship in Jewish mysticism has grouped Nahmanides together with other kabbalists of Gerona. So for example, Gershom Scholem devoted nearly a third of his seminal study, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, to 'The Kabbalistic Center in Gerona', treating all the kabbalists of the area as members of a single, though extended (social) circle.[5] More recent studies have adjusted this view,[6] concentrating on Nahmanides' own writings, principally his *Commentary to the Torah*, in order to characterize his own view of kabbalistic traditions and to describe the unique way in which he presents his esoteric explanations of the Torah.[7] While much progress has been made in understanding the various aspects of Nahmanides' literary career, to date, little attention has been given to the kabbalistic legacy of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* in the following two generations, particularly among the students of R. Solomon Ibn Aderet (Rashba), Nahmanides' most prominent student. For, although individual studies have been written on various works and members of this school, the study of the school as a kabbalistic center for the study of Nahmanides' traditions and a comparison of their supercommentaries to other

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[4] For a survey of his works and a discussion of scholarship see Israel Ta-Shma, *Nahmanides and His Works*, Jerusalem 1968 [Hebrew]; Yaakov Elman, '"It is No Empty Thing": Nahmanides and the Search for Omnisignificance', *Torah U-Maddah Journal* 4 (1993), pp. 1-83; Ephraim Kanarfogel, 'On the Assessment of R. Moses ben Naḥman (Nahmanides) and His Literary Oeuvre', *Jewish Book Annual* 51 (1993-1994), pp. 158-172.

[5] G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, chapter 4: 'The Kabbalist Center of Gerona', *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 48-52.

[6] Moshe Idel, 'La Història de la Càbala a Barcelona', *Curs la Càbala*, Barcelona 1985, pp. 59-74; idem, 'NAHMANIDES: Kabbalah, Halakhah, and Spiritual Leadership', *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*, ed. M. Idel, M. Ostow, Northvale 1998, pp. 15-96. See also his study, 'In the Light of Life: An Investigation in Kabbalistic Eschatology', *Sanctity of Life and Martyrdom: Studies in Memory of Amir Yekutiel*, ed. I. Gafni and A. Ravitzky, Jerusalem 1992, pp. 203-205 [Hebrew].

[7] See Moshe Idel, '"We Have No Kabbalistic Tradition On This"', *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. I. Twersky, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, pp. 11-34; E. Wolfson, 'By Way of Truth: Aspects of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic', *AJS Review* 14 (1989), pp. 103-178; David Novak, *The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented*, Atlanta 1992.

anonymous supercommentaries in manuscript has yet to be investigated.[8] In a previous study I described the various works and *collectanea* found in print and manuscript, in fact charting the boundaries of the literary development and reception of this kabbalistic circle.[9] Here I will analyze these texts with respect to the dynamic between the free and directed interpretations of Nahmanides' Kabbalah in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

Nahmanides stand on kabbalistic matters has been characterized by a number of scholars and there is no need in the present context to restate these views or highlight the differences between them.[10] For the purpose of the study of Nahmanides' influence, his true strategy is overshadowed by the impression his kabbalistic inferences left on his readers. In other words, *for the reception history of the text, what others thought Nahmanides meant is more important than what Nahmanides really meant.* I believe that Nahmanides' attitude to the dissemination of his Kabbalah is best expressed by the following three rules: (1) reliable (and authentic) traditions are only to be transmitted orally; (2) he who possesses a reliable tradition may write *of* its existence and hint at its content alone;[11] (3) the non-initiate who reads these hints is discouraged in the strongest terms from speculating on the meaning of these hints because all attempts to uncover the full meaning of the kabbalistic doctrine without a received tradition are futile. Although these three rules comprise a conservative view with regard to new or creative kabbalistic exegesis, they describe a somewhat moderate view to composition. It can therefore be suggested that Nahmanides has reassessed his strict conservative stance in accordance with a new historical reality.

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[8] See Twersky's assessment of the state of research in his introduction to the above-cited volume of studies on Nahmanides, p. 6. See also Scholem's comment, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 392 n.67 regarding various *collectanea* of Nahmanides' Kabbalah to be discussed below: 'These miscellanies, found in many manuscripts, are of great value for the detailed study of the Kabbalah in Gerona, which would in fact require a separate volume'.

[9] See the second chapter of my *The Book Bahir*. For the benefit of the reader certain bibliographic information will be repeated here.

[10] For a summary of this debate see Kanarfogel, 'On the Assessment of R. Moses ben Naḥman (Nahmanides) and His Literary Oeuvre'. See also now, Isaac Gottlieb, '*Sod ve-Signon be-Ferush Ramban la-Torah*', *Mahanayim* 3 (1993), pp. 162-169.

[11] See Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Pentateuch*, ed. Chavel, I, p. 11 as cited and discussed by Idel, 'Leadership', n.79.

According to this view, Nahmanides is clearly trying to publicize the elevated status of the Kabbalah. Moshe Idel has argued that underlying this effort is his wish to distinguish his tradition from the writings of his contemporaries in Gerona, the students of R. Isaac the Blind.[12] By announcing his possession of reliable traditions without interpreting them, Nahmanides is able to send a message to his innovative contemporaries that he alone is a true authority as he discourages their readership from accepting their traditions. In other words, Nahmanides' continued (complete) silence would only have given free reign to the contemporary kabbalists who were publishing esoteric texts. By publicly competing with them and suggesting to the common reader that only his tradition is reliable, Nahmanides has undermined their status in the eyes of his readers without revealing his full teaching. If this view of his stand holds true, Nahmanides felt that an important value had been threatened and he was forced to compromise his former position.

Further evidence toward this alteration of his view can be seen from the contradiction contained in the three rules cited above. For Nahmanides, the true kabbalist is not only permitted to state the existence of his Kabbalah, but may reveal a small part of its content. This is indeed striking for it suggests that the declaration of it existence alone, as might have been practiced before, was now viewed as insufficient. We can therefore assume that the ban on independent speculation was modified to include written hints of content that contained kabbalistic ideas and symbolic language already circulating in other Geronese texts.

Nahmanides' two-fold strategy of elevating the status of his own Kabbalah and curtailing speculation about it was only partly successful. Indeed, Nahmanides' Kabbalah achieved the reputation and status he sought. Many figures turned to Nahmanides' works as authoritative, presumably at the expense of works of competing systems of thought. And while it is difficult to ascertain to what degree, if any, his indirect message influenced contemporary kabbalists concerning the dissemination of innovative esoteric explanations, it is clear that his ban on speculation had the reverse effect. Instead of humbling his reading audience to surrender the kabbalistic explanation of Scripture to the

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[12] Moshe Idel, 'Jewish Thought in Medieval Spain', *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. H. Beinart 1992, vol. 1, pp. 274-275. In his 'Leadership', at the end of section VIII, Idel argued this thesis with respect to philosophical trends amongst the Geronese kabbalists, namely that Nahmanides is trying to prevent his Kabbalah from being casted in a philosophical garb.

few initiates who possessed an oral tradition, Nahmanides sparked an unabating curiosity in his Kabbalah and literary works.

The desire to understand Nahmanides' authentic tradition spread through every type of his readers: students connected to his school, uninitiated learned men from other circles, as well as kabbalists who emerged from very different traditions all tried to collect and interpret the kabbalistic statements of Nahmanides. So for example, R. Moses of Burgos, a leading kabbalist in thirteenth-century Castile attempted to incorporate into his works, traditions spuriously attributed to Nahmanides that had reached him.[13] This example alone demonstrates Nahmanides' goals listed above, Nahmanides was successful solely in raising the status of his Kabbalah. In fact, not only were numerous, anonymous or unidentified works attributed to him in early manuscripts, *including* manuscripts *contemporary* to him[14] (but in the following generation), in the beginning of the fourteenth century if not shortly thereafter, Nahmanides' *Commentary* had been transformed into a canonical work of kabbalistic thought, initiating a major kabbalistic activity of interpreting the passages of which Nahmanides specifically prohibited their further speculation.[15]

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[13] Gershom Scholem, *Le-Ḥeqer Qabbalat R. Yiṣḥaq ha-Kohen*, Jerusalem 1934, pp. 111-112; idem, *Chapters in the History of Kabbalistic Literature*, Jerusalem 1931, p. 99 [Hebrew]. See also the tradition cited in the name of Nahmanides in Ms. Cambridge Dd. 4.2.3., fol. 18a.

[14] See *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 371 n.16, 379 n.34, p. 393 n.69 and 372 n.22 where Scholem cites a manuscript of Recanati's *Ṭa'amei ha-Miṣwoth*, which attributes a text of R. Azriel to Nahmanides. See also Ms. Parma 1390, fols. 25b-36b copied in the year 1286 where material from R. Asher ben David of the Provençal school is attributed to Nahmanides. Of note as well is Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon's attribution of *Sefer ha-Ḥibbur*, apparently *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, believed by most to be authored by Joseph Gikatilla, to Nahmanides. See Gershom Scholem, 'Is Nahmanides the Author of *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*', *Qiryat Sefer* 21 (1945), pp. 179-186 [Hebrew]; Rami Sheqalim, *The Early Traditions on the Soul and Transmigration in the 12th-15th Centuries*, [Israel] 1994, p. 55 [Hebrew]. See further Charles Mopsik, *Lettre sur la sainteté: la relation de l'homme avec sa femme*, Lagrasse 1994.

[15] Ephraim Gottlieb, *Kabbalah of the Late Thirteenth Century*, ed. Y. Liebes, Jerusalem 1969, pp. 4-5, (Hebrew) lists these commentaries as a genre of early Kabbalah.

3. *A History of the Interpretations to Nahmanides' 'Secrets'*

Attempts to systematically treat Nahmanides' *Commentary* as a kabbalistic work begin with the editing of *'The Secrets of the Torah'*, the abridged version of the kabbalistic sections of his *Commentary*.[16] The earliest known, dated manuscript was copied in Italy in 1301, with other copyings from Italy dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century.[17] These particular manuscripts do not appear to be the original copies of the first editing and hence the abridgment can be pushed back even further. This period is marked by a renaissance of interest in Nahmanides' teaching as the manuscript witnesses display several attempts at abridging his *Commentary*. Around this time as well, in the first decade of the fourteenth century, we find a supercommentary composed by a kabbalist outside of the circle of Rashba,[18] and an additional one of undetermined provenance.[19]

A number of students of Rashba also produced kabbalistic supercommentaries to Nahmanides' *Commentary*, namely *Keter Shem Ṭov* by

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[16] Most manuscripts are headed with the title *Sitrei Torah* or *Sodot ha-Torah*. A related phenomenon is the *Commentary to the Pentateuch* of R. Jacob ben Asher (ca. 1270-1340). In the introduction to his work he states that he is commenting on Nahmanides work *except* where there is an esoteric discussion. See the introduction to the full version, which is also included in the numerologically based abstract from this work (most recently printed with critical notes, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 22-23).

[17] Ms. New York, JTSA Mic 1686 bears the colophon of 1301, although the script appears to be of a later hand. It appears therefore that this manuscript was copied from a now lost witness from 1301 and is therefore nevertheless testimony to the editing of Nahmanides' work at the turn of the fourteenth century. Early fifteenth century copies include Ms. Parma 2983 from the year 1387, Ms. Budapest 20A from the year 1405 and Ms. Parma 2377 from the year 1457.

[18] Moshe Idel, 'An Unknown Commentary on Nahmanides' Mystic Doctrines', *Da'at* 2-3, (1978/79), pp. 121-126 [Hebrew]. Idel writes, p. 125, that the text could be as early as 1290. This work can be found in the following manuscripts: Ms. Escorial G.I. 15, fols. 133a-170b; Ms. Vatican 214, fols. 179a-195a; Ms. Vatican 528, fols. 100a-b. I would like to extend my thanks to Prof. Idel for lending me his copy of this text. See also Moshe Idel's introduction to *Sefer Tsafenat Pa'aneaḥ*, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 24-25 [Hebrew].

[19] See Idel, 'An Unknown Commentary', p. 122 n.9. This text was published in part in *Sefer Liqquṭei Shikhekha u-fea*, Ferarra 1516 and can be found with variations in the following Mss.: Paris, BN 843, New York, JTSA Mic 1878 and Cambridge Add. 696. These manuscripts are dated from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I have prepared a critical edition of this text and hope to publish it in the near future.

R. Shem Ṭov ben Abraham Ibn Gaon written between 1298 and 1305,[20] *Be'ur le-Sodot ha-Ramban* by R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib written about the same time,[21] and a third anonymous supercommentary based in part on that of Ibn Shu'eib and written between the years 1315 and 1330.[22] Finally, due to the inclusion of various explanations to Nahmanides' Kabbalah in R. Baḥya ben Asher's *Commentary to the Torah*, written in the year 1291, it too can be considered a type of supercommentary to Nahmanides' esoteric teachings.[23] Like his contemporaries, Ibn Gaon and Ibn Shu'eib, each cite many traditions in the name of their teacher, Rashba, while Ibn Gaon cites additional traditions from R. Isaac Ṭodros, a figure to whom I will return below.[24]

Each of the above works interprets Nahmanides' *Commentary* (and not necessarily his thought as a whole) through independent analysis and/or received traditions concerning Nahmanides' intention. Beginning with the fourteenth century a number of attempts were made to collect the various supercommentaries and combine different texts and traditions into a single treasure-house of interpretations to Nahmanides' work. The earliest and most

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[20] Ms. Vatican Barb. 110, which contains this work, includes a colophon of the Jewish year 58. Following others, I had earlier interpreted this to be the year 1298, the manusciprt being a fourteenth century copy of an earlier manuscript with such a dated colophon. The copyist apparently presumed the year 100 and the manuscript was copied in Italy in 1398 and is thus not of great importance, even though it is commonly cited in scholarship. See further D. S. Levinger, 'Rabbi Shem Ṭob ben Abraham Ben Gaon', *Sefunot* 7 (1963), p. 10 [Hebrew], reprinted in the facsimile edition of Ms. Paris 840 of Shem Ṭov's *Baddei Aron u-Migdal Ḥanan'el.*

[21] On Ibn Shu'eib see Carmi Horowitz, *The Jewish Sermon in 14th Century Spain: The Derashot of R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib,* Cambridge Mass., and London England 1989, On the role of Kabbalah in his works see pp. 14-16, 159-170. The supercommentary was printed in Warsaw 1875 as the work of Meir Ibn Sahula. On the identification of its author see the sources cited in my *Book Bahir*, pp. 17-18.

[22] Moshe Idel, 'An Anonymous Commentary from the Circle of the Rashba', *Michael* 11 (1989), pp. 9-21 [Hebrew]. Idel argues that this commentary influenced the authors of *Sefer ha-Temunah* and *Sefer Ma'arkhet ha-'Elohut.*

[23] Lacking Kabbalistic statements but sensitive to '*sod*' is R. Yom Ṭov bar Abraham Ashvili's (Ritba) *Sefer ha-Zikkaron,* ed. K. Kahane, Jerusalem 1956. Ritva's work is arranged according to the pericopes of the Pentateuch. One may also wish to include Recanati's *Commentary to the Torah* in a list of works which comment on Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*. See Horowitz, *The Jewish Sermon*, p. 160.

[24] See Abrams, *Book Bahir*, pp. 79-80.

comprehensive work of this type is *Me'irat Einayim*, composed by R. Isaac of Acre who traveled to Spain in search of various traditions in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Of note as well is the later editing of Ibn Gaon's *Keter Shem Ṭov* with the *Yalqut he-Ḥakham ha-Maskil*,[25] and the fifteenth-century copyings of Ibn Shu'eib's *Commentary* alongside that of Ibn Gaon.[26] Yet another attempt to combine material of different authors is recorded in a fourteenth century (!) manuscript copying of Ibn Shu'eib's supercommentary, *Be'ur le-sodot ha-Ramban*, which includes notes in the margin that apparently have been culled from other works. These comments, which appear in the margins, are therefore reorganized here according to the literary structure of the commentary to the Pentateuch and include traditions from kabbalists of other circles such as R. Ezra of Gerona and R. Moses de León.[27]

The above compilation of sources should be contrasted to similar efforts which are not organized according to the order of the Pentateuch and therefore do not assume Nahmanides' work as the basis of its literary structure. Prominent examples of such *collectanea* were prepared by the same hand as those described above. So for example, Isaac of Acre can be assumed to be the author of at least some of the various *collectanea* that include fragments of works from R. Ezra and R. Azriel of Gerona and passages from Nahmanides' *Commentary*.[28]

A major departure from this method is adopted by some students of Rashba.

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[25] In his *Kabbalah in the Writings of Baḥya ben Asher*, Jerusalem 1970, pp. 214-215 [Hebrew], Ephraim Gottlieb notes manuscripts of *Keter Shem Ṭov* that lack these added parts, others that copy the two in parallel columns and yet others that incorporate the *Yalqut* into the body of the text of *Keter Shem Ṭov*. It therefore stands to reason (as Idel has argued in his article 'An Anonymous Commentary', p. 19) that these three types represent the editorial history behind the integrated edition we have today: *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, ed. Y. Koriat, Livorno 1798, fols. 25a-54a.

[26] For example Mss. Paris 798 and 823 as noted by Levinger, p.31.

[27] Ms. Parma 68. See for example fol. 16a, a Kabbalah from 'R. M.' R. Ezra is cited on fols. 18a, 18b, 24a, 33a, 34a, 35a, 36a. R. Sheshet is mentioned on fol. 36b, R. Abraham on fol. 37a and R. Mordechai on fol. 39a. On fol. 38b the copyist indicates that he is using a separate source, perhaps indicating that the others come from a single codex. An oral tradition is mentioned in the name of 'the Rabbi' on fol. 41b. Regarding traditions in the name of Ben Belimah see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 390, n.62.

[28] See Ms. Paris BN 859, Ms. Oxford 1945, fols. 25a-72b; Ms. Oxford 1947, fols. 10a-28b; Ms. Oxford 2456 (formerly Ms. Christ Church College 198), fols. 1a-25b headed with the words '*sodot ha-Ramban*'.

In an extremely important manuscript in Parma, the Kabbalah of Rashba is collected by theme and presented in an unordered series of a few hundred entries that begin with the words '*Another Matter*' [*'inyan aḥer*].[29] The thematic form can be found in similar though separate attempts to organize Nahmanides' Kabbalah. One example of such is the collection of traditions that follows the literary form of '*sodot*' which gained prominence in the kabbalistic works written in Castile in the second half of the thirteenth century.[30] A second example of a thematic presentations, which is based at least in part on received traditions, is the anonymous supercommentary cited above which has survived in three manuscripts.[31] This work finds its place only in part within the trend of thematic presentation as it groups discussions introduced by subject heading within the unit of the pericope of the Pentateuch. And while the author mentions traditions he 'received', they cannot be placed within the circle of Rashba. The tendency to organize Nahmanides' esoteric doctrines into a thematic outline reached its height with the writing of *Ma'arkhet ha-'Elohut*, a systematic presentation of Nahmanides' Kabbalah that has a complex structure with overtly didactic purposes.[32]

We can conclude from our survey of early commentaries to Nahmanides' work that prior to the thematic reorganization of Nahmanides' Kabbalah, there exist three stages in interpreting Nahmanides' *Commentary* with examples from the transitionary stages displaying characteristics of more than one. These supercommentaries can therefore be grouped according to the guiding principles of a) received oral traditions, b) independent interpretations to Nahmanides' work, and c) the collecting and editing of the written interpretations and traditions that illuminate Nahmanides' statements.

4. *Transmission vs. Interpretation: Problems in Defining the Nature of a Supercommentary*

Nahmanides' work presents unique problems which call into question the

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[29] Ms. Parma 1221: See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 392 n. 67.

[30] I have discussed the manuscripts in my article 'New Manuscripts to the "Book of Secrets"'. Part of this collection was published at the end of *Sefer Nefesh ha-Ḥakhama*, Basel 1608.

[31] Above, note 19

[32] See Avraham Elqayam, 'On the Architectonic Structure of the Book *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*'.

normal definition of a supercommentary for his interpreters.[33] Because Nahmanides stresses that oral transmission is the main medium for conveying his 'secrets' and his literary work contain only hints, the reception history of Nahmanides' esoteric teachings must be based on comments concerning the limited sections of his literary work *and* the body of oral traditions or 'texts'. In the case of the esoteric interpreters of Nahmanides, therefore, the definition of what is a 'supercommentary' must be extended to include *all treatments* of his (esoteric) thought, irrespective of literary context.

In some cases, in which the whole of Nahmanides' work forms the literary structure of the later work, it can be shown that the author's main goal is not necessarily to comment and explain Nahmanides' intent, but on the biblical text or related kabbalistic material from other schools. Although this might seem a fine line to draw because a given author may indeed be pursuing a number of goals simultaneously, in the wider context of these works it remains a critical distinction. Moreover, even when Nahmanides' kabbalistic statements are the primary focus, their isolated treatment can betray the accepted definition of a supercommentary. So for example, the abridgement entitled '*Secrets of the Torah*' meticulously extracts every statement where Nahmanides stops short of a full kabbalistic explanation. This editor is highly sensitive to every technical term, such as *sod* (secret),[34] *remez* (hint) and *'al derekh ha-'emeth* (by way of truth), drawing his net as widely as possible in search of kabbalistic material. This editing was therefore intended to be studied outside of its original and full literary context, possibly to be deciphered by the reader comparing passages one with another. It is difficult to assume the alternative, that the editor intended the reader to apply these passages to a re-evaluation based on external sources not included in the manuscript, examples of which have not been found in surviving manuscripts. When compared to the later supercommentaries listed above, we can easily see that less attention was paid in later years to the full array of comments. The difference between these two approaches can be explained by positing that the editors of the abridged version lacked all direction and were compelled to include as much material as possible, whereas the members of Nahmanides' school were guided by their own interests or even

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[33] See however the exceptions discussed by Charles Manekin, 'Logic and Its Applications in the Philosophy of Gersonides', *Gersonide en son temps*, édité par G. Dahan, Louvain-Paris 1991, p. 135; Idem, 'Logic, Science and Philosophy in Gersonides', *Studies on Gersonides*, ed. G. Freudenthal, Leiden 1992, pp. 287-288.

[34] On the term '*sod*' see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 387.

by the more limited material for which they *had not* received instruction.

A comparison of supercommentaries written by members of Nahmanides' school to those completely outside of it is not in itself sufficient for understanding the different methods of interpretation. While the former might possess authentic traditions that date back to Nahmanides' true teachings, independent interpretations are also prevalent in these works. It is therefore necessary to compare examples where traditions are explicitly cited in the name of a teacher, (and also to those mentioned in the name of the teacher's teacher). Such information is scant among the students of Rashba and leaves one with the impression that much of the material is freely interpreted in the general spirit of the kabbalistic traditions they possessed. Moreover, one could argue that the attempt to write a supercommentary is motivated by need – that these authors are compelled to write in order to bridge the gap created by the distance of time and ignorance. Such an explanation complements Nahmanides' own directive not to write about kabbalistic matters. That is, while the first generation of students might have desisted from writing a revealing supercommentary to their teacher's work because it would have met with his disapproval, it also holds that if they possessed his esoteric teachings, and could read his *Commentary* with these explanations in mind, there would be no point in composing a supercommentary. I suggest, therefore, that in these cases a supercommentary is written more for its author, as a document which organizes the author's thoughts and interpretations of a given work, than as a guide for others.[35] I will begin by testing this impression on the supercommentaries written by the students of Rashba, Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon and Joshua Ibn Shu'eib.

Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon is rarely guided by oral traditions from Nahmanides, but rather relies on the instruction of his two teachers, Isaac Ṭodros and Rashba. More interesting is that in the majority of the cases, particularly with respect to Isaac Ṭodros, Ibn Gaon cites their written teachings.[36] Additionally,

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[35] Compare Uriel Simon, 'Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries', *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra Studies in the Writings of A Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, ed. I. Twersky and J. Harris, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England 1993, pp. 86-128, see esp. pp. 86-89.

[36] That is, Isaac Todros' *Commentary to the Maḥzor*. This commentary can be found in Ms. Paris BN 839, fols. 191a-226a. This work makes no reference to Nahmanides or his works. For an exception to the above statement, where Shem Ṭov indeed claims to have received a traditions 'from the mouth' of R. Isaac Ṭodros, see

when citing Nahmanides' *Commentary*, Ibn Gaon refers to the tradition as 'hinted by our Rabbi in the appropriate place [in his *Commentary*]'. It would seem therefore that Ibn Gaon is producing a written document from material he has largely accessed through written sources. In the beginning of his *Commentary*, Ibn Gaon displays an awareness of what he is doing, at least as concerns his reader who will access these traditions through his text:

> And now make an effort to know this introduction and to receive [an explanation of] it orally, for in this way [or: through it] you will come [to understand] the hints of the Rabbi, may his memory be blessed. [And] even though I hint to you concerning each and every hint and add light to each one, you should not believe that reason will suffice to understand his [Nahmanides'] view.[37]

Ibn Gaon is painfully aware that Nahmanides polemicized in the introduction of his *Commentary to the Torah* against anyone who tries to understand his work through reason or without a received, oral tradition, and the above quote alludes to these passages. Ibn Gaon is therefore balancing his own literary efforts against Nahmanides' directive against it by encouraging the reader to receive additional oral instruction. In keeping with the aura of secrecy, Ibn Gaon explains in the continuation of the above passage that at times he mentions only one word regarding a secret matter 'to preserve its wonder', and at other times he remains silent or changes matters slightly 'to close the gates before others'.[38] These prescriptions for secrecy resemble those of other kabbalistic works and reflect on the secrets the author wishes to conceal in his own writing, not those of a work upon which he is commenting.

It seems fair to conclude that Ibn Gaon's work is not so much a supercommentary to Nahmanides' work as it is his own commentary to the Torah, which incorporates traditions from all sources known to him. Nahmanides' *Commentary* is awarded a central place because he is the head of the circle from within which Ibn Gaon's traditions arise. In Ibn Gaon's work, Nahmanides' text has not yet become a sacred text whose every obscure statement requires explanation.

By comparison, Ibn Shu'eib's *Commentary* is to a greater extent a supercommentary to Nahmanides' *Commentary*. Unlike Ibn Gaon, Ibn Shu'eib

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further below.

[37] Ms. Vatican, Barb. 110, fol. 95b-c.

[38] fol. 95c.

returns to Nahmanides' short kabbalistic references in almost every explanation. His work further lacks a preface of the usual warning concerning secrecy and the declaration of a partial written deciphering of an esoteric tradition.[39] Although relatively unconstrained, Ibn Shu'eib does not possess a complete kabbalistic explanation from within his circle. He often states that he has not received an explanation of Nahmanides' intention and resorts to sources outside of his circle to provide an interpretation. So for example, we read in Ibn Shu'eib's work:

> 'And God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters' (Gn. 1:6), 'This concerns the Account of Creation. Don't expect me to write anything about it'. (Nahmanides' *Commentary*, ed. Chavel, I, p. 18). And we (Ibn Shu'eib) have not received anything about it. [But] the sage, R. Ezra, hinted about the *aggadah* of the upper masculine waters and the lower feminine [waters].[40]

Ibn Shu'eib has interpreted Nahmanides' comment here through the work of another, a point of which he is aware.[41] It is clear from his open declaration that he has not received any tradition and that he is accessing another figure's work due to a need to provide an explanation. And insofar as Azriel's interpretation is independent of Nahmanides' *Commentary*, neither referring to the other,[42] we can view the above passage as evidence of Ibn Shu'eib's work functioning as a supercommentary as defined above.[43] Ibn Shu'eib's approach is surprising

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[39] Of note are shorter statements which state his self-censorship: e.g. fols. 6a, 8d.

[40] Ibid. fol. 4a. See I. Tishby, *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadot of R. Azriel of Gerona*, Jerusalem 1943, p. 36. On pp. 36-37 Tishby lists further uses of Ezra's work.

[41] Compare his comment on fol. 20a: 'And according to the view of the (other) remaining Kabbalists, foremost the sage, R. Ezra...'.

[42] See however, Tishby, 'The Kabbalists R. Ezra and Azriel and their Place in the Gerona School', *Zion* 9 (1944), p. 184 [Hebrew]; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 368; Idel, 'No Kabbalistic Tradition', p. 57 n. 21; *Ezra's Commentary to the Aggadot, Sefer Liqquṭei Shikhekha u-fea*, Ferarra 1516, fol. 20b where Nahmanides is cited. Further manuscript work is required to validate that this comment is not a later addition. See also Ms. Cambridge 505.9 fol. 3b where Azriel's 'Questions and Answers' on Kabbalistic matters (or: 'Explanation Concerning the Ten Sefiroth') is cited with the comment that Azriel received [his Kabbalah] from the mouth of Nahmanides'.

[43] Most interesting is Ibn Shu'eib's usage of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Talmud*, fol. 5b (*Ḥiddushei Nedarim*), reinforcing the claim that his main goal is to explain Nahmanides' view and not necessarily Ibn Shu'eib's own understanding of the Torah. Similarly see the printed version of *Keter Shem Ṭov*, fol. 29a and the *collectanea*

because he *did* receive traditions from Rashba, including esoteric sayings Nahmanides told Rashba.[44]

Isaac of Acre's treasure-house of source material, *Me'irat Einayim*, is edited with Nahmanides' *Commentary* in mind. Isaac is sensitive to the importance of oral traditions and is aware that differences in interpretation can result from this. It is therefore astounding to read his attack on the students of Rashba, that they falsified their traditions:

> And the author of *Keter Shem Ṭov* erred a grave error [in his interpretation of Nahmanides' comment], and because he made such an error, it is impossible that he received it, rather what he wrote it based on [his own] reasoning. And if he presented his reasoning such 'according to the way of truth' as if he received it from a pious kabbalist, then his sin is very great indeed. And I have explained this matter in the pericope of *Beshalaḥ*, and if he received this from the mouth of his teacher, he should have mentioned his name.[45]

Despite Isaac's sharp attack, he is not fully certain that despite the contradiction to other material he possesses, these traditions did not originate in an oral teaching from Rashba and Nahmanides. It is possible that R. Isaac of Acre is attacking the students of the Rashba in order to defend against his own 'unauthorized' compilation of sources and interpretations to Nahmanides' Kabbalah. It might very well be that R. Isaac of Acre is responding to a previous attack on himself from a member of that circle.[46]

These critiques raise the basic question: who exactly received traditions originating from Nahmanides? From our discussion above, Ibn Gaon seems to be the most reliable kabbalist in the generation after Rashba. In the previous generation, Rashba, R. Sheshet of Catalonia (Mercadell), R. Isaac Ṭodros and R. David ha-Kohen have been listed as students of Nahmanides in kabbalistic matters.[47] Very little evidence remains describing these figures affiliations to Nahmanides.

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of Ms. Parma 1221, fol. [179]a, where the author cites Nahmanides' commentary to *Massekhet Shavuot*, Ms. Oxford 1947, fol. 20a and *Me'irat Einayim*, pp. 23, 42.

[44] See the *collectanea* in Ms. Cambridge 2116.8, fol. 69a: 'And my teacher commented to me that here (that is, on this matter) he heard from the mouth of the Rabbi'.

[45] *Me'irat Einayim*, ed. Goldreich, p. 245, cited by Levinger, p. 11. See also Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 384.

[46] I would like to thank Boaz Huss for this comment.

[47] See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 384, Idel, 'No Kabbalistic Tradition', p. 65 and Idel, 'Nahmanides: Kabbalah, Halakhah and Spiritual Leadership'.

Sheshet of Catalonia is mentioned by Ibn Shu'eib and Isaac of Acre.[48] With the exception of Isaac of Acre's testimony that Sheshet met with Nahmanides in Acre,[49] no texts or traditions mentioned in his name are said to come from Nahmanides. While a careful study of his Kabbalah is required to assess how close his doctrines are to those of Nahmanides and the other members of his school, it may be suggested minimally that he was a kabbalistic colleague of these figures and not an initiate of all their traditions. In the case of Isaac Ṭodros, however, there is sufficient indirect evidence to believe that he was an initiate of Nahmanides' circle and served as a conduit of esoteric lore from Nahmanides to at least R. Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon.[50] Beyond this, Ibn Gaon mentions a tradition R. Isaac Ṭodros received from R. Judah ben Yaqar, one of Nahmanides' teachers.[51] Finally, R. David ha-Kohen who is known from citations of him by Isaac of Acre is identified in a Moscow manuscript as the student of Rashba and R. Isaac Ṭodros, placing him a generation later than previously believed.[52]

5. *Supercommentaries of Other Orientations*

Many of the anonymous and late supercommentaries outside of the circle of Rashba are written to explain the work of Nahmanides according to a particular theology.[53] Outside sources are rarely cited and the reader is rarely if ever

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[48] See Abrams, *Book Bahir*, p. 49.

[49] Idel, 'No Kabbalistic Tradition', p. 62 n.42.

[50] See Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 449 n.201 and *Baddei Ha-Aron*, Ms. Paris, BN 840, fol. 14b (Levinger's facsimile edition, p. 27) where Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon reports that he orally received a tradition from both Isaac Ṭodros and Rashba who each received it from Nahmanides. A similar formulation can be found in Isaac of Acre's *Mei'rat Einayim*, p. 171. I would like to thank Moshe Idel for bringing this passage to my attention.

[51] *Ma'or va-shemesh*, fol. 29a. The printed version is shortened to read only 'R. Yehudah'.

[52] See Ms. Moscow-Gunzberg 1302, fols. 70b-71a. On David Ha-Kohen see Idel as cited by Goldreich in his edition of *Me'irat Einayim*, pp. 414-415 and Ibid, p. 248. Goldreich cites Isaac of Acre's *Oṣar Ḥayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Gunzberg 775, fol. 22b who records a tradition R. David Ha-Kohen 'heard from the mouth' of Nahmanides. The apparent contradiction between these two sources needs further clarification and study.

[53] For the benefit of future research these commentaries will be listed in chronological order of their first printings: Shmuel Ṣarfati, *Nimuqei Shmuel*, Amsterdam 1808; Moshe bar Eleazar Ḥayyim of Mezritch, *Ohel Moshe*, Warsaw 1878; Ḥezqiah Feibel

addressed directly. In many of these 'supercommentaries' there appears to be the conscious attempt to ignore Nahmanides' introduction and understand the *Commentary* outside of its kabbalistic framework, or at the least the early Spanish orientation of its Kabbalah. Of the former, the commentary of Isaac Abuab II stands out. A reading of Isaac's work leaves the reader with the impression that Nahmanides was not even familiar with Kabbalah! Every attempt is made to cull from the *Commentary* direct explanations of the biblical text and compare them to interpretations of Rashi. Some late commentaries, written within the last hundred and fifty years, achieve this recasting through their literary form: fragmentary comments, resembling notebooks or glosses. A consistent reinterpretation is offered in Lurianic 'supercommentaries' that seek to recast Nahmanides' Kabbalah altogether. The renewed interest in Nahmanides' *Commentary* among those who follow Lurianic Kabbalah seems to follow the comment by Ḥayyim Vital that Nahmanides is the last of the true kabbalists who received oral tradition.

> Do not go near any of the late kabbalistic works [written] after Nahmanides, may his memory be blessed, because following Nahmanides the path of wisdom has been hidden from the eyes of all wise men and nothing is left to them except a few branches of their introductions, lacking their roots. And upon this the later kabbalists based their words according to human intellect.[54]

Vital's comment seeks to bridge the gap between the works of the early kabbalists and that of Isaac Luria by emphasizing that each is based on mystical revelation. This was understood by later figures to be an invitation to re-examine Nahmanides' *Commentary*. These figures were familiar with Nahmanides warning, that his Kabbalah could only be penetrated through received, oral tradition and so understood Vital's words to be a direct commentary to Nahmanides' instruction. It stood to reason therefore that

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Ployt, Pressburg 1878; Abraham bar Eliezer Lichtenstein, *Kanfei Nesharim*, Warsaw 1884; Yisrael bar Shabtai Shapirah, *She'erith Yisrael*, Lublin 1895; Abraham Livlin, *Kesef Mezuqaq*, Lemberg 1898; Jonah Dov Rabonovich, *Midrash Ḥakhamim*, Vilna 1903; Ḥayyim Arnstein, *Divrei Avraham* Bartfeld 1907; Yiṣḥaq fon Marshan, *Tifereth le-Moshe*, Amsterdam 1928; Joseph Patsanov, *Pardes Yosef*, first published in part in Pietrekov 1931, new edition with notes, Jerusalem 1994; Jacob Leb Frankel of Satmar, *Gevurot Aryeh*, facsimile edition of Rumänien 1932 edition published Jerusalem 1990, published in part in 1906; Aryeh Leb Steinhart, *Kur Zahav*, Jerusalem 1934; Mordechai Gimpel Jaffe, *Tekhelet Mordechai*, Jerusalem 1954.

54 *Sefer Eṣ Ḥayyim*, Jerusalem 1988, vol. 1, p. 19.

Lurianic Kabbalah was a key to Nahmanides' work. For example, Meir Poppers write in his seventeenth-century work, *Torah Or*:

> Nahmanides' *Commentary* is very profound, who can understand it. And there is no one who understands his meaning to its depth. And R. Isaac of Acre composed a work called *Me'irat Einayim*, written according to the wisdom of the early [Kabbalists]. And also his words are obscure. Therefore, I have chosen to delve into it so that maybe I will understand something of it. And I saw that after I read [Ḥayyim Vital's] *Eṣ Ḥayyim* and ate from the fruits of the words of R. Ḥayyim Vital, almost all his words became clear, and need no explanation. Therefore, I have been encouraged to compose a commentary to the words of Nahmanides and his [kabbalistic] hints, to the degree that I understand them, according to the introductions *[haqdamoth]* of R. Ḥayyim Vital. And I am not transgressing the instructions of the Rabbi [Nahmanides] because I have received them orally from a wise Kabbalist, from one ear to another ear, and I am writing nothing [which arises] from reason.[55]

We can see therefore that the lasting effect of Nahmanides *Kabbalah* as presented in his *Commentary* is its hidden nature and the need for a received tradition. This was understood in the first generations following its composition and resurrected when a new system of thought emerged along these lines.[56]

6. *A Complete Edition of Supercommentaries: A Tool for All Future Scholarship*

We learn from our survey that future research into the reception-history of Nahmanides will revolve around the comparison of interpretations based on oral teachings and contrasting them to explanations based on intellectual insights alone. Such a program of study is made highly difficult by the current state of the sources themselves. Most of the material remains in manuscript and the printed editions of the remainder of the material differ considerably in additional manuscripts. Moreover, even if good editions were made available, the regimen of study proposed here requires detailed comparisons between

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[55] Quoted at length by Scholem in his description of Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 108, in his, *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, p.146 [Hebrew]. This passage is printed as well in the rather recent edition of the complete work, Jerusalem 1989, pp. 1-2.

[56] See further, Daniel Abrams, 'The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism', esp. pp. 84-85.

numerous sources, a task made drastically easier by an integrated edition of them all. Indeed, inasmuch as the Hekhalot project which presented a number of important manuscripts in parallel columns, so that one could study the texts' editing and transmission-history,[57] a similarly arranged and comprehensive edition of the texts of Nahmanides' interpreters would make obvious what a dozen separate editions could not.

The edition proposed is a departure from the traditional format of the *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, the collection of medieval commentators arranged together on the same folio with the biblical text. The first editions included Rashi and Targum Onkelos,[58] with Ibn Ezra, David and Moses Qimḥi and Levi ben Gershom (Ralbag) being added to later editions.[59] The original interest of these printers rested in the correct biblical text and tools, which helped to reveal the text's literal sense. Although carried out by educated Jews, the printing was sponsored by Christians. The printers apparently chose a handful of classical commentators that independently help the reader with the biblical text. That is, there is no indication that they were generating an opinion on the relationship between the commentaries.[60]

Nahmanides' *Commentary* was first published in Rome around 1470 as an independent volume, being included with Rashi's *Commentary* for the first

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[57] Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*,. On such advances in the research see for example: Klaus Herrman, and Clauda Rohrbacher-Sticker, 'Magische Traditionen der New Yorker Hekhalot-Handschrift JTS 8128 im Kontext ihrer Gesamtredaktion', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 17 (1989), pp. 101-149.

[58] e.g. Bologna 1482.

[59] On the Venice 1525 editions see Jordan Penkower, 'Jacob ben Ḥayyim and the Rise of the *Biblia Rabbinica*', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1982, Chapter One [Hebrew]. Despite Kabbalistic influences on ben Ḥayyim's conception of the Torah and the sanctification of its text, particularly those of Nahmanides' tradition regarding the Torah as the divine name, (pp. 8-9), Jacob ben Ḥayyim did not include him in the edition.

[60] On the juxtaposition of material and exploiting the body of the page and margins see Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Literary Content of the Manuscript', *The Rothschild Miscellany: A Scholarly Commentary*, London 1989, pp. 49-51. On printed bibles and their commentaries, see Herbert Zafren, 'Bible Editions Bible Study and the Early History of Hebrew Printing', *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982), pp. 240-251 [Hebrew]. For an example from Kabbalistic sources see the layout of the three commentaries to Ezekiel of R. Moses de León, R. Joseph Gikatilla and that of the *Zohar* as found for example in Ms. Cambridge Dd. 3.3.5.

time in Salonica 1520.[61] And although Nahmanides' *Commentary* was republished numerous times, it was not a favorite choice of printers of various types of editions of the *Miqra'ot Gedolot*. The first edition to include both Nahmanides' *Commentary* and a supercommentary (from his circle) appears to be the 1875 Warsaw edition of the Pentateuch, which includes the commentary attributed to Meir Ibn Sahula.[62] This example unfortunately does not demonstrate a relationship between the two works. The supercommentary is added at the end of each of the five volumes of the Pentateuch and appears to be a later consideration as the quire signatures reveal a different pagination.[63] This fragmented edition of the supercommentary was later published separately in one volume.[64] To date, therefore, no printed edition reflects the methodology of an integrated reading that would permit critical comparisons of the interpretations and oral traditions. Moreover, the text of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* has never been properly edited from manuscript sources. Chavel's edition is extremely poor though widely used. The manuscripts show great variation and Nahmanides is known to have added passages and possibly revised his commentary in the last years of his life after leaving Spain for Acre.[65]

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[61] This printing had begun already in 1512. For a list of the printings and further discussion, see A. M. Habermann's introduction to the facsimile edition of the Rome printing (Jerusalem n.d.) [Hebrew] and Ṣafren's article cited above.

[62] See the copy in the National Library of Israel, S22V4372. This copy is the original format from which Scholem removed the pages of Ibn Sahula's commentary (Scholem Collection #253). The above copy located in the stacks of the National Library of Israel and previously owned by Shlomo Ḥayyim bar David Kahane also includes annotations in pen by Gershom Scholem! See also the facsimile edition (New York 1969, Malkhut Press) of the Vilna 1927 edition which appears to be a reprinting of the same.

[63] Facsimile edition in *Oṣar Mefarshei ha-Torah*, Jerusalem 1973. This two volume set includes ten commentaries to the Torah, among them the supercommentary of Isaac Abuab II, and is also divided according to the five books of the Pentateuch.

[64] Vilna 1930, The Widow and Brothers Ram, publishers. Although the volume appears separately in the Scholem Collection #252, it appears that it too was intended to be bound with other material in a five volume edition and may have been assembled together as well by Scholem.

[65] See Kalman Kahana, 'Nahmanides' Additions to his Commentary on the Pentateuch', *Ha-Ma'ayan* 9 (1969), pp. 25-47 [Hebrew]; Mordechai Sabato, 'On the Text of Nahmanides' Commentary to the Torah', *Megadim* 23 (1995), pp. 71-81 [Hebrew]; Uriel Itim, 'On the Text of Nahmanides' Commentary to the Torah in Chavel's Edition',

By reading the comments of Nahmanides' students back into his work, the modern reader is engaging Nahmanides' work on the terms set out by Nahmanides himself and is then able to test the role of orality in this circle. Such a method permits for the comparison of methodologies in modern scholarship: the evaluation of a work within its own literary framework, and the use of external (and later) sources to understand the reception-history of a text. Moreover, by combining these two methods the reader is pursuing Nahmanides' own prescription for decoding his work as he views the work in the context of the history of ideas. This method therefore does not attempt to characterize or question the strategy of Nahmanides' presentation of his kabbalistic traditions, but to understand how his commentary, which gives the impression of conservatism, was received by his students.

7. *Methodological Differences and Criticism of Recent Scholarship*

Since the initial publication of this chapter as an article, two major studies on Nahmanides' thought have appeared, Haviva Pedaya's *Naḥmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*[66] and Moshe Halbertal's *By Way of Truth: Naḥmanides and the Creation of Tradition*.[67] Neither work is formally an explication of Nahmanides' 'Kabbalah' to the exclusion of other subjects, but each

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Megadim 30 (1999), pp. 73-96 [Hebrew]; Mordechai Sabato, 'Nahmanides' Additions to his Commentary on the Pentateuch', *Megadim* 42 (2005), pp. 61-124 [Hebrew]; Yosef Ofer, 'The Two Lists of Addenda to Nahmanides: Torah Commentary: Who Wrote Them?, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008), pp. 321-352. I note that R. Isaac of Acre also added, at a later date, additional comments or revisions to his Supercommentary on Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*. The layering of both texts is of great interest for editorial practice and has great implications for intellectual biographies and the history of ideas. Beyond the observations of modern scholarship, any attention of later commentaries or figures to stages of writing and thought is also of great importance.

[66] Tel Aviv 2003 [Hebrew].

[67] Jerusalem 2006 [Hebrew]. Lost in the translation of the Hebrew title listed in the volume is the sense of the creativity [*yeṣirata*] that accompanies tradition beyond the establishment or invention of tradition by Nahmanides. See the publically delivered review of this volume by Jonathan Garb: http://pluto.huji.ac.il/~jogarb/derechemet.doc See also Halbertal's study, 'From Oral Tradition to Literary Canon: Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon and the Critique of Kabbalistic Literature', *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. Margalit Finkelberg and Guy Stroumsa, Leiden and Boston 2003, pp. 253-265.

significantly engages his esoteric teachings.[68] To be sure, each navigates through Nahmanides' multi-faceted corpus in order to present a certain picture of his contributions, in the literary, cultural and hermeneutic realms in which he operated. For different reasons, each devotes much attention to Nahmanides as a kabbalist, allotting greater and lesser roles to his esoteric traditions in their presentation of the themes and overview that constitute these volumes.

Pedaya's work, published in 2003, is mostly geared to the esoteric topic of cyclical time, a theme mediated through an appreciation of Nahmanides as a the first kabbalist to write a commentary to the Torah. Pedaya additionally accesses Nahmanides' esoteric traditions through the literature of his students and kabbalistic commentators, calling their treatments of his esoteric phrases 'dialectic' and terming the later works of kabbalists who wrote about his oral traditions, amidst other kabbalistic traditions from Castile, 'dialogical'[69] in that they opened up his body of thought to parallel and competing systems. A sample passage states the methodology employed:

> It seems, that a breakthrough in the major avenues of inquiry into the teaching of Nahmanides will be [achieved] dialectically against the background of early Kabbalah, and which will contribute to the sharpening of the description of the circle of Nahmanides in its entirety: his students, his students' students, the commentators and those who broke the restrictions of his secret. My aim in the following is not to explicate all the literary and bibliographic problems bound up in this circle, but rather to suggest ways for sorting out the members of the circle, according to the interpretive categories I have described above. That is, preservation and innovation, tradition and revelation, the written and the oral, the explained text, and systematic or interpretive writing, and the like.[70]

My difficulties with this stated methodology are as follows: No clear social circle or textual community has been established. On the contrary, as argued above, the texts display a very complex engagement with the written references to Nahmanides' secrets, which he explained in part orally, and new textual tools

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[68] Of note as well is Yair Lorberbaum's article 'Nahmanides' Kabbalah on the Creation of Man in the Image of God', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 287-326 [Hebrew], which adheres more closely to Nahmanides corpus, drawing parallels from works by later figures from his school and not explicitly engaging the transference from oral to literary transmission. See also Dov Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Leiden-Boston 2005, pp. 69-70.

[69] See for example, Pedaya, *Naḥmanides*, p. 106.

[70] Pedaya, Ibid., p. 89.

are required to flesh out these differences. A new methodology also needs to be developed in order to seriously flesh out the unique role of orality in this group of texts, not necessarily categorized by the above categories and not for each work as a whole. Finally, a dialectic engagement with the sources of the Early Kabbalah creates a scholarly narrative that synthesizes disparate traditions into a larger, even if complex, narrative of Nahmanides' 'teaching' [*mishnato*].

I find myself in deep disagreement with the rather clear lines between concealment and revelation in both these monographs. The choices drawn between the independent interpretation of Nahmanides' text (*savrah*) and releasing in writing the secrets Nahmanides transmitted orally are clearly constructed from Nahmanides' text, and lack the sophistication of methodologies of orality and literacy that go beyond such positivist readings from the Middle Ages. Pedaya further suggests that the existence of anonymous commentaries in manuscripts is evidence of the self-awareness of some authors that they have broken with esotericism.[71]

Halbertal's program, by contrast, seeks to map out the full breadth of Nahmanides' intellectual achievements, his contributions to nearly every aspect of religious and cultural life, and thereby assess his esoteric traditions within the widest possible matrix of Nahmanides' thought. Halbertal's monograph thus serves as an intellectual portrait of Nahmanides, based on a systematic review of his works from all genres.[72] Halbertal's method hence offers an implied critique of past methodologies.

It is not a coincidence that scholarship has produced very few intellectual biographies of a kabbalistic figures, most of which are explorations of their (group of) works.[73] At best, Scholem devoted a chapter of *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* to the school of Ecstatic Kabbalah founded by Abraham Abulafia, but in this case as in all others, the object of study is the texts produced by the figures, and the meaning extrapolated from them by the modern reader.[74] The idea of casting Nahmanides' thought explicitly against the

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[71] Pedaya, Ibid., p. 107.

[72] Compare to the monograph of Novak, *The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented*.

[73] See the discussion of such works, below, in chapter 5.

[74] Not even de León or Isaac Luria have warranted such a study, the latter being the focus of analysis on the impact of his charisma and the emergence of a hagiographic literature. M. Rosman's work on the Baal Shem Ṭov, proving his existence and analyzing his few authentic letters, is another case in point of avoiding such a methodology.

backdrop of 'medieval Jewish thought'[75] is a construct that is beholden to the institutional division of subjects into departments in the university and is not a construct that is natural or recognized in the texts or period under scrutiny. Putting aside for the moment the death of the author and any post-modern inclinations to contextualize meaning within the reading of a text, we might further question whether it is desirable to presume or create an amalgam of thought attributed to a personality (and the larger intellectual life of a single personality) when the works participate in very different genres and follow different rules in those discourses. As Halbertal notes, Nahmanides is different than his philosophic predecessors, such as Judah Halevi and Maimonides who consciously produced synthetic works of their thought or statements of their doctrines. My sense is that this presumption of the individual author who affects society with the literary fruits of his intellectual development is a literary form of academic hagiography, a modern academic myth that creates a register of the important and canonical figures and their thought.

Nahmanides' kabbalistic thought is not interesting in itself relative to the riches that can be found in manuscript and print. The focus on Nahmanides is best understood from his importance for other reasons, as an halakhic figure who had great standing in the Sephardic community, and is found to be acceptable for study according to the fashion of Jewish studies today. In other words, Kabbalah is still considered taboo, to a degree, but Nahmanides is someone whose Kabbalah is legitimated by virtue of it being presented as part of a larger matrix of his thought. To be clear, unlike Maimonides who integrated the basic tenets of his philosophical program into his halakhic work, the *Mishneh Torah*, Nahmanides refrained from any synthesis. True, he studded his popular *Commentary to the Torah* with hundreds of references to Kabbalah, but intentionally concealed his intent and layered the various approaches of plain, rabbinic and kabbalistic interpretations. As Halbertal himself notes, without the 'breakdown of esotericism' by the later generations of commentators, 'it is doubtful whether these passages would be decipherable'.[76]

Both of these works suffer from the methodological problematics explored in this chapter. Most of all, Nahmanides' esoteric tradition, his Kabbalah, is perceived by these scholars as something which exists and can be known, despite Nahmanides' great efforts to conceal it in passages that require oral

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[75] p. 13.

[76] p. 298.

instruction. Using synchronic methods that largely integrate the later understandings with the earlier cryptic passages by the teacher, a synthetic picture is achieved across various generations. Such a reading presumes an idealist understanding of Nahmanides' Kabbalah, portraying him as a conservative figure who served as a conduit of older traditions, and who faithfully transmitted this body of ideas to students who successfully preserved the author's intent. Even when differences arise between the texts of the students in the second and third generations, authentic meaning of the past generations is sifted out as authentically that of Nahmanides.

While these two volumes are each beautifully written by these leading scholars of Jewish thought today, my critique is based on the methodological uncertainty that follows from work undertaken without the proper grounding that would emerge from a textual tool prepared for such a project, as described above. Even when orality is acknowledged as a major factor in these projects, it must be appreciated diachronically across the creative intervention of the figures who transmitted and crafted the traditions in their own image. In short, these studies would have benefited greatly from an appreciation of orality and the effects of reception. The eagerness of the traditional and scholarly communities to ascertain Nahmanides' tradition has preempted any balancing of the conclusions in favor of what can be learned from the students. As I have indicated above, an uninvested inquiry into all of the material available would result, I believe, in a determination that what Nahmanides *truly* thought may never be known, and is for (most) all purposes irrelevant when compared to how his intent was perceived in the history of Jewish literature, particularly amongst the kabbalists who broke from his desire not to record in writing his esoteric teachings.

To be clear, it is not impossible for scholarship to ascertain Nahmanides' authentic traditions and intentions. Rather, the preferred program for the initial stages of such research would require scholarship to first type the hermeneutics of the reception history, and then prepare accurate editions to allow for a synoptic overview. Both of these moves are necessary in order to peel away the later layers of interpretation that presumably would lead to the exposure of Nahmanides' thought, as it would, at the same time, *document* the complex interface between preservation and innovation along its transmission history.

Academic scholarship, as opposed to the medieval methods of scribes and kabbalists, appreciates the differences of context and embraces the advances of methodology in order to invest interpretation with distinctions that respect the

history of ideas. Lacking this methodology, modern scholarship may discern insightful understandings from the texts of the Nahmanidean school(s) as a whole, which may very well agree with what the methodologically rigorous project outlined project may uncover.[77]

[77] The project outlined in this study was never implemented for a variety of reasons (including) foremost funding and the lack of additional scholars to join in such a venture of editing the texts. A Hebrew translation of this study was given to Aharon Eisenbach, who has edited impressive editions of the works of the Rashba and R. Eleazar of Worms. It is my hope that the outline and methodology will offer guidance for the realization of such a project in his competent hands.

Chapter 4

*The Invention of the Zohar as a Book**

'And this book, *Zohar*, does not exist' 'ואין בעולם ספר זוהר זה'

– R. Isaac of Acre as quoted in *Sefer Yuḥasin*

'I do not possess this book [*Tiqqunei Zohar*] in its proper form and arrangement. And I have struggled greatly with the codices [*ha-sefarim*] and arranged the book [*ha-sefer*] with great effort [...] and the arrangements of the printed edition were not done properly'.

– Moses Cordovero, *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei Zohar*, volume 2, p. 81

1. *On the Assumptions and Expectations of the Kabbalists and Modern Scholars*

The *Zohar* is arguably the most important text of theosophical *Kabbalah*, composed in late thirteenth-century Castile. Over time, kabbalists and modern scholars have canonized its edited form and sanctified its place in the kabbalistic library of printed books. By outlining a history of views regarding the literary form of the zoharic texts, this chapter will demonstrate that modern scholarship has adopted the earlier assumptions of kabbalists and projected the received forms of the zoharic texts *as a book* back onto what they presumed to be the intended structure produced by its 'authors'. My aim is not to solve the mystery of the *Zohar*'s composition, nor to offer a comprehensive or consistent

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* Portions of this study were delivered in Hebrew under the title 'The *Zohar* is not a Book' at the conference '*Ḥiddushei Zohar*' held at Tel Aviv University, December 29, 2003. The article from which the lecture was based was subsequently published in Hebrew as Daniel Abrams, 'The *Zohar* as a Book: On the Assumptions and Expectations of the Kabbalists and Modern Scholarship', *Kabbalah* 12 (2004), pp. 201-232. The present study, many times its length, is a revised expansion of that study which appeared in *Kabbalah* 19 (2009), pp. 7-142.

explanation for *all* the evidence regarding the early history of its composition, but rather to call into question the theories in currency today through a more sophisticated methodology for appreciating the literary forms of the zoharic texts, those that are historically earlier, but not necessarily 'original', as well as those that were imposed on the materials throughout the rich and complex history of its transmission and reception. The revision of these basic assumptions should affect how the *Zohar* is read and interpreted and should suggest a much needed correction to scholarship.

This inquiry is the product of many years of research, public lectures, and printed articles. For more than a decade now, I have been developing a methodology that questions the presumed literary claims about the *Zohar*, theories and assumptions that have become dogma in the field and upon which other types of studies have emerged. My main reservation has been that scholarship cannot presume that the *Zohar* was produced as a book. My first conclusion emerged from displacing and reconfiguring the literary unit of the 'Introduction of the *Zohar*' in a study published in 1994.[1] Later, in 1996, I published in broader terms my conclusion about the printed *Zohar* as a whole.[2] In that same year, I delivered a lecture in Chicago to the academic advisory board of the Pritzker translation to the *Zohar* undertaken by Daniel Matt concerning the gap between the form and identity of the printed edition of the *Zohar* and what scholarship considers to have been produced in Castile centuries earlier. For years, I had been discussing my ideas with colleagues against a significant degree of resistance, most prominently in the year devoted to the *Zohar* at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1998) in which I recall important conversations with Daniel Matt and Arthur Green over my idea that the *Zohar* manuscripts should no longer be considered *fragments* of a lost and once whole work. In 2003, I gave a lecture in Hebrew entitled 'The *Zohar* is Not a Book' in a conference at Tel Aviv University, organized by Ronit Meroz and was publicly berated for suggesting such a methodology. I nevertheless took comfort in a Foucauldian reading of the event, seeing how I was finally defined as 'the author' of my idea, that the *Zohar* was not a book, and that I had been found responsible, 'disciplined' as it

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[1] Daniel Abrams, 'When was the "Introduction" to the *Zohar* Written', and Changes within Differing Copies of the Mantua Printing', *Asufot* 8 (1994), pp. 211-226 [Hebrew].

[2] Idem, 'Critical and Post-Critical Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature: Notes on the History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques', *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 17-71, which appears here in a revised and expanded form as chapter one.

were, for contributing this idea for public consumption. This irony notwithstanding, even though I published in 2004 the full form of the paper I delivered at the conference – an article composed in Hebrew, intended for the specialized reading audience – the thesis has met neither acceptance nor criticism, only neglect, with only one scholar offering a reference to the published form of the study in the proceedings of this very conference issued three years after its publication.[3] I document the history of my claim because it has been either ignored, as if never published, or adopted at some later date as an obvious or authorless claim, without any reference to my various published comments from 1994 through 2004. A much expanded English version appeared in 2009 the journal *Kabbalah* and is here further enhanced in a more detailed exposition as a chapter in this monograph on textual theory and editorial practice.

A basic premise of my inquiry is the distinction between the history of the literary structure of the *Zohar*, as evidenced by the extant manuscripts and early printings, and the history of attitudes to the *Zohar* as a book in the consciousness of kabbalists and modern scholars. In my study published in 1994, 'When was the "Introduction to the *Zohar*" Written', I showed that the so-called 'Introduction' is an independent literary unity that was anachronistically published as the introduction to the '*Book of the Zohar*', which the printers of the second edition in Mantua constructed from various manuscripts according to the different literary strata they included in the book. Nevertheless, my main conclusion regarding the *Zohar*, was published in 1996 in a study entitled 'Critical and Post-Critical Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature'.[4] In this study, I claimed that it was an error to assume that the *Zohar* had always

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[3] Moshe Idel, 'Moses Gaster on Jewish Mysticism and the *Zohar*', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. R. Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 111-127 [Hebrew]. More demonstrative of my remark is Matt's study included in this conference volume, based on his introduction to the first volume of his translation of the *Zohar* (prior to the composition of this study as a lecture and its appearance as an article in Hebrew), in which he states, that no manuscript of the 'whole' *Zohar* as it appears in print exists 'and with near certainty it never existed'. To this comment he rightly footnotes my study on the 'Introduction to the *Zohar*' and my comment published in 'Critical and Post-Critical', p. 61 [English p. xvi n.5; Hebrew version: 'The *Zohar*: Pritzker Edition', p. 4 n.3)].

[4] This article appears in a different and much expanded form here as chapter one. The passage cited appeared in *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), p. 61.

been a 'Book'. My remarks were offered as a criticism of the scholarly efforts at that time to edit a critical edition of the '*Book of the Zohar*' from manuscripts, following the structure of the printed editions: 'A scholarly edition of the zoharic corpus cannot base itself on the assumption *that there is a Zohar*'. I would like to emphasize that my claim then was formulated as the rejection of a positive assumption, namely that there is no known evidence of manuscripts prior to the sixteenth century that contain an edited 'Book of the *Zohar*' that conforms to the format of the first printed editions.[5]

Since then I have been able to offer a stronger and more encompassing claim for understanding the nature and roles of the writings known by the name '*Zohar*': All the facts demonstrate that the 'Book of the *Zohar*', or the *Zohar as a book, is a late invention* that should not be attributed to the process or intention of its composition at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century. *In other words, the Zohar was neither written, nor edited, nor distributed as a book by the various figures who produced the literary units that were later known by the name 'Zohar'*. Later in this chapter, I will explore the function of the pseudepigraphic mentality that constructed the literary form and discourse of the zoharic texts and redirect the scholarly discussion to the use of the idea of a book cast back upon the literary and historical character of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. With these categories, it will be possible to distinguish between the operative myth of a more complete work that was imagined to have existed in antiquity and the partial texts that were summoned up or retrieved from this presumed literary entity, but never known in their entirety, neither by the Castilian writers nor by the early copyists, students and anthologizes who preceded the sixteenth-century efforts to codify

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5 I summarized once again my conclusions in a study on the parable of the maiden without eyes from the *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*. In this article, I question intertextual interpretation in zoharic literature. See Daniel Abrams, 'Knowing the Maiden Without Eyes: Reading the Sexual Reconstruction of the Jewish Mystic in a Zoharic Parable', *Da'at* 50/51 (2003), pp. 487-511. More importantly, in the first footnote of this study I restated my claim from an earlier study regarding the literary nature of the *Zohar*: 'Once again I would like to state that my claim is not that "the" literary frame of the *Zohar* never existed until the sixteenth century, rather there is to date no positive evidence to claim that this literary structure, or for that matter, any recognized literary structure existed until the two editions of Mantua and Cremona were issued in the years 1558-1560'. Avraham Elqayam, 'The Holy *Zohar* of Sabbatai Ṣevi', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 345-387 [Hebrew], has validated many of these claims.

and canonize the *Zohar* in the fullest form that could be re/produced.

To state my conclusion at the outset, such an appreciation of the literary expectations and assumptions of these kabbalists provides the grounds for sharply demarcating production from consumption in the *Zohar's* history and the changing definitions of its literary identity. This chapter will thus reconsider the question of 'how the *Zohar* was written', and instead will tackle the question of its literary production by breaking with the later assumptions and expectations concerning its literary identity. Here, I will to implement the methodology I put forward in 1996, which is based on reception history and form criticism. Such a critical investigation will consider each document as a historical record that should be appreciated in a specific time and place. Not only has the meaning of the concept and the Hebrew term for book, *sefer*, changed from the Middle Ages to the present, but moreover, the literary forms of the various zoharic texts changed when they were refashioned in order to conform to new literary structures by scribes and printers, a dynamic process that continues on through the various efforts being undertaken today.

2. *A New Appreciation of the Semantic Field of the Hebrew Book (Sefer) and the 'Open Book' in Medieval Jewish Literature*

In modern discourse, and certainly in spoken Hebrew in the State of Israel, the term *sefer* refers principally to a literary creation written by a single author (according to an easily recognizable or well-defined literary structure), and which is distributed in a uniform format in identical or very similar copies at a particular time and to a wide audience. In the Middle Ages and especially within the circles of the Jewish esotericists and early kabbalists in Germany, France and Spain, the term *sefer* could refer to any type or form of a work in all of its versions, including reworkings and editorial revisions completed by later figures. The term *sefer* therefore was often used in the sense of the modern term *text*, whether that be a long or a short document.[6] An interesting

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[6] See Ya'aqov Sussman's highly important study that critiques the construction and restoration of books by modern scholarship of rabbinic literature against the background of an inquiry into the early history of these texts and the possible existence of 'books' in the rabbinic period. His mapping of the sources regarding the literary status of the traditions from that period including the lexical field of terms employed to reflect upon the written (and oral) formulation and transmission of these traditions is a model for scholarly inquiry in other related disciplines. Ya'aqov Sussman, 'Oral Torah Understood Literally: The Power of the Tittle of the [Letter] *Yod*', *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic*

phenomenon, which is not unique to the kabbalists, but sharply criticizes the literary creativity of kabbalistic works is the freedom they felt in blurring the roles of copyists, readers and commentators to esoteric works. Among the works that underwent significant reworking, including those that obtained a new identity by such changes, are some of the most central and founding works of early Jewish esotericism and the medieval Kabbalah, from the Hekhalot literature through the Lurianic writings. Some outstanding examples in the thirteenth century include the works of R. Eleazar of Worms, the *Book Bahir*, and the works of the kabbalists in Provence and Gerona (especially the works of R. Asher ben David, R. Ezra and R. Azriel), the works of the great kabbalists of Castile, such as R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, R. Joseph Gikatilla and numerous anonymous works scattered throughout manuscripts. We should not limit this phenomenon to the authors alone.[7] In some instances, students edited and reshaped the works of their teachers, at times constructing works from smaller literary units. In other cases, the initial writer reworked his own material, editing texts he composed many years earlier. More interesting, however, are the examples in which others edited and rewrote texts in order to produce new literary works that display a different ideational and literary plan than found in the previous state of the material.[8]

Which works of Jewish esotericism were composed as books that their authors had written, with intent, according to a literary program and structure, from beginning to end? Certainly, works found outside of Jewish esotericism and composed under the influence of Greek and Arabic literary conventions, such as the philosophical works of Saadia Gaon's *'Emunot ve-De'ot*, Judah Halevi's *ha-Kuzari*, and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, should certainly be considered, even if these were all composed in Arabic, since their profound

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Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal, Jerusalem 2005, vol. 1, pp. 209-384 [Hebrew]. On the term *sefer* see pp. 284-295. In Moshe Halbertal's *People of the Book*, Cambridge, Mass. 1997, he discusses at length the various meanings of 'book', even though it is clear from the discussion that he is attempting to map out the various meanings of the Hebrew term *sefer*, which at times do not refer to the common meanings of 'book'.

7 On multiple versions of a text by one author see Moshe Idel, 'The Kabbalah's "Window of Opportunities", 1270-1290', *Me'ah She'arim; Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life, in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. E. Fleischer, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 171-208.

8 Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, esp. pp. 8-14 [Hebrew].

influence on Jewish culture was achieved through their Hebrew translations. If we turn our attention, however, to medieval Jewish mysticism in Europe, beginning in the late twelfth century, we can point to works of an anthological character or literary framework in which various textual traditions were preserved and transformed over time. In this list we may include *Sefer Ḥasidim*, the numerous works of the German Pietists (as argued by I. Ta-Shma),[9] the *Book Bahir*, and numerous other texts.[10] Certainly, commentaries to canonical works followed a clear literary structure, such as commentaries to the Torah, to *Sefer Yeṣira* and commentaries to the ten *sefirot*. In the halakhic genre, Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, follows a clear design established in advance of its composition. Maimonides' near-contemporary, R. Eleazar of Worms, possibly heard of Maimonides' book or imitated the literary structure of Maimonides' code when he composed the ethical-pietistic introduction to his *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ*.[11] Maimonides imagined himself as the follower and continuation of the literary efforts of Moses or of R. Judah the Prince, authors of works which, with prior intent, were designed to become canonical. In the introduction to the *Mishneh Torah* he writes:

> Our Teacher, the Saint, compiled the *Mishnah*. From the time of Moses to that of Our Teacher, the Saint, no work had been composed from which the Oral Law was publicly taught. But in each generation, the head of the then existing court or the prophet of that time wrote down for his private use a memorandum of the tradition which he had heard from his teachers, and which he taught orally in public. So too, every student wrote down according to his ability, the exposition of the Torah and of its laws, as he heard them, as well as the new matter evolved in each generation, which had not been received by tradition but had been deduced by application of the thirteen hermeneutical rules and had been adopted by the Supreme Court. This was the method in vogue. In the time of Our teacher, the Saint.
>
> He gathered together all the traditions, enactments, interpretations and expositions of every portion of the Torah that had either come down from Moses, our Master, or had been deduced by the courts in successive generations. All this material he redacted in the Mishnah, which was diligently

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[9] Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages'; idem, 'The "Open" Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature'.

[10] See Abrams, *R. Asher ben David*, p. 16 n. 35 [Hebrew]: idem, *Sexual Symbolism*.

[11] Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany*, Leiden 1981.

> taught in public, and thus became universally known among the Jewish people. Copies of it were made and widely disseminated, so that the Oral Law might not be forgotten in Israel.
>
> Why did Our Teacher, the saint, act so and not leave things as they were? Because he observed that the number of disciples was diminishing, fresh calamities were continually happening, the wicked Government was extending its domain and increasing in power, and Israelites were wandering and emigrating to distant countries. He therefore composed a work to serve as a handbook for all, and the contents of which could be rapidly studied and would not be forgotten. Throughout his life, he and his colleagues were engaged in giving public instruction in the *Mishnah*.[12]

Maimonides saw the creative, literary process as the transition from oral teachings to free literary production of disparate documents traversed through the rewriting of written traditions in a book that organized these subjects. A book is thus a work by a single author that forwards a new plan for existing traditions. Of note is how the term *sefer* signifies the final organizing corpus. R. Eleazar of Worms' *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ* is similarly highly organized. He employs the term *sefer* as the title of the parts of his work and for the work as a whole.

When turning to the zoharic texts' understanding of a book, and not necessarily its own self-perception, which will require a separate discussion, we find the word *sefer* is one of many terms used to refer to literary identities: *sefer*, *aḥmeta* and *geniza*. The *Zohar*'s interpretive narratives are rich in their allusions to existing works from rabbinic antiquity as well as medieval philosophic and kabbalistic works. The use, presentation and references to works and books is thus bound up with the dynamic of pseudepigraphy.

In a wonderful display of erudition on this topic, S. A. Neuhausen compiled a list of the (apparently) pseudepigraphic titles that comprised the esoteric library of the zoharic authorship.[13] Neuhausen's listing of titles and their

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[12] *Mishneh Torah: The Book of Knowledge by Maimonides*, edited and translated by Moses Hyamson, Jerusalem 1962, fol. 2b.

[13] S[imon]. A. Neuhausen, 'The Supernal Library: A Listing of Books Mentioned in the *Zohar*, *Zohar Ḥadash*, *Tiqqunim* and More', *Oṣar ha-Ḥayyim* 12 (1937), pp. 35-43. A bound offprint with its own pagination can be found in the Scholem Library #2190, and was cited in *Major Trends*, p. 291 n. 83 where Scholem notes the shorter list provided earlier by Leopold Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin 1875, 1, pp. 12-13. Future research will welcome this listing as the basis for investigating the undocumented and unnamed

references in the *Zohar* extends methodologically to describe the supernal archives reflected in the world below as the descent or earthly representation of recorded secrets. For example, he describes the *Zohar*'s depiction of the 'arch-librarian', Dabriel, who administers the 'holy supernal secrets',[14] alongside traditions of the similar roles of Refael, Meṭaṭron and others. Most interesting is the passage cited by Neuhausen from the *Zohar* (I, 117a-b) in which R. Yose stumbles into a cave and finds a book stuck within a crevice at the end of the cave.[15] These self-reflecting zoharic traditions establish the idea of the book in antiquity, the model of a book that could have been recovered, and arguably restored, from fragments. What is interesting here is the way later kabbalists, particularly in the sixteenth century, viewed this (pseudepigraphic) self-reflection on the idea of a single volume to imply the existence of an overriding organizational principle for its literary structure and as such an invitation to begin with its recovery. We have here a presumption of structuralism, the belief that texts do and should conform to the rules of order of similar items in its family, and the *Zohar* was no exception, foremost to the Italian printers who were inspired by the Safedian kabbalists.[16]

3. *The Invention of the Zohar as a 'Book' by the Kabbalists and the Editio Princeps*

Kabbalists and professional printers joined hands to print the zoharic corpus in sixteenth-century Italy. It is clear that they worked with particular conceptions of works, even as they stumbled to shape these works out of the disparate manuscript sources that did not contain the literary forms they presented to their readers. The printing efforts should first be seen as an appreciation of all the zoharic corpus even if they did not use the term. The first volume to be issued was *Tiqqunei Zohar* in Mantua 1557, which tellingly includes a detailed

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traditions employed by the zoharic authorship. The next stage of research will abandon the exclusive dichotomy between the known works and pseudepigraphic invention.

[14] *Zohar* 1:55b, Neuhausen, 'The Supernal Library', p. 9 n. 31.

[15] As noted by Matt in his translation to this passage (*The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt, Stanford 2004, volume one, p. 183 n. 526), there are other parallels to this motif. Cf. *Zohar* 2:13a-b and *ZḤ* 53c-d.

[16] Moshe Idel, 'Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah', *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. D. Ruderman and G. Veltri, Philadelphia 2004, pp. 239-269; idem, *La Cabbalà in Italia (1280-1510)*, Firenze 2007.

printer's introduction about the *Book of the Zohar*. The printing of this volume first may not necessarily indicate the privileged role of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. However, in their partly defensive self-justification for breaching the strictures of esotericism, they present their case for publishing the *Book of the Zohar*, which was not accurately contained in this volume. In their remarks they speak of its importance and present the need to disseminate this material, which they admit, cannot be found in its entirety.

> And the poor and the needy demand food, the food of Torah. And there is none also because their hearts are like the heart of a lion [wanting] to delve into the hidden matters and understand the mysteries. Their hands are outstretched to obtain a scribe's manuscript of the *Book of the Zohar* in its entirety [*Sefer ha-Zohar kullo*]. Also anyone who has [a copy of] the *Book of the Zohar* has hidden it so that no one else can gain access.[17]

While they refer to unknown hidden copies, their assumption is that the partial manuscripts with which they are familiar come from some complete original, which again, is presumed to exist. Shortly thereafter, in the years 1558-1560 two competing publisher would attempt to produce a complete *Book of the Zohar*. The first produced the large format volume of zoharic texts they titled '*The Book of the Zohar*' (*Sefer ha-Zohar*') in Cremona 1558. Another edition, in small format consisting of three volumes was published in Mantua 1558-1560, basing itself on various manuscripts and utilizing the Cremona edition to a certain extent. It is blatantly clear from both of these parallel efforts that the attempt to present to the reader a book of the *Zohar* as a structured commentary to the Torah failed to a certain degree. That is, the editors were hard pressed to re/construct the structure of the '*Book of the Zohar*' and voiced this awareness.

The self-understanding of the editors of the first edition can be ascertained from the title page. I quote from the original version of the 1558 title page from Cremona, extant in a few copies in the world:[18]

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[17] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Mantua 1557, fol. 2a.

[18] For a discussion of the printings and facsimiles of the title pages, see Meir Benayahu, *Hebrew Printing at Cremona: Its History and Bibliography*, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 121-137 [Hebrew].

The Book of the Zohar on the Torah

> From the holy man of God, who is very holy, the Tanna, Rabbi *Shimon bar Yoḥai*, may his memory be blessed, with many innovations. And they are: *Sitrei Torah*. And *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*. And *Tosefta*. On some of the pericopes. And we added innovations beyond those [printed] by others concerning the Book of Genesis, all of the work [*ḥibbur*] of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Ḥiddushei ha-Bahir* and *Midrash Ruth, Midrash Ḥazit* and *Ma'amar Ta Ḥazei* and *Hekhalot* and annotations to biblical verses, printed after great study.

The first striking statement is the appreciation of the textual independence of literary units that comprise 'Zohar' in their mind, as distinct from the '*Book of the Zohar*' that they constructed, or more specifically in their words, '*The Book of the Zohar on the Torah*', namely the texts arranged and printed *as* a commentary to the Torah. The printers in Cremona mentioned the ongoing efforts of their competitors who had yet to issue their edition in Mantua, a point I had not discussed in my earlier study, which changed the accepted chronology of the editions in proving that Cremona is indeed the first edition.

Note as well the distinction the printers of Cremona offered in this title page of 1558 between *sefer* and *ḥibbur*, the former being the printed volume that anthologizes the various text in the literary frame of a commentary to the Torah and the latter being the existence and identity of a work, in this case, *Ra'aya Meheimna*, known to be separate in manuscript or presumed to be different based on stylistic aspects or on its content. I emphasize that the printers boasted of having used '*all* of the work of *Ra'aya Meheimna*', despite their conscious fragmentation of its form in their *Book of the Zohar*. The category of separate literary units is continued in a listing of other *works* from which texts would be culled in order to arrange them in their place around the frame of the book created.

The original title page of the volume was completed in 1558, at the time when the Mantua printers had only begun to prepare the first of three volumes of their editions, and has survived in only a few copies. Due to the misfortune of the printers in Cremona the copies they produced needed to be restored in 1560 with pages printed later and appended to complete their initial work, including the title page. In this restored title page of the Cremona edition the above-cited text is amended:

> And at the end of the volume [*sefer*, although here clearly meaning 'book'], you will find an index of verses and all the verses that were interpreted and which were doubled in the *Zohar* [*hanikhpalim be-ha-Zohar*], printed after great study.

This addition is of tremendous importance as it reflects on their editorial self-awareness. That is, the title page clearly distinguishes between the *Zohar* and the *Book of the Zohar* that they have created. The additional line, moreover, explains the inclusion and arrangement of the various zoharic texts in parallel columns positioned and juxtaposed for their value as multiple efforts to interpret biblical verses within the greater literary program of *Zohar*. The *Book of the Zohar* was thus fashioned and sculpted out of the *Zohar*, the larger phenomenon of manuscript sources that contained writings known by this collective name.

The restoration of the Cremona 1558 edition was undertaken in 1560. In the restored version, the 1560 date appeared, confusing many scholars. Moreover an introduction was added to the second folio, which immediately follows the title page. In the original version, a poem appeared on the recto of that folio and in the restored page an introduction of a page and half was added, pushing the poem to the middle of the verso (see figures 4.2 and 4.3). Many pages were lost in almost every surviving copy, including the beginning of *parshat bereshit* and the last ten folios of the book of Exodus. Completing the puzzle of the relationship between the Cremona and Mantua and the differing copies of these first editions, I note that there are differing copies of the first volume of the Mantua edition. One known copy has survived from the first run of the Mantua printing (see figures, below). The text was of a good quality and was corrected in all subsequent surviving copies, and surprisingly all changes accord with the Cremona edition. The editions can thus be arranged chronologically as (1) Cremona, (2) Mantua, (3) a corrected Mantua and (4) the restored and bound Cremona edition.[19]

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[19] For the full argument of this claim, see Daniel Abrams, 'When Was the "Introduction" to the *Zohar* Written'. A fascinating reverberation of this point prior to modern scholarship can be found in the following comment by R. Isaac Yehuda Yeḥiel of Komarno in his commentary to the *Zohar*, *Zohar Ḥai*, vol. 2, Przemyśl, Zupnik und Kneller, 1878 reprinted as volume three of a five volume set in Jerusalem 1972, fol. 22b: 'And all this was done by the copyists and the printers who found little material for Exodus and decided on their own to print in Exodus [material] from *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* as well as making an Introduction to the *Zohar* [*'asu haqdamah 'al ha-Zohar*] and to the *Tiqqunim*, which is not at all the conduct of the ancients. In the Lublin and Sulzbach editions an introduction was not printed, rather [it as placed] within [*Bereshit*]'. My thanks to Avraham Segal for this reference.

ספר הזוהר

בקרימונה

Figure 4.1: Zohar, Cremona 1558 (original title page)

Figure 4.2: Zohar, Cremona 1558 (restored title page, 1560)

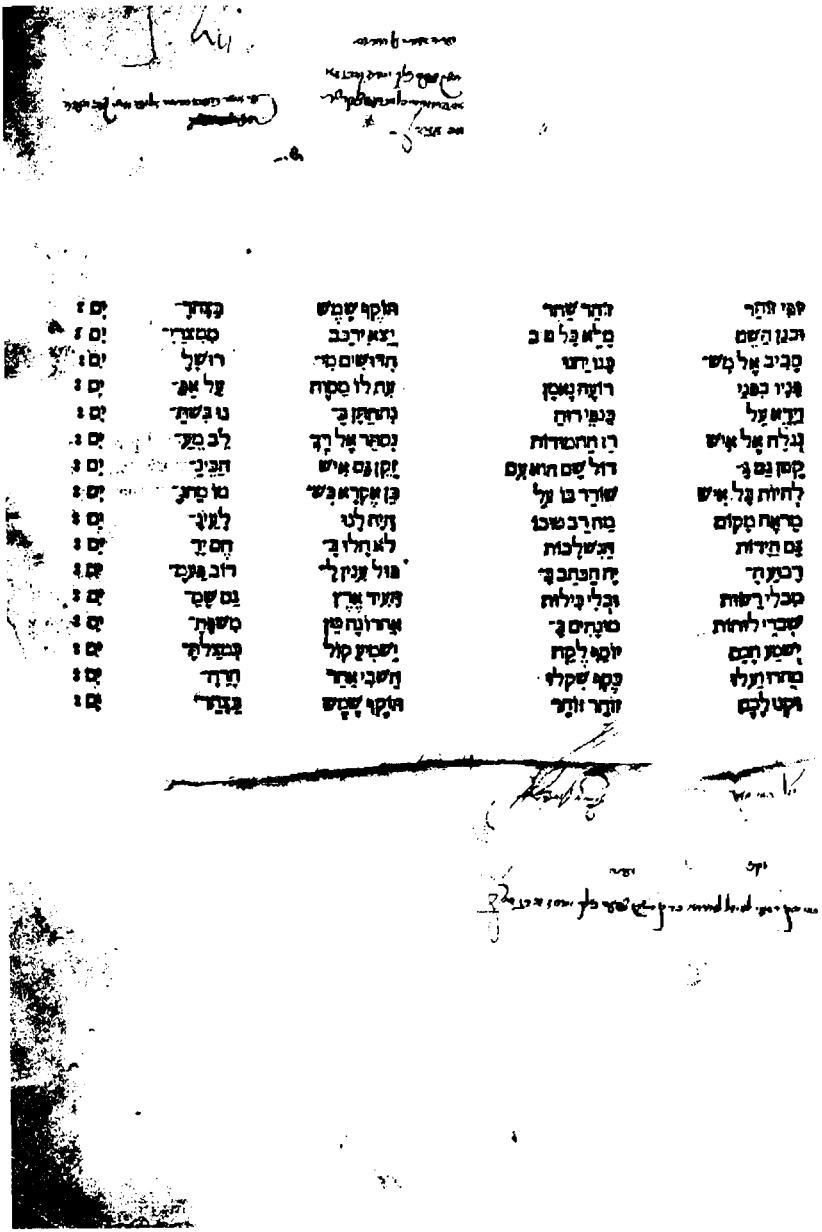
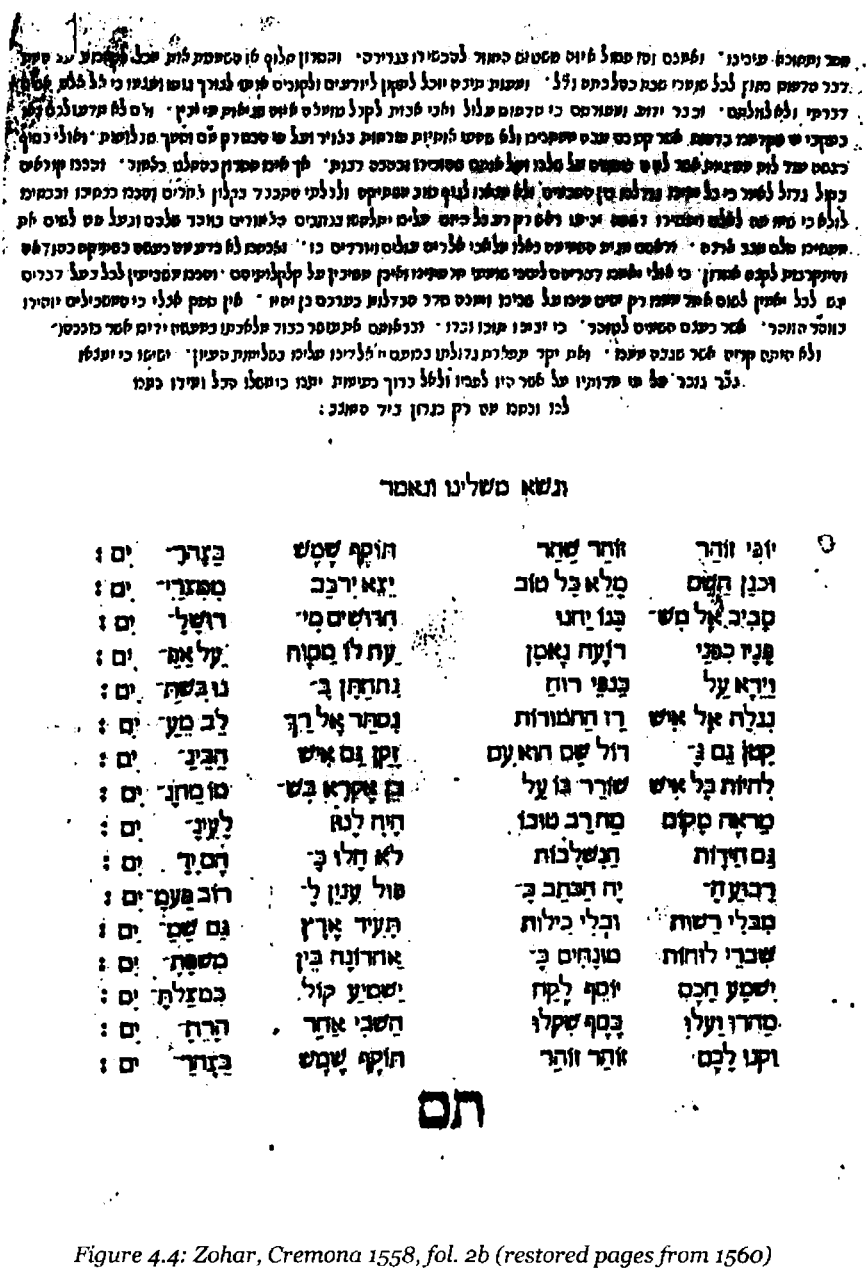


Figure 4.3: Zohar, Cremona 1558, fol. 2a (original version)



תשא משלינו ותאמר

יוֹפִי זוֹהַר	זֹהַר שָׁאַר	תּוֹקֶף שָׁמֶשׁ	בְּצָהֳרֶיהָ יָם :
וְכֵנֵן הַשָּׁמֶשׁ	מְלֵא כָּל טוּב	יָצָא יִרְבֶּה	מִמְּצָרֶיהָ יָם :
סָבִיב אֶל מְשֹׁשׁ	בְּגוֹ יַחְנוּ	הָרוּשִׁים מִי	רוּשָׁלֶיהָ יָם :
פָּנֶיהָ כְּמַרְאֵי	רוֹעָה נָאוֹן	עֵת לוֹ מַטָּוֹח	עֶל אַמֶּיהָ יָם :
וַיִּרְאֶה עֵל	בְּגַפֵּי רוּחַ	נִתְחַזֵּן בְּ	נוּ בְּשִׁתָּהּ יָם :
נִגְלָה אֶל אִישׁ	רֵיחַ הַתְּמוּרוֹת	נִסְתָּר אֶל רַבְּ	לֵב מֵעֶיהָ יָם :
קָטָן גַּם גָּ	רוֹל שֶׁם רוּא עִם	זָקֵן גַּם אִישׁ	הַבִּינֶיהָ יָם :
לְחִיוֹת כָּל אִישׁ	שׁוֹרֵר בּוֹ עֵל	בֵּן אֶקְרָא בְּשֵׁ	מוֹ מַחֲנֶיהָ יָם :
מַרְאֶה מָקוֹם	סַחְרַב טוּכוֹ	הָיוּ לָנוּ	לַעֲנִיָּיהָ יָם :
גַּם וְיָדוֹת	תַּשְׁלוּבוֹת	לֹא חָלוּ כָּ	חָם בְּיָדָיהָ יָם :
רַבּוּעַ הַ	יָה חִבְּתָב בְּ	פוּל עֲנִיָּן לֵ	רוֹב פַּעֲמָיהָ יָם :
סִבְּלֵי רִשּׁוּת	וּבְלֵי כִּילוֹת	תְּעִיד אָרֶץ	גַּם שָׁמֶיהָ יָם :
שְׁבָרֵי לוּחוֹת	טוֹנְחִים כָּ	אוֹרוֹנָה בֵּין	מִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ יָם :
יִשְׁמַע חֲכָם	יוֹסִיף לָקַח	יַשְׁמִיעַ קוֹל	כְּמַצְלֵתָהּ יָם :
סִדְרוּ וַעֲלוּ	בְּסֵפֶר שִׁקְלוֹ	הַשְׁבִּי אַוֵּר	הָרוּחַ יָם :
וּקְנוּ לָכֶם	זֹהַר זוֹהַר	תּוֹקֶף שָׁמֶשׁ	בְּצָהֳרֶיהָ יָם :

תם

Figure 4.4: Zohar, Cremona 1558, fol. 2b (restored pages from 1560)

בריש הרמכותא דמלכא גלוף גלופי בטהירו עלאה כונוכא
דקרדומתא כפוק גו סתום דסתימו מרומא דלחין סוף
קוטרא כגולמא נשן בעוקא לא חוור ולא לוכס לא סומק ולא ירוק לא גוון כלל כל
מדיד מסומא עביד גווכין לאכהר׳ לגו כגו כונוכ׳ כפוק חד כטיט דמכיה אנטכשו גווכין
לתתא׳ סתים גו סתימין דרזא דלחין סוף בקעולא בקע אוירא דיליה לא אתידע
בלל עד דמגו דחוקו דבקיעתיה כהיר בקודא חדא סתימא עלאה כתר הפוא בקודה
לא אתידע כלל וכגין כך אקרי רחטית מאמר קדמאה דכלא׳ והמשכילים
יזהירו כזהר הרקיע ומגדיקי הרבים ככוכבים לעולם ועד:

זהר סתימא דסתימין כטם אוירא דיליה דמטי ולא מטי בהאי נקוד׳ וכדין
אתפטט האי רחטית ועביד ליה יקרא להוכליה לתטכחתא׳ תמן
זרע זרעא לאולדא לתולעתא דעלמא ורזא דא זרע קדם מנכתה:

זהר דזרע זרעא ליקריה כהאי זרעא דמטי דאדגוון טב דאתחפי לגו
ואתעביד ליה הוכלא דאיהו תוטכחתא דיליה ותולעתא דכלא׳
בהאי רחטית כרא הנוא סתימא דלא אתידע להוכלא דא׳ הוכלא דא אקרי שדום
ורזא דא כראסי׳ כרא שדי׳ זהר דמכיה כלהו מאמרו׳ אתכריאו ברזא דאתפטטותא
דנקודה דזהר סתים דא׳ אי בהאי כתיב ברא לות תוורה דכתיב זיכרא אלדום
לת האלם כגלמו׳ זהר כראסית קדמאה דכלא אדיך סמא
קדים׳ גלוף כסטרו אלדים גליפא כשטרא אחר
הוכלא סמיר ענגיו שריאותא דרזא דראסית אחר דאם דנפיק מרחטית׳ וכד

Figure 4.5: Zohar, Mantua 1558, vol. 1, fol. 15a (original version)

בריש הורמכותא דמלכא גליף גליפי כמהירו עלאה כוכיבא
דקרדיכותא כפיק גו סתים דסתימו מריעא דלאין סוף
קוסרא כגולמא כשין כעזקא לא חוור ולא אוכם לא סומק ולא ירוק ולאנגון כלל כל
מדיר מסיק עביד גוכין לאכהר לגו כגו כוכיב כפיק חד כביעו דמכיס אנטכעו גוכין
לתתא סתים גו סתימין מרזא דלאין סוף כקע ולא כקע אורא דלים לא אתיידע
כלל עד דמגו דאיקו דכקיעתיה כהיר כקודה חדא סתימא עלאה כתר הכיא כקודש
לא אתיידע כלל וכגין כך אקרי ראשית מאמר קדמאה דכלא ·
ודמשכילים יזהירו כזהר הרקיע ומגדיקי הרכים ככוכבים לעולם
ועד· זהר סתים דסתימין כסם אורא דיני
דמטי ולא מטי כהאי כקודה וכדין אתפשט סאי ראשית ועביד ליה
יקרא להיכלה לתוסכחתא · תמן זרע זרעא לאולדא לתועלתא דעלמא ורזא דא זרע
קדם מנכתה· זהר דזרע זרע ליקרי כהאי זרע דמטי דאגנון טב דאתתפי
לגו ועביד ליה היכלא דאיהו תוסכחתא דיליה ותועלתא דכלא ·
כסאי ראשית כרא ההוא סתימא דלא אתיידע להיכלא דא· היכלא דא אקרי אלדים
ורזא דא כראשי כרא אלדי· זהר דמכיה כלהו מאחרו אתכריאו כרזא דאתפשטותא
דנקודה דזהר סתים דא · אי כהאי כתיב כרא לית תוהה דכתיב וכרא אלדים
את השמים כגלמו· זהר כראשית קדמאה דכלא אדיך ממא
קדיש גליפ כסטרוי אלדים גליפא כשיטרא אסר
סיכלא ממיר ונגיז מרוחתא דרזא דראשית אסר רשם דכפיק מראשית· וכר

Figure 4.6: Zohar, Mantua 1558, vol. 1, fol. 15a (second version; note inverted plate)

In the first editions of Cremona and Mantua we note, foremost, that the increasing paucity of zoharic material in accord with the progression of the literary frame of the Torah. In the three volume format, the third volume contains zoharic sources related to Leviticus through Deuteronomy, in a much less impressive quantitatively than the zoharic literary production for the books of Genesis or Exodus. Moreover, the editors were faced with tough challenges in placing the material that did not conform to their expectations. Many of the literary units that comprise the zoharic corpus do not formally follow the narrative structure of the pericopes. The printers of these editions were thus forced to line up such texts in parallel columns in order to position the numerous texts somewhere within the literary frame of the commentary to the Torah that they constructed. Some manuscripts may offer precedents to this layout in which literary units were broken apart according to the pericopes and copied after the text from the 'Body of the Zohar'.

The Mantua printers further followed Renaissance conventions, identifying one literary unit as the 'Introduction' to the 'Book of the *Zohar*', and placed it before the pericope of *Bereshit*. Certainly, this literary structure is anachronistic to the character of Tannaitic midrash and even to pseudepigraphic writing of thirteenth-century Kabbalah. By contrast, the printers in Cremona organized their edition differently and incorporated this literary unit within the pericope of *Bereshit*. This is but one example of how the organization and order of the texts differs in the first two printed editions.[20] Further, one should note that numerous segments are found in only one edition or the other.

A full comparison of the two editions was undertaken by the printers of the 1715 edition in Amsterdam. They identified all passages that were unique to the Cremona edition and published them as an appendix to a reprinting of the Mantua text. A parallel listing of the passages unique to the Mantua edition has yet to be prepared, although Aharon Zelig's very rare volume, *Ḥibbur 'Ammudei Sheva*, sought to complete the Cremona edition with corrections and passages not found in that edition from his comparison with the Mantua edition.[21] His efforts were offered as the completion of work begun in the Lublin

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[20] Margolioth's edition of the *Zohar*, which conforms to Mantua printing (and later, to the Amsterdam and then the Vilna expansions of the format and text) includes marginalia placed horizontally alongside the text indicating the page breaks in the Cremona layout.

[21] Cracow 1635, fol. 2b. See further discussion in my article, 'When Was the "Introduction" to the *Zohar* Written', p. 213.

1623-1624, reprinting of the Cremona edition, in which he was able to compare the editions from *parshat va-yera*, so that this new volume presents corrections and 'omitted' passages from the pericopes of *bershit* until *va-yera*.[22]

It would be difficult to state definitively the printers' views of the precise literary borders of the texts they printed. Were they attempting to issue a comprehensive volume of zoharic literature or were they attempting to restore the literary structure of the 'Book' of the *Zohar* that remained hidden behind the scattered texts of numerous manuscripts? Even if we were to assume that their intent was a new anthology of zoharic texts, did they then believe that their collection was a complete record of all texts produced? According to which criteria did they include and edit the sources they found in manuscript? We should further wonder what rationale prompted the printers in Cremona to include significant sections from the *Bahir* (attributed to another Tannatic figure, R. Neḥuniah ben ha-Qanah) in their edition, but not the entire work? More curious is the inclusion of sections of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the Book of Ruth, part of the zoharic corpus, but not all of this relatively short text.[23] Other printers would later publish the zoharic texts that remained in manuscripts, and possibly understood these efforts as completing the work of their predecessors in Mantua and Cremona.

So for example, in Tiengen 1559, a separate volume of the text to Ruth was printed (notably to the exclusion of the other relatively short zoharic commentaries to the Scrolls). A more decisive demonstration of the literary self-awareness of the sixteenth-century kabbalists and printers is the volume published in Salonica 1597 under the title *Zohar Ḥadash*, namely, '*The New Zohar*'. This volume served as a sharp criticism of the earlier printing of the *Book of the Zohar*. The 'New Zohar' was not the title of any work or book that existed, but was the name given to the volume, an anthology of the many texts *not* printed in the Mantua and Cremona editions, mainly the *Midrash*

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[22] He adds at the foot of the page, fol. 2b, that he had to repeat the work done by editors of the Lublin edition due to errors on their part. This volume further notes repeated passages and comments concerning the relationship between the printed volumes of the *Zohar to the Torah* and *Zohar Ḥadash*, alongside additional commentary and corrections from other sources.

[23] This serves as well as a correction to what I wrote in the introduction to the facsimile edition I published of the Venice 1566 edition to *Midrash Ha-Ne'elam Ruth*, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew].

ha-Ne'elam texts to Genesis, Exodus and the Scrolls and some texts of the *Tiqqunim*.

The self-perception of these editors as finally completing 'the *Zohar*' in full under the title *Zohar Ḥadash* did not begin with the authoritative supplement that completed the magisterial editions from Italy. After the publication of the *Zohar* in 1558-1560 according to the frame of the Pentateuch, *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, to *Ruth* was printed in a special volume (Tiengen 1559; Venice 1566), not conceived then as part of the ensuing and subsuming collection of works known as *Zohar Ḥadash*. This collection first published the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* texts printed in Salonika 1597 in a two volume edition without *Midrash Ruth*[24] (and reprinted in the same format in Cracow, 1603). Later volumes bearing this title would include all such texts related to *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on the Torah, the Scrolls and some remaining *Tiqqunim*. The Venice edition credits Menaḥem di Lonzano with having a manuscript copy of all these works together and in accord with the arrangement and notes of R. Isaac Luria.[25] Referring to the efforts of Abraham ha-Levi, the printers of the Salonika edition write:

> And this also he added according to his understanding and the Lord, may He be blessed, was with him with a discerning ear, so that he was able to correct the text and arrange everything properly in its place, according to the appropriate pericope, for that which was missing in the '*Book of the Zohar*', that was previously published and that which is missing from the book of *Tiqqunim*. And he proofed all that he could and at times introduced changes and interpretations [*u-lifamim ḥiddesh u-firesh*] for most of the five books of the Torah. And every reader should know that in the copy that we found we viewed interpretations. And you shall see luminaries following [the section about] the ten commandments. And we thought that the copyist intended [*she-be-khavanat ha-mekhavven*] this order and placed what belonged later on [in the work] earlier because of the limitations of [the reader's] comprehension and the depth of the concept[s] concerning physiognomy. Therefore, we saw fit not to change [the order according to the decisions] of the owner [of the manuscript we used] and there is no order regarding what is early and late in

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[24] Two volume set; first volume *Midrash ha-Ne'elam to the Torah*, varia of verses and *Tiqqunim*; second volume *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim* and *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to Lamentations.

[25] Introduction to Venice edition, verso of title page: שנמצא שלם בסדר והגהות מהאר"י זלה"ה.

> the Torah, [so we leave this order as it is because we understand very little, just like one who] has heard very little, even if just the sound of the quill and the paper,[26] as your eyes will see correctly that in the *Zohar* there is [material from the] Song of Songs and the scroll of Lamentations and also *collectanea* of interpretations to verses that are scattered and broken apart one from the other.[27]

The passage is telling of the conscious intents of the editors, the materials at their disposal, as well as the fluidity of the text in the manuscripts of the *Zohar* and the various literary forms the *Zohar* took on in its printed volumes.

4. *Moses Cordovero's Commentary to the* Zohar *and the Invention of the* Zohar *as a Corpus*

At this juncture, I wish to survey the textual witnesses that were extant in the generation prior to the first printing of the *Zohar*. Important commentaries to the *Zohar* were composed in the sixteenth century, such as *Ketem Paz* by R. Shimon Ibn Lavi and *Or Yaqar* by R. Moses Cordovero. *Ketem Paz*, written around the year 1571, originally contained a commentary to Genesis and Exodus, even though only the commentary to Genesis survived. The order of the zoharic texts commented upon is similar, although not identical, to that of the Cremona edition. This commentary was printed in Livorno in 1795, in two volumes that followed the unique arrangement of this commentary. The first volume was later reissued, this time conforming to the arrangement of the Mantua edition of the *Zohar*.[28]

The most complete textual witnesses that bears a similarity to the editions of Mantua and Cremona is Cordovero's *Or Yaqar*.[29] This voluminous and encyclopedic work maps out the full breadth of the zoharic corpus of texts,

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[26] A phrase borrowed from BT Giṭṭin 6a.

[27] Fol. 2a.

[28] On this work see Boaz Huss, *Sockets of Fine Gold: The Kabbalah of Rabbi Shimon Ibn Lavi*, Jerusalem 2000, p. 12 n. 7 [Hebrew]. On other commentaries to the *Zohar* see Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah*, Oxford 2001, pp. 16-33.

[29] The edition has recently been completed from the manuscript in Modena, Jerusalem 1962-2009, 26 volumes. See now the claim of Cordovero's autograph copy of *Or Yaqar* to Genesis in the Chabad Library: *Treasures from the Chabad Library*, compiled by Shalom Dovber Levine, Brooklyn 2009, pp. 60-61, and p. 225 from the Hebrew section.

including *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* (to the Scrolls, but not to Genesis and Exodus)[30] and further includes other commentaries and excurses, such as his commentary to *Sefer Yeṣirah*, a fragmented commentary to the Torah, excursus on angels and more.[31] Even though Cordovero places the zoharic interpretations to the Torah at the center of his commentary, as a running midrash to the pericopes of the Torah, he does not force all of the zoharic texts in his possession into this framework (and he certainly does not resort to a presentation of all additional texts in parallel columns in order to achieve such a task). Rather, adhering to his innovative, encyclopedic program, he expands the literary structure of his 'commentary' to present separately all the ancient texts attributed to the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. It is not clear at all times to what extent he modified the structure of the texts in his possession. *Or Yaqar* is the earliest document to contain nearly all of the zoharic texts. It can thus be argued that functionally Cordovero was the inventor of (the idea of a) zoharic literature,[32] or at least the first to implement such a program on such a scale that far outstrips the editing efforts of such important manuscripts as the Freidberg manuscript at the University of Toronto. Here, I am limiting my focus to visions of a full work, or *the Zohar as a literature*, according to what was copied out onto paper and vellum, as distinct from cultural impressions or expectations of the same, that lack a paleographic footprint.

Despite the literary form of the primary sources he received in manuscript, the literary program of *Or Yaqar* is based on an agenda to present the *Zohar as*

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[30] Cordovero included some passages in his commentary similar to that of the first printed editions. The formal exclusion of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* is very telling of sixteenth-century traditions about the identity of the zoharic corpus, in stark contrast to the manuscript tradition. See volume 17 of *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1989 for his commentaries to the zoharic texts on the scrolls. For a discussion about *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* in Cordovero see the brief note by Melila Hellner-Eshed, 'On Love and Creativity: Drops from Sea of Myths of Cordovero on the *Shekhinah*', *Ma'ayan Ein Ya'aqov: The Fourth Ma'ayan from Sefer Elemah*, edited and annotated by Beracha Sack, with introductions by Shifra Asulin, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Beracha Sack, Esther Liebes, and Leah Morris, Beer Sheva 2009, p. 185 n. 45 [Hebrew].

[31] See Beracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, Beer Sheva 1995, p. 25 [Hebrew].

[32] Moshe Hallamish notes that Joseph Karo had only parts of the *Zohar* when he composed his *Bet Yosef*, receiving a 'full'[er] text at a later date. See Moshe Hallamish, 'Joseph Karo's *Maggid Mesharim* as a Book of Ethics', *Da'at* 21 (1988), p. 87 [Hebrew].

a commentary to the Torah, alongside an attempt to preserve the independent identity of the literary units as part of the overall zoharic corpus. Accordingly, Cordovero held that the *Zohar* is both a book and a corpus. Further investigation into Cordovero's remarks shows that he was working with a number of definitions of the concept of '*sefer*' in reference to *Sefer ha-Zohar*: (a) the mythic structure of the book written by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his students; (b) his understanding of the literary boundaries and identity of the texts according to his own literary criticism; (c) the new form and arrangement that he gave to the texts in his commentary. I quote from his introduction to *Or Yaqar*:

> And truth has been hidden for ages and ages. Until God appointed as a man inspired with the spirit of holiness, the divine Rabbi, Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, may his memory be blessed. In his time the esoteric wisdom was weakened and scarce. And the hand of the Lord was upon him and he readied himself and tied up his skirts (1 Kgs. 8:46), and his head and the words of his prayer reached heaven (Job 20:6) and he was permitted to transcribe this wisdom. And he composed the esoteric book called the *Book of the Zohar*, without a doubt is a tall mountain. His words are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible (Ps. 17:7) in which the reasons for the commandments and their secrets are revealed and made apparent, [including] the knowledge of His names, may He be blessed.
>
> 'His head is like the finest gold' (Songs 5:11) this is the *Tiqqunim*. 'His locks', these are the remaining books of the *Zohar*. That they are 'wavy' (*taltalim*), this refers to the multitude [*tali talim*] of the hidden rules. They lend a hand to he who seeks to enter into the knowledge of the Torah and its secrets and the reasons for the commandments.[33]

This passage reflects the first definition mentioned above to the term *sefer*. Cordovero believes that Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai and comrades composed disparate texts whose edited form was established in Tannaitic times, and that differences that arise in the manuscripts should be attributed to corruptions introduced by copyists.[34]

Cordovero appreciates the internal literary history of the *Zohar* according to the myth of the circle of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai. In another passage he claims

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[33] Cordovero, *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1962, vol. 1, p. 1; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 25.

[34] Ibid., p. 35: 'Commented on the literature of the *Zohar* according to its order'. See the accompanying note by Sack: 'According to the manuscripts in his possession'.

that the '*Book of the Zohar*' was not composed as a book by the circle, but rather that the literature amounts to a compendium of commentaries to the Torah that we taught within the circle. The various oral discussions of the secrets to the Torah that circulated among the comrades were later written down, similar to the preaching literature in the Middle Ages which were recorded after the Sabbath and holidays.[35]

> And with all this, for this reason he gave permission to write down this wisdom and record it in books so that there would be a full arrangement of it all, and anyone who wishes to partake in the secret of the name would come and partake in it. Permission was needed for this, and no one should think that someone has sinned if his soul falls victim to the dangers instead of receiving praise and such laudation. Were it not for this permission, the matter would be precarious and it would be preferable to refrain from doing so. Rather, he received permission from Above and celebrated help. Then Rabbi Shimon gathered the seven comrades who remained after the gathering (*Idra*) in which three died as I explained in my commentary to *Parshat Naso*, §___.[36] And these seven named [comrades], R. Shimon, his son R. Eleazar, R. Abba, R. Judah, R. Ḥiyya, R. Yiṣḥaq, and R. Yosi are those who gathered in a known place to compose this composition [*le-hitḥabber ha-ḥibbur*], which is called *Sefer ha-Tiqqunim*. And all that can be found about the three who died, R. Ḥezqiyyah and R. Ya'aqov bar Yesa, is mentioned in the book of the *Zohar*. And there are others who should be added [to this list] but they were [their] students and are not considered among the seven important comrades. *And the compilation of the pericopes of the Zohar [ve-ḥibbur ha-parashiyyot ha-Zohar] was compiled accidentally* [*derekh 'arai*], because they would preach during their breaks from rabbinic learning, from discussion they had regarding the laws of the Torah. Indeed, this work [*Sefer ha-Tiqqunim*] and the work *Ra'aya Meheimna*, the Song of Songs, the *Pequdim* and the *Idra* were composed when they were completely free to compose this work. And this work was added to the rest of them. To this [end], they delved into its subject(s) because its secrets were given to them [*nimshakh lahem*] from the secret [or: ontic grade] of the radiance of

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[35] On the problematics of the relationship between the actual preaching on the Sabbath and holidays the literary products recorded in the following days see Marc Saperstein, *Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn: Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching*, Cincinnati 1996.

[36] Passage number left blank in original, as was often the case in Cordovero's commentary. For a discussion of his work patterns and this phenomenon, see Daniel Frish, *Sefer Sha'arei Zohar*, Jerusalem 2005, p. 176 [Hebrew].

> the heavens [*zohar ha-raqi'a*], as it is written, 'In order to make this work from the supernal radiance above'.[37]

Cordovero distinguishes between the different books (*sefarim*) of the zoharic literature and speaks of the literary units that exist in manuscript as edited works. Amongst them he singles out certain works that are deeper or more important than others because they were intentionally written by their authors as books and not as the written record of sermons delivered earlier. I do not consider these comments to be narrative summaries by Cordovero of the daily life of the comrades as told in the pages of the *Zohar*, but rather as part of his overall critique of the literature under scrutiny, expressed and explained as the activities of the zoharic circle.[38]

In a remarkable passage, Cordovero explains the mystical attachment of the comrades to Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, arguing a doctrine of incarnation and composition that justifies a change in the position on esotericism.[39]

> And in the matter of the 'permission was given'[40] [to reveal secrets], there were two aspects. The first was Rabbi Shimon and his comrades. And Rabbi Shimon was distinguished amongst them, as the Sabbath is amongst the days [of the week], as is explained at the end of the *Idra* section in *Parshat Nasa*, passage ___.[41] And they were his select students and were called comrades. And therefore Rabbi Shimon was a domain[42] unto himself and they were adjoined to him. Therefore, it says 'Rabbi Shimon and his comrades', and they had permission to compose the book, to write it down, to join together, and to draw

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[37] Cordovero, *Or Yaqar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Jerusalem 1972, vol. 1, p. 15; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 50. The concluding line is a citation from the opening of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, fol. 1a. Cordovero's text significantly differs from the printed version: *le-ma'abad hai ḥibbura de-ihu mi-zohara ila de-le-eila*.

[38] It should be noted that Cordovero recognized historical problems in citations attributed to named Rabbinic figures which problematizes the chronologies of transmission. See *Or Yaqar* to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, volume 2, Jerusalem 1973, p. 134. There he also notes the interpolations of glosses into the zoharic text.

[39] In other passages of *Or Yaqar*, Cordovero expresses other views on esotericism, concealment and revealing, even in the context of the composition of the *Zohar*. My intention here is not to offer his singular view, but to offer his stated awareness, which he adopts here, of this idea of the composition of the *Zohar*.

[40] Tiqqunei Zohar, fol. 1a.

[41] Left blank in original.

[42] Reading *reshut* instead of *rashum*.

> upon them the holy spirit so that the secrets in the verses of Torah would be truly interpreted by them. And when a hidden secret came to them about a deeply secret [matter], they would reveal it and write it down. And they would not hold themselves back and ask whether it is appropriate to reveal a particular secret that is not concealed, or whether it is inappropriate to reveal a deep secret that is concealed? Rather, they revealed in it [the book they were writing] even the concealed secrets, and would reveal them and write them down, and would not hold back [from revealing] whatever came to them. And this happened by attaching themselves to the domain of the one who contains within him those who are composed,[43] in body and soul, [they are] the writers of secrets and those who transfer them from their hidden state to this bodily reality.[44]

Employing rabbinic language that regulates the transfer of objects from a defined area of ownership to common space on the Sabbath, Cordovero explains that the secrets known to Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai were known and written down by his comrades through their mystical attachment to him. The circle extends the reach and activity of R. Shimon, who is conceived as belonging to the heavenly and concealed realm. His secrets, or rather, the knowledge of the supernal secrets concealed within the text, are revealed and recorded in writing by the comrades who traverse the heavenly boundaries by coextending the being and esoteric knowledge of Rabbi Shimon thorough their corporeal fraternity through which they compose a book which renders the concealed revealed.

Nevertheless, we learn from Cordovero's scattered comments in *Or Yaqar*, that he did not appreciate all of the literary units of the *Zohar* to be derivative of a single textual work, and this despite any mythic conception that generally guided him. That is, he never viewed any one codex of all the zoharic literature, not to mention one arranged in the order and format of the printed editions. Cordovero wrote his magisterial work by composing a commentary to each literary unit of the zoharic literature, such as *Ra'aya Meheimna*, *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*, *Yanuqa*, the *Idrot*, etc. In his commentary to *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*,

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43 An intentional play on words, *meḥubarim/meḥabrim*, based on the opening passage from *Tiqqunei Zohar*.

44 *Or Yaqar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 16. On the activities of the Safedian circle as an imitation of the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul: Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford 2003, pp. 59-65.

Cordovero writes: 'There are copyists who insert here the story of Rabbi *Sabba* and this is correct. And I will copy it into a volume [*sefer*] of its own, because it is independent literary unit [*she-hu ma'aseh le-'aṣmo*] with wonderful interpretations on transmigration'.[45] In the *Yanuqa* unit he remarks that he found a manuscript: 'I found passages copied from torn pages, misarranged, all passages taken from the *Yanuqa* which relate to this pericope. I have therefore decided to copy it here [at this place in his commentary]. It is not possible to appropriately explain all of its content because the essential part is missing from the work [*sefer*]. Nevertheless, I will explain it to the best of my ability so that nothing will be missing from this codex [*mi-qoveṣ zeh*]'.[46] Similarly he comments in the pericope of Balaq, 'The text is lacking here [*ḥaser*] and is so lacking in all the manuscripts [*sefarim*].[47]

Even *Tiqqunei Zohar*, which contains distinct literary divisions, did not reach Cordovero in tact. Cordovero used various ('incomplete') manuscripts which he called *sefarim*. For example, he writes 'I have found multiple [copies] [*kefulim*] of the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth *tiqqunim*. And there are books [*sefarim*, namely, manuscripts!] that do not have these at all, and there are books that have these but do not have others, and the like'.[48] Concerning *Tiqqunei Zohar* he writes:

> I do not possess this book in its proper form and arrangement. And I have struggled greatly with the codices [*ha-sefarim*] and arranged the book [*ha-sefer*] with great effort. And God knows the extent to which I regret [any mistakes I have made regarding] this book's order because [my efforts] are only intended for the sake of heaven. May God forgive me if I have misplaced some part, placing it before or after [its appropriate place]. Rather, my intent was only to arrange the book appropriately. *And the arrangements of the printed edition were not done properly.* And this seems to be the beginning of the *Tiqqunim*, and until here is its introduction, but still there is another

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[45] Cordovero, *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1976, vol. 8, p. 254. My thanks to Beracha Sack who graciously provided this references from *Or Yaqar* and the references below from the Modena manuscript of *Or Yaqar*, many of which are cited according to the subsequently published edition in volume 5 of Cordovero's commentary to *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Note that Cordovero uses the term *sefer* in different senses as translated in the following passages.

[46] Jerusalem 1986, vol. 14, p. 89.

[47] Ibid, p. 82.

[48] *Or Yaqar*, Ms. Modena, fol. 86a.

> introduction at the beginning of the fifth section. Apparently, the work [*sefer*] has many parts as can be proven from another place where it says the second book [*sifra*] of the thirteen in the first part, section §__.[49] In all, there is no clear order to the arrangement to his argument [*le-mishnato*]. Nevertheless, his words are sweet and contain many principles [*kelalim*] that even if a number of passages lack their beginning and end, they contain many insights that their absence does not detract from the beauty of their content. Therefore, if I were to find a passage [*ma'amar*], which is but a small fragment, I will copy if for the small benefit that can be gained from it until such a time that a righteous scholar will come and find all of it for us. And R. Shimon explained the word *Bereshit* in seventy ways by permutating the word *Bereshit*, *Bereshit*, *BRA TYSh*, *YRA*, *ShBT*, and the like according to the form of the word itself, and here he began with its explanations. And because the secrets of the Torah are the adornments of the Holy One, blessed be He and His *Shekhinah*, so that they will untie. Therefore, they are called *Tiqqunim*, the first *Tiqqun*, the second and so on.[50]

Elsewhere, in his commentary to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, he divides the manuscript texts in his possession into two versions, commenting separately on each, neither uniting the two, nor preferring one text.[51] Cordovero notes that some manuscripts of *Tiqqunei Zohar* have a different order of the passages [*yesh sefarim she-katuv ba-hen 'inyan zeh qodem le-zeh she-he-'etaqti*] and others are so convoluted that he hasn't the strength to reorder the passages [*u-veli safeq 'ein lo qesher kan, ve-ein lanu koaḥ le-sadder ha-'innyan mipnei bilbul ha-sefarim*].[52] Formally, however, Cordovero is aware that a literary structure existed for the *Tiqqunim* and he decides in a very important move to break apart that structure, and instead privileges his own program of constructing a zoharic commentary to the Torah. Thus when he reassigns material from the 69th and 70th *Tiqqunim* to the commentary to *Parshat Bereshit*,[53] leaving the beginnings of these sections in their place in his commentary to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, he writes, 'I have seen fit to append [*le-ḥabber*] these two passages to *parashat bereshit*, even thought they belong to the *Tiqqunim*, because they substantively [*she-'iqqaram*] concern the commentary to this *parashah* of the

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49 Left blank in original.

50 *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1973, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 81.

51 *Or Yaqar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, volume 5, Jerusalem 2007, p. 29.

52 Ibid., p. 37.

53 *Or Yaqar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, volume 6, Jerusalem 2009 (*Babba Batra*).

Torah [namely, *parashat bereshit*].[54] I understand Cordovero to be referring to his own commentary to the *Zohar* and not to the zoharic literary construction independent of his efforts. It should be recalled however that at the end of each pericope, he composed a commentary to the Torah that does not adhere to the zoharic text.[55] Cordovero thus constructs three texts in his *Or Yaqar*, the first comprised on the *Zohar to the Torah* and what the printers issued as the 'introduction', materials from *Tiqqunei Zohar* integrated into his running commentary to the *Zohar* on *Bershit*, and his newly formed commentary to the biblical text which appears as an appendix to each pericope.

In another passage from Cordovero's commentary to the *Zohar* he comments, 'For this section (*'inyan*) I have not found its beginning and I could not [interpret it in its entirety]'.[56] Cordovero remained faithful to the partial witness he possessed and did not supplement material from other manuscripts as did the modern editor who printed his commentary.[57] In another place in this same work, Cordovero writes that he was unable to find a zoharic text for that portion of the Torah and so wrote freely about the subject: 'In this pericope there is no *Zohar* [or literally, no *Zohar* is to be found; *lo nimṣa zohar*] and we will write here according to what destiny has in store with the help of God'.[58] This example demonstrates Cordovero's particular literary assumption about the *Zohar*, or rather, that he expected to find, and wished to write about, every pericope of the Torah. In another passage he wrote, 'There is text missing here and I did not find it in the manuscripts [*ba-sefrarim*]'.[59] Here Cordovero is clearly working with an ideal form of the text, defying all manuscript evidence he possesses. These cases show the divergence between the literary program of Cordovero and those of the sixteenth-century editors of the *Zohar*, establishing *the fact that there was no consensus regarding the editorial makeup of the*

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54 *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1964, vol. 3, p. 1.

55 See the discussion in chapter 5, below p. 522 n. 168.

56 *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1970, vol. 5, p. 9.

57 Compare to the similar formulation in *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1970, vol. 10, p. 9: 'With this too I have not found its beginning and I was also not able to proof [the text] appropriately'. The modern editors added 'In order that [the text] will not be lacking, we found it appropriate to copy the beginning of the *Zohar* from the printed edition'.

58 *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1989, vol. 15, p. 117 (*parshat devarim*).

59 *Or Yaqar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, volume 5, p. 65: *Kan ḥaser ve-lo maṣativ ba-sefarim*, referring to what is now referred to as fol. 37b (*Tiqqun* 18).

Zohar.[60] I would add that there is room to doubt whether, prior to the sixteenth century,[61] there ever was a transmitted tradition of how to edit together the various zoharic texts. This would mean then that the archeology of knowledge about the transmission history of zoharic texts in manuscript *will not help recover any lost original configuration of the* Zohar *as a corpus, but will be an important chapter in its reception history*. The modern editors of Cordovero's commentary noted various lacunae in his base text, such as in the beginning to Leviticus: "'I will make people scarcer than fine gold" (Is. 13:12), found in the printed edition at the beginning of Leviticus, is interpreted by the author, may his memory be blessed, as an independent literary unit [*ke-mamar bifnei 'aṣmo*] and thereafter he begins with passage A'.[62]

Cordovero serves as a striking example of a kabbalist who demonstrates a critical appreciation of the literary form of the *Zohar* in the face of traditions that sweepingly or simplistically attribute 'the book' to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. In a very important passage, which serves as a counter-tradition or competing explanation to that recorded by Zacuto from the lost work of R. Isaac of Acre, Cordovero records a tradition about the physical location and discovery of the original manuscript work, or book, composed by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai.

> There are those who say that it [the *Zohar*] was found in a cave in Meron by a Ishmaelite farmer, and was sold to merchants of spices and perfumes who used [its pages] to wrap the spices. And a scholar from Dara who was in Israel found it in Safed, may it be built and rebuilt, scattered, disordered and torn. And he gathered it and made great efforts [to collect it all] and even went to the garbage to gather up the small pieces that were sold to the merchants of spices and he

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[60] *Or Yaqar*, vol. 1, p. 1. Cordovero cites the so-called 'Introduction to the *Zohar*' as '*Parashat Bereshit mi-Sefer ha-Zohar*'. See further, *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1962, vol. 6, p. 1: 'I have seen two passages [*ma'amarim*] of *Parshat Bereshit*, and both of them are from the *Tiqqunim*, since they are essentially a commentary to the *Parashah*'. As is well known, a long passage from the *Tiqqunim* was printed in *Parashat Bereshit* in the Mantua edition of the *Zohar*, beginning on folio 23a. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 218-219; Efraim Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, Tel Aviv 1976, 215-230, esp. p. 216 [Hebrew]; Daniel Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume 1, p. 170 n. 499. Finally, see *Or Yaqar*, vol. 21 = *Shi'ur Qomah*, vol. 1, p. 213 where Cordovero writes, 'I went over all the manuscript witnesses and found agreement between them (*ḥazarti 'al kol ha-sefarim u-maṣati ha-girsa ha-zot muskemet bekhol ha-sefarim*).

[61] See further, Giller, *Reading the Zohar*.

[62] *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1983, vol. 12, p. 1 (beginning of *Parashat Va-Yiqra*).

> bought from them all that remained with them that was sold to them by the Ishmaelite digger who found it in a cave. And he copied it and many lacunae were found in it and [much] was lost and was missing and it was torn and scattered. And this is not necessarily so nor it is proof, except that the principle part of the *Zohar* [*'iqqar miṣiut ha-sefer*] was present in Dara and from there it was disseminated and reached us. And this matter was already investigated in earlier times in the days of R. Moses de León and R. Isaac of Acre, author of *Me'irat Einayim*, as is written in his book, *Ma'aseh he-Ḥasidim*. And it seems that he heard of this [the *Zohar*] and did not see it, but certainly Nahmanides did not have it all the more so those who came before him. And there are those who wish to defame it and they will receive their judgment for this.[63]

Although the passage has been discussed repeatedly in the scholarly literature, a crucial point has been overlooked that unifies the thesis concerning the lack of a set literary form, namely, that although it was claimed to have been discovered in the Land of Israel, the *Zohar* was said to have been recovered 'scattered, disordered and torn'.[64] The passage seeks to mediate between the

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[63] *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei Zohar* 2, p. 104. A parallel text is cited by Abraham Azulai in his commentary, *Or ha-Ḥamah*, Jerusalem 1876, verso of last unnumbered page of the introduction prior to fol. 1a, as cited by Scholem (as fol. 1b) in a note in *Qiryat Sefer* 1 (1924-1925), p. 166 [Hebrew]. The text was later discussed by Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 19 who additionally cited an account of the *Book of the Zohar* (as a single unit) discovered buried in a box by a king from the East: R. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim*, Brooklyn 1958, vol. 2, p. 44, s.v. *'Zohar'*. See also Yiḥya Qapaḥ, *Milḥamot ha-Shem*, Jerusalem 1931, pp. 61, 76, 120 for uses of this tradition and a discussion of the Eastern origin of the *Zohar*. (Note that Qapaḥ repeatedly uses the phrase *Meḥabber ha-Zohar*!). See further Beracha Sack who showed the dependence on Cordovero's *Or Yaqar*: 'On the Sources to *Sefer Ḥesed le-Avraham* of R. Abraham Azulai', *Qiryat Sefer* 56 (1981), p. 175 [Hebrew]; Rachel Elior, 'The Kabbalists of Draa', *Peamim* 24 (1985), p. 37 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'The Kabbalah in Morocco: A Survey', *Morocco; Jews and Art in a Muslim Land*, ed. V. Mann, New York 2000, pp. 105-124, esp. p. 111; idem, 'The Land of Secrets', *Zion and Zionism: Among Sephardi and Oriental Jews*, ed. W. Z. Harvey, et al, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 45-49 [Hebrew]; Boaz Huss, *Like the Radiance*, pp. 297 n. 42, 298 n. 45.

[64] The views of the *Zohar* by kabbalists in the early modern and modern period, namely after its printing, is not systematically treated in this study, as their views lie beyond the realm of the present inquiry. An exceptional comment is nevertheless worthy of note, where Yehuda Ashlag writes that he is certain of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's authorship but even if it were proven to him that de León wrote the book it would only

desire to posit a lost original document and yet be faithful to the acknowledged disorder of the documentary evidence in their possession.

5. *Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts of the Zohar*

I suggest that the *Zohar* was intentionally produced and originally distributed in separate booklets or quires in order to create the impression that fragments had survived from an antique work that was in fact never realized as a single document until the sixteenth century. The possibly authentic testimony of R. Isaac of Acre, recorded solely in the much later work of *Sefer Yuḥasin* by R. Abraham Zacuto, bolsters this claim.

> And Rabbi Moses' wife replied to Rabbi Joseph's wife with an oath, saying, May God do so to me and more also if my husband ever possessed such a book. But he wrote what he did out of his own head and heart, and knowledge and mind. And when I saw him writing without any material before him I used to say to him: Why do you tell everybody that you are copying from a book when you have no book, and you write out of your head? Would it not be better for you to say that the work was your own brainchild, because then you would get more credit? ... And now see the important test to which I subjected Rabbi Moses to see whether he wrote with the power of the Holy Name. This was the test. A long time after he had written for me a number of lengthy extracts from the *Zohar*, I hid one of them, and told him that I had lost it, and asked him to make me another copy. He said to me: Show me the end of the text that preceded it and the beginning of the text that followed it and I shall copy the whole section that you have lost. And this I did. A few days later he gave me the recopied text, and I compared it with the first, and I saw that there was no difference between them: nothing added, and nothing missing, no discrepancy in either subject matter or wording. But it was all of a piece, as if one text had been copied from the other. Can there be a more stringent test than this, or stronger proof?[65]

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increase his appreciation for him as its author beyond that of any figure of Tannaitic times. He further adds the reason that the *Zohar* was 'revealed' in a certain point in history and that the 'revelation of the words of the *Zohar*' is a gradually unfolding event in history. See Yehuda Ashlag, *Sefer ha-Zohar...with the Wonderful Interpretations of the Sulam*, Jerusalem 1956, volume 1, p. 17, §§60-61 [Hebrew]. An English translation is also available, Yehuda Ashlag, *An Entrance to the Zohar*, compiled and edited by Philip Berg, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 81-82.

[65] *Sefer Yuḥasin ha-Shalem*, ed. S. Piliqovski, Jerusalem 1963, pp. 88-89. The translation is that of Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

In this passage, de León is described as producing texts 'from his head', without having a source in front of him from which he was copying. While not possessing a written original, the passage speaks of signature-leaves, booklets (*quntresim*) that contain texts that can be – or should be – joined together in the act of copying larger amounts of the textual material, following the assumption that somewhere else, or in his head, there existed a complete work with a clear literary structure. I do not believe that this testimony depicts actual, historical events, although it may be an ideological reworking of a more authentic account of the life of R. Moses de León.[66] In any event, the nature of the dissemination of the zoharic texts (in numerous manuscripts of various sections not transmitted as a completed, whole work) accords well with the intended pseudepigraphic air the lack of textual integrity and organization of what is offered as a collection based on ancient manuscripts. Scholarship since Tishby seems to have presumed that de León was copying out the continuous text of the body of the *Zohar*, ignoring the question of how the other literary units were worked into this record of its dissemination. Indeed, I do not recall any study that claimed that each quire corresponded to a defined literary unit, although my point should be clear from the language implemented throughout modern scholarship of the 'layers' (*sh*ᵉ*khavot*) of 'the *Zohar*', when referring to the overall integrity and relationship between the literary units found in the fourteenth through fifteenth-century zoharic manuscripts as parts of the full form of the *Zohar* as printed in 1558. Accordingly, I would argue that it is no longer appropriate to refer to de León's works as his 'Hebrew writings' in order to presume thereby that he necessarily was the author or editor who applied the final seal to the language of the text of the *Zohar*, in content or form. This correction to the academic discourse of the field is admittedly a hypercorrection in that we know that de León did compose some pseudepigraphic texts and used Aramaic as one if his devices. My aim here is to challenge the way scholarship talks about all such literary products under the rubric of its understanding of the production of the *Zohar* and the presumption of a scholarly consensus on the relationship between de León and the zoharic texts.

Once again, my claim is that the *'Book' of the Zohar* as a textual structure laid out by the editors is the invention of sixteenth-century kabbalists and

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[66] Indeed a separate study is warranted on the ideological and scholarly uses of this passage within the greater framing of the *Zohar*. Some of the more important discussions include Emden, Deinard, Milzahaghi, Margolioth, Scholem, Tishby and a host of comments in recent years.

printers. In the early years of the dissemination of zoharic texts, and certainly until the Spanish Expulsion, kabbalists who wanted to read large quantities of zoharic literature had to collect numerous manuscripts. This is to say that the zoharic literature was found in various regions and in different manuscripts and therefore was not available in a single, large codex. I quote from the now-famous words of R. Judah Ḥayyat, a kabbalist from the generation of the Expulsion.

> When I, Judah son of the wise and pious R. Jacob Ḥayyat, may his memory be blessed, was in Spain, I tasted a little of the honey and my eyes were enlightened and I let my heart interpret and explore this wisdom. And I went from one achievement to another (Ps. 84:8), collecting everything I could of the above-mentioned book [*me-ha-sefer ha-nizkar*] and I collected a little here and there, until I possessed the majority of it.[67]

Moreover, in R. Isaac Mor Ḥayyim's epistle we find similar statements concerning the literary state of the *Zohar* in diffuse parts, scattered in manuscripts throughout Italy.

> The *Book of the Zohar* in its entirety cannot be obtained in any one province. Rather, it is scattered throughout all the provinces. And this passage I copied from the *Book of the Zohar* that I found in the study house of R. Eliezer, may the Lord keep him, from Lisbon.[68]

This early comment on the ontology[69] of the zoharic text in numerous

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[67] R. Judah Ḥayyaṭ's Commentary to *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, Mantua 1558, fol. 2b. On R. Judah Ḥayyaṭ's method of interpreting the work according to numerous zoharic passages see Moshe Idel, 'Encounters between Spanish and Italian Kabbalists in the Generation of the Expulsion', *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391-1648*, ed. B. Gampel, New York 1997, pp. 189-222.

[68] Yael Nadav, 'The Kabbalist, R. Isaac Mor Ḥayyim's Letter on the Doctrine of the *Ṣaḥṣaḥot*', *Tarbiz* 26 (1957), pp. 440-458, esp. p. 456 [Hebrew]. See also Moshe Idel, 'Encounters between Spanish and Italian Kabbalists', p. 209, n. 85.

[69] Here I am following Greetham's use of the term in his *Theories of the Text*, pp. 26-63. See further the fascinating note by Stephen Wald in his book, *The Doctrine of the Divine Name*, p. 98 where he comments on the phrase סטרא דקיומא from line 4 of his edition of 'The Secrets of Letters of the Divine Name: 'This rabbinic source enlightens another aspect of this obscure phrase. In order for writing to be included in the prohibition on Shabbat it must be permanent – something which is מתקיים. קיום in this context therefore carries the double sense of a permanent impression made on some

manuscripts of the various parts lends itself to the conclusion that the zoharic corpus was written unit by unit, or piecemeal, composed and disseminated in numerous pamphlets. Finally, R. Abraham Adrutiel faced a similar manuscript situation with *Tiqqunei Zohar* and like the kabbalists mentioned above engaged in a editorial act of anthologizing the disparate sources: 'I have collected for you wondrous passage [*'inyanin niflaim*] from *Sefer ha-Tiqqunim* which were scattered, one here and one there'.[70] It thus becomes apparent that the reception of zoharic literature amounts to chapters in the history of attempts to produce editions that compile as much manuscript material as could be obtained by the various kabbalists, editors and printers. On a methodological note, we should not assume that this history of the text progressed in a linear fashion leading up to the two sixteenth century printings in Cremona and Mantua.

On this question, let us examine the works of R. Menaḥem Recanati. Recanati composed a lost commentary to sections of zoharic literature. He referred to this commentary in his other works as '*Perush Sefer ha-Zohar*'. According to Moshe Idel's suggestion, Recanati reworked this commentary into his larger work, his *Commentary to the Torah*, which contains numerous passages and discussions of the *Zohar*.[71] Zvia Rubin prepared an anthology and index of all the zoharic passages cited by Recanati in his Commentary to the Torah. From this index it seems clear that he did not posses many pericopes of the *Zohar* according to its arrangement in the editions of Cremona and Mantua.[72] *Recanati spoke of fragmentary manuscripts that he possessed*: 'I

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medium, as well as the regular medieval philosophical sense of existence'. For a full discussion of this term see Liebes, *Chapters*, especially p. 355 §1 and p. 356 §4' [and see also Ibid., p. 381 §7, following a marginal gloss by Liebes in the copy housed in the Scholem Library]. The question of the physical medium of writing is a central trope in Jewish mystical literature. See Wolfson, 'Erasing the Erasure: Gender and the Writing of God's Body in Kabbalistic Symbolism' in his *Circle in the Square*, pp. 49-78 (and on the phallic connotation of *qiyyuma*, see p. 43) and the discussion below on *Midrash Konen* and later interpretations.

[70] Cited according to Ms. Gaster 956 (London, The British Library, Or. 12262), fol. 69b by Scholem, *Chapters in the History of Kabbalistic Literature*, Jerusalem 1931, p. 76 [Hebrew].

[71] Moshe Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati*, pp. 68-71 [Hebrew].

[72] Zvia Rubin, *Passages from the Book of the Zohar in R. Menahem Recanati's Commentary to the Torah*, Jerusalem 1992 [Hebrew]. The data she provided through page 35 along with the synopsis on pp. 36-37 indicating which passages if any Recanati

additionally found pieces here and there of *Sefer ha-Zohar*'.[73] As Moshe Idel has shown, when mentioning 'The Wondrous *Zohar*', Recanati was referring to what modern scholarship has termed 'the Body of the Zohar', along with *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*'. He does not necessarily attribute the *Zohar* to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, even though this figure recurrently appears in the passages he cites. At one point, Recanati remarks, 'I have additionally found', indicating perhaps that his use of the term *Sefer ha-Zohar* reflects his assumption that he is quoting from codices and not from an edited corpus. Moreover, Recanati quotes from '*Idra Rabba*' by the name *ha-Zohar ha-Gadol*, apparently as a free translation of the word *rabba*.[74]

A complete inventory of zoharic quotations and extensive passages that have been translated into Hebrew in the first decades following the composition and dissemination of this body of literature would considerably advance our understanding of what was produced and available in the early period after the *Zohar's* creation. A further important task is to isolate and compare the textual differences between the different editings of the zoharic texts in the early period of its reception. R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid apparently possessed an early version (or possibly recension) of a significant amount of zoharic literature, which served as the basis for the translation he undertook in the beginning of the fourteenth century.[75] An examination of such a textual version, in comparison with a wide range of important manuscript witnesses will not only shed much light on the early chapters of the reception history of the *Zohar*, but will also highlight the particular contributions of the various scribes and editors

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cited from each pericope (according to the later layout in print format) is extremely helpful. *Note that many pericopes are not represented at all.*

73 As cited by Idel, *R. Menaḥem Recanati*, p. 103.

74 Ibid., p. 104.

75 See Gershom Scholem, 'R. David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, Nahmanides' Grandson', *Qiryat Sefer* 4 (1927-1928), pp. 302, 309 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'R. David ben Judah he-Ḥasid's Translation to the *Book of the Zohar* and His Commentary to the Aleph Beth', *'Alei Sefer* 8-9 (1980), pp. 60-73, 84-93 [Hebrew]; Amos Goldreich, 'Rabbi David ben Judah he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*; His Method of Reworking the Zoharic Text after the Appearance of the Zohar', M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University 1972 [Hebrew]; Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalistic Material from the School of R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2 (1983), pp. 169-207 [Hebrew]; Daniel Matt, *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer Mar'ot ha-Zove'ot by Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid*, Chico 1982; Yehuda Liebes, 'How the *Zohar* was Written', *Studies in the Zohar*, tr. Stephanie Nakache, Albany 1993, pp. 126-134.

who helped shape some of the layers of its composition in diffuse but partial redaction(s).

We can now turn our attention to the textual witnesses of the first editings of the early *Zohar* manuscripts. Menaḥem Ṣevi Qaddari described the earliest known manuscript of the *Zohar*,[76] which contains (following the layout of the *Zohar* in the Margolioth's edition, similar to that of the Vilna printing) passages from the pericope of *bereshit, midrash ha-ne'elam* to *Bereshit*, and portions from the pericopes of *lekh lekha, vayera, ḥayyei sarah, toledot, ve-yishlaḥ, ve-yeḥi, be-shalaḥ, mishpaṭim* (not including *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*), *terumah, va-yaqhel, 'emor* and *va-yelekh*. The copyist offered some comments to the effect that he utilized a number of zoharic manuscripts. Another such manuscript codex from this period could enlighten scholarship as to the arrangement and quality of the texts at that time, or at the very least it could illustrate what was available in a specific center in the fourteenth century.

The earliest manuscript that contains an edited compilation of a significant amount of zoharic material as a commentary to the Torah is the Freidberg manuscript: Ms. Toronto, University of Toronto 5-105. The manuscript was copied in fifteenth-century Byzantium by Sabbatai ben Isaiah Cohen Balbo. Elqayam, who described this manuscript,[77] offered an initial description of the material contained in the codex, which includes the majority of zoharic sections that interpret the pericopes of the Torah, as well as parts of the *'Sitrei Torah'*, *Idra Rabba*, *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta* and a large part of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. In addition to this important codex, mention should be made of the manuscript by Michal Oron in the Merton College at Oxford, also copied in the fifteenth century which includes an unique editing of certain units of the zoharic literature, especially to *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the books of Genesis, Exodus. Her work on this manuscript and an edition will propel zoharic scholarship forward immeasurably as it will present a work, or more precisely the text of what is often presumed to be a work, in full, according to a particular manuscript tradition and without integrating its readings with those of other manuscripts.

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[76] Menaḥem Ṣevi Qaddari, 'The Earliest Known Manuscript of the *Zohar*', *Tarbiz* 27 (1958), pp. 265-277. Reprinted in his book, *The Grammar of the Aramaic of the 'Zohar'*, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 161-172 [Hebrew]. See also Gershom Scholem, 'A Lost Chapter of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*', *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, New York 1946, pp. 465-446 [Hebrew].

[77] Avraham Elqayam, 'The Holy *Zohar* of Sabbatai Ṣevi', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 345-387 [Hebrew].

This of course can and should be followed by the publication of other manuscript traditions which demonstrate a different quality and character of readings and an order of the passages. Oron's work will, nevertheless correct the damage done by the sixteenth-century printers who removed various passages from the flow of the manuscript text in order to insert them in their editions of the *Zohar to the Torah*, which in turn afforded a pretext to the printers of *Zohar Ḥadash* to skip over these passages when editing *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, as they were already printed elsewhere.

A detailed analysis of the many zoharic manuscripts, a cataloging of the texts contained in them along with their editorial arrangements will not be undertaken in the present study. My aim, however, is to demonstrate that the array of editings accomplished prior to the sixteenth-century printings (and the kabbalistic commentaries to the corpus composed by such figures as R. Moses Cordovero) show conclusively that there was no one tradition that dictated the literary form of the zoharic texts. The onus of proof falls upon the scholar who claims that the surviving manuscript witnesses amount to 'fragments' of the lost original editing of the complete *Book of the Zohar*. A form-critical inquiry, along with a comparison of the textual differences that exist between the witnesses is needed. In the concluding section of this study, I will offer guidelines for future research in accordance with the methodologies discussed here. In the following section, I will review the various views of scholarship over the last eighty years on the question of the literary status of the *Zohar* as a book.

6. *The First Printings and Early Reactions to its Format*

In his seventeenth-century manuscript work, *Naḥlat Ya'aqov*, R. Jacob Halevi reviews many of the claims regarding the *Zohar's* dating and composition. His comments regarding its literary form are the most telling as he responds to the arrangement of the texts in the printed edition from Mantua.

> And there are those who say in truth that it was R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, peace be upon him, who composed the *Book of the Zohar*. However, the majority of it was composed by men of our times and they all inserted in it whatever came to their minds. And they are correct when they answer with their view because what does the chaff have to do with the wheat? Namely, in the printed edition of the *Zohar* from Mantua, *Parashat Va-Yeḥi*, the proofreaders wrote that [a text of] approximately three pages is not from the *Book of the Zohar*, and the language [of the text] proves that there is a [great] difference between it and the language of the *Zohar*, as there is between night and day. And this true and it

> was not done with malicious intent because anyone who touches the *Zohar*, his hands are clean. However, this is internal to Israel, that he who reads from the book, will be quick to offer his insights, writing about it and offering comments and interpretations or glosses as much as he can. And behold, when the printer engaged in his craft, he did not sift through the material, like when Sanherib confused the world. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the value of the *Book of the Zohar* because its light is recognized from within the darkness, and all the rest is equally considered to be added or subtracted from its form.[78] And even if it changes its taste [and would make it not fit for eating] it is nullified [as insignificant] as one in 600,000 parts. And there are those[79] who ask: 'What are these *collectanea* of the *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim* that have been published?' And in their vanities they say that the Book of the *Zohar* is a candelabrum of chapters. We answer them that it is the opposite, the book is much, much older than the printed [format] and all of it has not survived in tact as a single unit, because over time and with the vicissitudes of the Diaspora [much was] lost and some of it was planted here and some elsewhere. And he wrote:[80] that the author of *Shalshelet ha-Qabbalah* wrote concerning the *Book of the Zohar* as follows: 'And I received an oral tradition that this work [*ḥibbur*] is so great in its size that if all of it were found together it would amount to the entire load of a camel'.[81]

The printed *Zohar* was viewed as a monumental event in no small part due to the artificial nature of the composite literary nature of the 'full' work. The introduction to each volume boasts of the multiple manuscripts in their possession that were consulted (and synthesized) into the polished product that went to press. R. Abraham Azulai reflects upon the process of deliberating between various texts in proofreading the copy/text that went to press.

> Indeed, the reason for the many errors that can be found is due to the depths of the concepts and limitations of the one comprehending them. But you should not think that this book contains any independent deliberation, God forbid. Rather it was proofed based on precise and ancient manuscript codices, and where it deliberated independently it is says 'its seems to me', 'it seems' or 'to to

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78 Citing BT Hulin 58b, נטול דמי.

79 Hallamish (below, n. 81) cites *Ari Nohem*, Leipzig 1840, p. 73.

80 Ibid., p. 59.

81 Part of this lengthy text was published by Moshe Hallamish in his study, 'A New Document on the History of the Polemics Against Kabbalah from Italy in the Seventeenth Century', *Bar Ilan Annual* 22-23 (1988), pp. 195-196 [Hebrew]. The passage discussed here was cited by Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 43 n. 1.

the best of my knowledge'. It was also proofed according to the books of the holy, R. Moses Cordovero, may his memory be blessed. It was also proofed from a book from Egypt, about which I heard that it was said, and which I confirmed when I saw it, that it was copied from R. I[saac] A[shkhenazi], may his memory be blessed, who had six ancient manuscript codices before him and one of the *Zohar* translated into Hebrew by R. Israel Naqawa, may his memory be blessed. So when someone learns from a proofread book, and doesn't understand the depths of its meaning, this should illuminate for him a little light, like the light of the moon.[82]

7. *Chapters in the Historiography of the Zohar as a Book*

We turn now to the history of scholarship on the *Zohar* with an emphasis on the assumption of its literary structure and the efforts undertaken to identify its author or authors. This survey is based on all published studies and it is my hope that such an analysis will enrich future studies.

Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Scholarship: Studies Prior to Gershom Scholem

Elyaqim Milzahagi

Elyaqim Milzahagi offered numerous insights into the authorship and composition of the *Zohar* in his relatively short book, *Sefer Raviah* and in his lengthy unpublished manuscript, *Zoharei Raviah*.[83] Although he responded mainly to R. Jacob Emden and other critics of the *Zohar*, many of his comments are fresh insights into its literary nature. While we will focus on his comments that shed light onto the question at hand, his work as a whole marks a qualitative break with ideological reflections of his predecessors and amounts to the beginning of academic criticism.[84] In *Sefer Raviah* he struggled, at one

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[82] Azulai, *Or ha-Ḥamah*, Jerusalem 1936, fol. 2b (unnumbered introduction). Cited by Ya'aqov Spiegel, *Chapters in the History of the Jewish Book: Scholars and their Annotations*, Ramat Gan 1996 (second edition, 2005), p. 372 [Hebrew].

[83] Milzahagi, *Sefer Raviah*, Ofen 1837; *Zoharei Raviah*, Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 121, composed ca. 1840. G. Qarsel, 'The Writings of Elyaqim ha-Milzahagi', *Qiryat Sefer* 17 (1940), pp. 87-94 [Hebrew].

[84] See Scholem's *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, p. 40 [Hebrew]; G. Qarsel, 'The Writings of Elyaqim ha-Milzahagi', *Qiryat Sefer* 17 (1940), pp. 87-94 [Hebrew]; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 47.

point with the lack of uniformity in citations to the *Zohar* by kabbalists prior to its printing. So for example he noted discrepancies in citations by R. Judah Ḥayyat. Referring to a particular citation, he wrote:

> It is not to be found whatsoever in the main *Zohar* (*ha-Zohar ha-'iqqari*), but rather in the introduction to *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Therefore my heart tells me that also Rabbi Ḥayyat did not bother to look up each passage and identify its place whether it was in the *Zohar*, the *Idra*, *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*, *Tiqqunim*, *Zohar Ḥadash*, or *Sitrei Torah*. He relied only on Recanati who cited some passages. And proof of my words is that in most cases Ḥayyat cites Recanati's *Commentary* and his exact words and the passages of the *Zohar* and *Tiqqunim* that Recanati himself cited. Nevertheless, Ḥayyat does not mention him by name, but rather cites these himself as if he were citing them originally (but again there are times when he does mention Recanati by name). I have also found passages cited as 'The Wondrous *Zohar*' ('*Zohar ha-Mufla*') which is the name Recanati often uses in his book, and so R. Judah Ḥayyat uses this same terminology, calling it *Zohar ha-Mufla*. And so Ḥayyat followed Recanati's method of not citing the places in the *Zohar* and in other kabbalistic books according to pericope and folio, and so like Ḥayyat, the others followed suit, including the *Book Ṣiyyoni*. And those who followed changed the names of the books, what they saw and what they received. It seems to me that they thought that the main body of the *Zohar* (*she-guf ha-zohar ha-'iqqari*) and *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta* and *Idra* and the *Tiqqunim*, new and old, and *Zohar Ḥadash* and *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and *Sitrei Torah, Ra'aya Meheimna* and the passages from the *Bahir* and all the addenda added as appendices to the main *Zohar* (*Zohar ha-'iqqari*) are all the product of one hand [*mi-beten eḥad*] and came from the holy Tanna, R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his students and so they were not precise in the name of the book, whether it were the *Zohar* or *Idra*, or [...]
>
> The great authors of works of Torah, scholars and kabbalists thought that all that was printed in the *Zohar* (and I do not intend here to include *Ra'aya Meheimna, Midrash ha-Neelam* and all the addenda I mentioned earlier, even if I mentioned them earlier on this page, to be part of the *Book of the Zohar*), is from the *Body of the Main Zohar* [...] [rather] they are all additions that were subsumed into the *Main Zohar* and no one took notice. And in order to sort this out I must interpret them in their order and according to their form.[85]

In Milzahagi's manuscript text, *Zoharei Raviah*, he divides the history of Kabbalah into historical periods, a rather impressive move methodologically

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[85] *Sefer Raviah*, fol. 32a-b.

considering the time and character of his study! Milzahagi is possibly the first self-aware literary critic of zoharic literature who is not motivated in his comments by any apparent ideological or polemical agenda. His third period begins with the publication of the *Zohar*:

> The third period is from the time that the *Book of the Zohar* was published at the beginning of the sixth millennium and from which time all that reached the kabbalists and authors were some pamphlets of the *Zohar*, but only most, not all of them, only the *Body of the Zohar* or the additional [materials] that were appended to it, because in the beginning it was not arranged as it is today as I explain later on.[86]

And further:

> The sages who brought the *Book of the Zohar* [to press] stated a major principle, that all that was printed in the volume of the *Zohar*, and in the *Tiqqunim* and *Zohar Ḥadash*, was all said by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and all was spoken from his mouth without adding or taking away anything from them according to the order of the pericopes as they are before us today. Therefore, all the kabbalists and authors who preceded them and all the writings of the R. Isaac Luria, may his memory be blessed, and that which came before him and after him until this day have all jumbled together in their works the introductions and the principles of the *Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and the *Toseftot* and *Sitrei Torah* and the *Matnitin* and *Saba* and *Yenuqa* and the *Old* and *New Tiqqunim* and from the *Zohar Ḥadash* on the Torah and the five scrolls – from all of these they made a single spiced and well-kneaded dough, soaked in the holy anointed oil of the [formed] wisdom of the Kabbalah.[87] And they sought to solve the contradictions that arise between these books and contradict the words of the *Zohar*. And they are ardent to explain away these [problems] and are hard pressed with proofs of one for the other, for example, from the *Ra'aya Meheimna* to the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and from there to the *Zohar* and so on to the other works mentioned. And so for all of these on the *Zohar* and vice versa. And one who reads the words of the kabbalists [in the printed volume] in the order [presented] will find a huge jumble of difficulties. The *Tiqqunim* and the *Zohar Ḥadash* are all given from the hand of one shepherd.[88]

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[86] *Zoharei Raviah*, p. 9.

[87] עיסה בלוסה מרוקחה בשמן משחת קודש של חכמת הקבלה.

[88] Ibid., p. 10.

Milzahagi deconstructs the literary form of the printed edition and enumerates its constituent parts. Many sections were of course itemized in the printed layout of the Mantua edition by the printers who preserved or offered the titles to the units with captions above the columns, even as their aim was create an encompassing structure for a book. Here, the aim is reversed, to isolate the units and to name and describe all of the unique styles and subjects that have a literary identity, including those that were subsumed into larger or existing parts in the printed edition. Milzahagi's efforts take the literary criticism of the zoharic texts another step further, far beyond the comments offered by Emden who enumerated some of the sections in the service of his ideologically oriented critique. That is to say, Emden was not interested in providing a complete cataloging of the literary units and comparing that to the artificial composite of the printers. Milzahagi's list is of extreme importance as it formed the ground for later lists, culminating in the guidelines of the field, namely where it reappeared in different formulations in Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar*. On pages 16-17 of his manuscript he writes, 'The Holy Book of the Zohar, as it is before us today, I have found in it more than thirty different literary units [*maḥberot*] and separate books from different authors, that each one of them is deserving of its own name and these are their details'. His annotated list includes the following: 1) the *Body of the Zohar*; 2) The *Introduction to the Zohar*; 3) *Tiqqunei Zohar*; 4) *Hekhalot*; 5) *Tosefta*; 6) *Matnitin*; 7) *Sitrei Torah*; 8) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*; 9) *Ra'aya Meheimna*; 10) *Pequdin*; 11) The treatise '*ve-'ata te-ḥazeh*' in *Yitro*, fols. 70-75; 12) *Razei de-Razin*; 13) treatises found within it in parashat *Mishpaṭim*; 14) *Sabba* in the pericope *mishpaṭim* (fol. 22); 15) *Yenuqa*; 16) *Rav metivta*; 17) *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*; 18) *Idra Rabba*; 19) *Idra Zuṭa*; 20) *Idra* of *Mishpaṭim*; 21) *Devar Aḥer yishresu ha-mayyim*; 22) *Nosḥa aḥrina*; 23) other books; 24) *Zohar Qaṭan*; 25) *Zohar Ḥadash*; 26) *Bahir*; 27) *Midrash Ruth*; 28) *Gilayon* of *parshat va-yiqra* of the printed edition; 29) the commentary found within the printed edition to *parshat noaḥ*; 30) 'the proofreader said'; 31) glosses; 32) addenda; 33) additions; 34) hidden and interpolated [passages] and like these there are many'.

Adolph Franck

In 1843, Adolph Franck published a French volume entitled, *La Kabbale ou la*

philosophie religieuse des Hébreu[89] in which he evaluated the doctrines and major works of Jewish mysticism. His appraisal of the *Zohar* foreshadows some of the later conclusions of modern, university scholarship on the *Zohar*. More importantly, however, are his comments on the literary character of the *Zohar*, especially considering the early date of his study.

> We have come now to those who say that Simeon bar Yoḥai really taught the metaphysical and religious doctrine (which forms the basis of the *Zohar*) to a small number of disciplines and friends, among whom was his son; that these lessons, though transmitted at first by word of mouth as inviolable secrets, were edited little by little; and that these traditions and notes, to which commentaries of more recent time were necessarily added, accumulated and, therefore altered in time, finally reached Europe from Palestine towards the close of the thirteenth century. We hope that this opinion, until now expressed with timidity and as a conjecture, will soon acquire the character and the rights of certainty.
>
> This opinion, above all, is in perfect accord, as was already noted by the author of the chronicle 'Chain of Tradition', with the history of all the other religious monuments of the Jewish people. This Mishnah, the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds were also made up by joining the traditions of different ages and the lessons of different teachers, held together by a common principle. It agrees no less with a belief which, according to the historian just cited, must be quite old. 'I have learned from tradition', says the author, 'that this work was so voluminous, that when completed it would have made up a camel's load. Now, it can not be supposed that one man, had he even spent his whole life writing on such matters, could have left such deferring proof of his productiveness. Finally, we read in the Supplements of the *Zohar*, (*Tikun ha-Zohar* – תקוני הזהר), which are written in the same language, and known just as long as the *Zohar* itself, that the latter will never be entirely published, or, to translate more faithfully, that it will be disclosed at the end of days.
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> If we now examine the book itself for the purpose of searching therein, without prejudice, for some light on its origin, we must soon notice, by the inequality of style and lack of unity, not in the system, it is true but in the exposition, method, application of general principles and, finally, in the consideration of details that it utterly impossible to ascribe it to one person.[90]

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[89] Paris 1843, German translation, Die *Kabbala oder die Religionsphilosophie der Hebräer*, Berlin n.d.; English translation: *The Kabbalah or the Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews*, New York 1926.

[90] pp. 107-108.

Frank then sets aside three 'fragments' of the 'work' of the *Zohar* as containing 'different principles' than the rest, namely *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*, *Idra Rabba* and *Idra Zuta*. 'These fragments', he adds, 'seem to us at first sight lost in this immense collection'.[91]

Adolph Jellinek

The greatest contribution to the study of the *Zohar* prior to Scholem was undertaken by Adolph Jellinek.[92] While his contribution did not amount to any overarching theory about the literary nature of the *Zohar*, nor its author(s), Jellinek was a pioneer in comparing literatures and reading manuscripts. This category alone, methodologically speaking, places him outside of the group of scholars that marked his generation. On the question of Moses de León and his relationship to the *Zohar*, Jellinek devoted a small volume in 1851, in which he ran in parallel columns quotations from the *Zohar* and the known works of Moses de León. In so doing, Jellinek turned away from the fanciful suggestion made a number of years earlier by Landauer that no less than R. Abraham Abulafia composed the *Zohar*, a position Jellinek was well placed to refute based on his comparative methods and his independent work with manuscripts in publishing some of Abulafia's writings.[93] And while he was focused on the

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[91] p. 109. Further comments about the *Zohar*, mainly its authorship and place in the history of Jewish mysticism were offered by David Heymann Jöel, מדרש הזוהר *Die Religionsphilosophie des Sohar und ihr Verhältniß zur allgemeinen jüdischen Theologie: zugleich eine kritische Beleuchtung der Franck'schen "Kabbala"*, Leipzig 1849, pp. 61-81, but with little contribution to the history of comments about the *Zohar*'s literary form. See, however, pages 64-65 where he comments on its fragmentary nature, noting that the *Sifra de-Ṣeinuta*, and *Idrot* are ancient.

[92] See Moshe Idel, 'On Aaron Jellinek and the Kabbalah', *Pe'amim* 100 (2004), pp. 15-22 [Hebrew].

[93] See Landauer's extensive review of kabbalistic literature in *Literaturblatt des Orients* 6 (1845). See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 130; Ronald Kiener, 'From "Baal ha-Zohar" to Prophet to Ecstatic: The Vicissitudes of Abulafia in Contemporary Scholarship', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, pp. 145-159; Idel, 'On Aaron Jellinek and the Kabbalah', where he points out that nevertheless Jellinek attributed *Tiqqunei Zohar* to Abulafia. Joseph Dan has grouped Landauer together with Israel Weinstock in order to compose a portrait of scholarship that was methodologically other than that established by Scholem. See his article, 'The Landauer-Weinstock Syndrome: Toward an Understanding of the Status of Kabbalah in the Preceding Generations', *Yahadut Zemanenu* 9 (1995), pp. 3-18 [Hebrew].

question of authorship and not the literary character or identity of the *Zohar*, his suggestion about authorship places him as one of the early fathers of the idea that a circle of kabbalists collectively composed the *Zohar*.

> If we raise the question whether Moses ben Shem-Tob de León composed the *Zohar*, as reported in *Sefer Yuḥasin* (Constantinople), we have to reduce the question to whether he was one of the compilers of the zoharic collection, or its main originator (*Haupturheber*). And this [the latter], we can positively affirm! Because not only can almost the entire content of *Sefer ha-Mishqal* be found in the *Zohar* but also word for word! We have presented the most important parallels according to sections, and ask the reader to look up the *Zohar* passages that we have marked according to the Amsterdam edition of the Zohar, and to compare them to citations from Moses de León's work [*Sefer ha-Mishqal*] to convince themselves that they are identical.[94]

The close parallels to *Sefer ha-Mishqal* compelled Jellinek to conclude that de León should be considered the main originator ('*haupturheber*'), a concept close to that of an author or producer of the literary product, but he stops short of identifying him as the sole author, apparently due to the lack of affinity found in other sections. If he therefore thought that other authors wrote these other parts, without mentioning an editor of the project as a whole, it might not be too generous a reading of Jellinek to suggest that he did not consider the work to be a single, edited work. Note also his term '*Sohar*-Sammlung', the zoharic collection!

Christian David Ginsburg

In 1863, Christian David Ginsburg, best known for his study of the Masorah, published a small but very detailed volume entitled *The Kabbalah: Its*

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[94] Adolph Jellinek, *Moses ben Schem-Tob de Leon und sein Verhältnis zum Sohar: Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung über die Entstehung des Sohar*, Leipzig 1851, p. 23: 'Wenn wir nun die Frage aufwerfen, ob Moses ben Schem-Tob de Leon Verfasser des Sohar sei, wie dies im Berichte des Konstant. Juchasin erzählt wird; so haben wir sie darauf zu reduciren, ob er Antheil an der *Sohar*-Sammlung habe, oder ob er der Haupturheber derselben sei. Und dies können wir bejahen! Denn fast sein ganzes Sefer ha-Mischkal findet sich nicht bloß dem Inhalte nach, sondern beinahe wörtlich im *Sohar* wieder!! Wir geben hier die wichtigsten Parallelen nach bestimmten Rubriken geordnet, und ersuchen der Leser, die von uns bezeichneten Soharstellen nachzuschlagen (nach der Amsterd. Edition), sie mit den Citaten aus Moses de Leon's Schrift zu vergleichen, um sich selbst von der Identität zu überzeugen'.

Doctrines, Development and Literature.[95] Scholem ignored this volume, as he did much of the scholarship that preceded him. Scholem's intent was surely to establish the academic study of Kabbalah within the university at a level leagues ahead of anything the came before him, and indeed he did so. When looking back, however, at the efforts of his predecessors on questions that interest us today, such as the question at hand, we see that Ginsburg contributed to an appreciation of the literary composition of the *Zohar*. Indeed, nearly a century before the publication of Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Ginsburg described the literary components of the *Zohar*. Following his overview of the main concepts of the Kabbalah, Ginsburg describes two books, 'The Book of Creation' and 'The Book Sohar'. He writes:

> Before we enter into an examination concerning the date and authorship of this renowned code of the kabbalistic doctrines, it will be necessary to describe the component parts of the *Sohar*. It seems the proper *Sohar*, which is a commentary on the five Books of Moses, according to the division into Sabbaitic sections, was originally called מדרש יהי אור the *Midrash of Exposition, Let there be Light*, from the words in Gen. 1, 4; because the real Midrash begins with the exposition of this verse. The name *Sohar* (זוהר), i.e. Light, Splendor, was given to it afterwards, either because this document begins with the theme light, or because the word *Sohar* frequently occurs on the first page. It is referred to by the name of the *Book Sohar* (ספר הזוהר) in the component parts of the treatise itself. (Comp. *The Faithful Shephard, Sohar*, iii, 153b.) The *Sohar* is also called Midrash of R. Simon b. Jochai (מדרש של ר׳ שצעון בן יוחאי), because this Rabbi is its reputed author. Interspersed throughout the *Sohar*, either as parts of the text with special titles, or in separate columns with distinct superscriptions, are the following dissertations, which we detail according to the order of the pages on which they respectively commence.[96]

The passage offers an early and important inventory of the 'component parts' of the printed *Zohar*, which deconstructs any impression of an organic whole that might have been reproduced and presented in the printed format. The list of units which follows. *1. Tosephta and Mathanithan; 2. Hechalot; 3. Sithre Torah; 4. Midrash ha-Neelam; 5. Raja Mehemna; 6. Raze Derazim 7. Saba Demishpatim; 8. Siphra Detzniutha; 9. Idra Rabba; 10. Januka; 11. Idra Suta.* The list was apparently copied and expanded upon by later scholars. Ginsburg

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[95] London 1863; reprinted in 1955 and again with *The Essenes*, London 1955, 1956. My citations follow the 1956 edition.

[96] p. 160.

concludes: 'Hence the Sohar is more a collection of homilies or rhapsodies on kabbalistic subjects than treatises on the Kabbalah. It is for this reason that it became the treasury of the Kabbalah to the followers of this theosophy. Its diversity became its charm'.[97]

Heinrich Graetz

Much has been written about Graetz's ideologically based review of the composition of the *Zohar*, mainly in terms of the corrective offered by Gershom Scholem in arguing for the role of Moses de León as the sole author of the *Zohar* and the periodization of de León's known works in relation to the zoharic composition, dissemination and citation.[98] Later scholarship, from Tishby to Liebes, would open up these questions again, particularly the nature of citations, in order to destabilize Scholem's iron-clad conclusion concerning the relationship between the book and its author, with an eye toward describing the various authors who contributed to the book ultimately authored (and edited) by de León. My return to Graetz's text emerges from a different interest than found in previous scholarship, namely the literary character of the documents described by this highly influential historian of the nineteenth century. As we shall see, despite Graetz's obvious abandon in maligning de León as a self-interested squanderer of money who was motivated by his economic goals to deceive his potential customers, Graetz displayed a more nuanced appreciation of the corpus than some later scholars who lacked his polemical tone.

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[97] p. 166.

[98] Note for example how Graetz reads the 'book' of the *Zohar* as a lens into an evaluation of the personality of its 'author', the *same* method used later by Scholem in a positive valence, demonstrating I believe the strong degree of dialogue and even influence of Graetz on Scholem even if Graetz served as the object of Scholem's polemic and correction to scholarship: 'The *Zohar* glorifies its author excessively. It calls him the holy light, who stands higher than the greatest prophet, Moses, "the faithful shepherd". "I swear by the holy heavens and the holy earth", the *Zohar* makes Simon bar Yochai exclaim, "that I behold now what not other mortal since Moses [who] ascended Sinai for the second time has beheld, aye, even more that he. Moses knew not that his countenance shines". On account of God's love for the writer of the *Zohar*, his generation merited the revelation of truths till then hidden. As long as he who illumines everything lives, the sources of the world are opened and all secrets are disclosed. "Woe to the generation forsaken by Simon bar Yochai". He is almost deified in the *Zohar*'. (Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4, Philadelphia 1894, p. 13).

> There are certainly very few compositions which have exercised so much influence as the *Zohar*, or which can be compared with it in regard to the remarkable nature of its contents. It is a book without beginning and end, of which it is unknown whether the extant portions originally belonged to it, or were added later, or whether at an earlier period more if it was in existence. It consists of three principal parts, with appendices and explanatory comments. The absence of form in this farrago made it possible for certain portions to be imitated. It is so easy and tempting to imitate its wild though sonorous style. Thus the forgery was counterforged. *It is not positively certain whether the Zohar is to be regarded as a running commentary to the Pentateuch, as a theosophical manual, or as a collection of Kabbalistic sermons. And its contents are just as curious, confused and chaotic as its form and external dress.* The *Zohar* with its appendages in no wise develops a Kabbalistic system like Azriel's, neither does it unfold an idea like Abraham Abulafia, but plays with the Kabbalistic forms as with counters – with the En-Sof, with the number of Serifoth, with points and strokes, with vowels, accents, with the names of God and the transposition of their letters, as well as with the Biblical verses and the Agadic sayings – casts them about in eternal repetition, and in this manner produces sheer absurdities. Occasionally it gives a faint suggestion of an idea, but in a trice it evaporates in feverish fancies, or dissolves in childish silliness.[99]

Graetz did not consider the *Zohar* to be a book. In his rationalist disdain for all that the *Zohar* represented, he offered disparaging remarks as to the *Zohar's* lack of stylistic consistency and literary formlessness, leading him to believe that it was no more that a 'collection of sermons'. Graetz's later remarks reflect on what he calls 'the reception of the *Zohar*', by which he attempts to show how 'a new text-book of religion was by stealth introduced into Judaism'.[100]

Simon Dubnow

Seemingly more careful in his remarks, Simon Dubnow did not claim that de León was the author of the *Zohar*. He began by positioning the *Zohar* in Spain and hinted that its formal identity as a work circulated under its celebrated title was a later invention: 'At the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries, copies of a secretive commentary to the Pentateuch, which later became known as the *Zohar* ("Brightness"), were circulated in the circles of the Spanish Kabbalists. The book was in the form of a Midrash, and contained sermons and

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[99] Ibid., p. 14.

[100] Ibid., p. 22.

discourses of Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai and other *Tannaim* of the 2nd century'.[101] In a most curious comment, Dubnow waivered between calling de León the author or the disseminator of the *Zohar*: 'Rabbi Moses ben Shem Ṭov de León (circa 1250-1305), the kabbalist of Castile, who was destined to make the *Zohar* the holy script of the Kabbala, more than anyone else made use of these manuscripts'.[102] These citations from Dubnow's book are of tremendous interest as they foreshadow Tishby and Liebes' challenge to Scholem's appreciation of de León's authorship. Take for example the following comment, which speaks directly to the issue of whether de León's cited from a completed work of the *Zohar* in his writings: 'Moses de León often quoted unknown midrashim in the following secretive form: "I found in one midrash", "in a Jerusalem midrash", "I saw in the secrets of the Torah", "I will reveal a great secret to you"'. The quotations are primarily from the *Zohar* translated into Hebrew'.[103]

Similar to Graetz, Dubnow wrestled with the continuum he believed to exist between the personality of de León and the ideas contained in the literary entity of the *Zohar*. While retreating from both extremes of an 'author', who is the producer, and responsible agent of the ideas contained in a uniform 'book', Dubnow attempted to depict a more complex relationship between de León and the sources he received, reworked and produced:

> It is not known whether Moses de Leon actually believed in what he said, or merely tried to persuade others that he attained this concealed substance of the Torah through secret writings that he had obtained; at any rate, he utilized them as far as possible. He not only included many "ancient" manuscripts in his own compositions – which he not only copied, but also edited – he also incorporated his own ideas within them.
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> Such was the way in which the *Zohar* was fashioned. Like other books of this sort, it was a product of the collective work of unknown mystics of former times, as well as of Kabbalists of the 13th century, and at the end of that century, Moses de Leon assembled their ideas in a book.
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> In the *Zohar* itself, it is impossible to ascertain that later authors had participated in it. They left no trace in the text. The tanna Simeon ben Yohai appears as the chief spokesman, and is presented in the bright light of a second

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[101] Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews: From the Later Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, volume 3, New York, London 1969, p. 129.

[102] Ibid., p. 129.

[103] Ibid., pp. 129-130.

> Moses, to whom the angel Matutrun revealed all the secrets of the Torah. "I declare in the name of the high heavens and of the holy earth," the seer announces solemnly, "that I see now such things which no mortal was deemed worthy to see, since Moses ascended Mount Sinai for the second time..."
>
> The *Zohar* consists of several books, evidently written at various times, and coordinated mechanically only in a later editing. The fundamental trait of this vast collection consists of sermons on passages of the Torah, arranged in the order of the fifty-two 'portions' of the year, as they were customarily read in the synagogues. This basic text contains fragments of other books, which bear the secretive titles: *Idra Rabba* ('Larger Assembly'), *Idra Zuta* ('Smaller Assembly'), *Sifra di-Tzeniuta* ('Book of Mysteries'), *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* ('The Hidden Midrash'), *Raaya Mehemana* ('The Faithful Shepherd'), and so on.[104]

In the concluding paragraph, Dubnow deconstructed the various literary units of the volume(s) printed as the *Book of the Zohar*, indicating that it is comprised of books, and includes sermons, as if to suggest that they might have originally been produced over a long period of time and assembled in the literary frame of a commentary to the Torah, after having been delivered or created in some social context in accordance with the Jewish calendar. These literary units, whether produced as such or conformed to this convention by the decision of the author(s), is joined in his view by 'books' of a different character which he names. Dubnow has thus contributed another level to the appreciation of the literary complexity of the *Zohar* as a collection.

In the concluding lines and footnote to this chapter of his major work, Dubnow responded to Graetz, and in clear disagreement with him, layered the sources that predate de León, the new product formed by de León as compiler and author and further identifies the editorial hand of the printers in sixteenth-century Italy who attempted to preserve the 'original tone' of the texts they published.

> At that time [in the sixteenth century], *Zohar* was first printed in Italy. Each participant contributed his share to this compilation, conforming to the original tone. However, the editing of Moses de Leon determined its character.[105] [...]
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> In the question of whether Moses de Leon was the author or only the compiler and editor of the *Zohar*, we are inclined to accept the latter view. The original and, partly, beautiful apocalyptic style of the *Zohar* – if one also bears in mind its Aramaic language along with the system of the old midrashim –

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[104] Ibid., pp. 130-131.

[105] Ibid., p. 133.

> testifies to the fact that the chief contents of the book belong to the East, not to the West. It seems plausible that upon his arrival in Palestine in 1267, Ramban, who was somewhat of a Kabbalist, took to assembling copies of old midrashim, and transmitting them to Spain. The same could have been done by Abraham Abulafia in the course of his wanderings through the world. Copies of those fragments circulated for a while in the circles of the 'hallowed'. And later, Moses de Leon assembled and edited them in the language of the originals – in Aramaic – at the same time interposing ideas of the new Kabbala into the texts. All materials that Graetz gathered in the Supplement XII, in the VIIth volume of his History, are not sufficient to accuse Moses de Leon of forgery; they only prove that he applied in this instance the usual procedures of the pseudo-epigraphic.[106]

In all, Dubnow recognized that Graetz accused de León too sharply of being a forger and used the literary form as a foil to mitigate this impression in scholarship. In another volume, Dubnow summarized his position simply by calling Moses de León 'the compiler of the *Zohar*'.[107]

Ernst Müller

More popular, or popularizing, treatments of the *Zohar* in the beginning of the century include the work of Ernst Müller, who anthologized zoharic passages in German translation. His appraisal of the literary structure of the *Zohar* points to a lack of order, as he names its constituent parts and compares it to the *Zohar*, apparently as a redacted document of various traditions.

> The Arrangement, Editions and Commentaries [of the *Zohar*]
> The Names of the Books
>
> The *Zohar* is a work that defies uniformity much like the Talmud. It is comprised of the following parts: the actual Zohar, which in form serves as a running commentary to the Pentateuch; some older parts with mysterious titles: *Idra Rabba* (the large meeting), *Idra Zuta* (the small meeting) and *Sifra de-Seniuta* (Book of the Secret) and in the commonly found editions of the *Zohar* they are disconnected. Furthermore, *Sefer ha-Hekhalot* (Book of the Heavenly Palaces) and the *Zohar* piece to the Song of Songs, to Ruth and to the other scrolls, including different expansions and explanations, like the

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[106] Ibid., p. 133 n.10.

[107] Simon Dubnow, *Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History*, from the Authorised German Translation, London 1903, p. 114

Tikkunim (Supplement), *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* (the concealed *Midrasch*), *Ra'aya Mehemna* (the faithful shepherd) and *Sitre Torah*.[108]

Moses Gaster

As detailed by Moshe Idel in a study on Moses Gaster's comments on the *Zohar*,[109] Gaster considered the *Zohar* to be a collection. Much of what was presented by Idel from Gaster's work demonstrates that Gaster was impressed by the multiple forms of literary expression, indicating various documents and authors, and considered, at most, that Moses de León 'either pieced some of these treatises together or copied them from older MSS in a haphazard manner'.[110] Although not stated by him, the importance of Idel's review is to demonstrate the early history of *Zohar* scholarship, observations and theories that went unnoticed in later studies, which depart from Scholem's single-author thesis and foreshadow Liebes' suggestion that de León served as the head of a zoharic circle. I wish to return to Gaster's comments and present more fully, and for the first time, passages that point to his appreciation of the literary form of the *Zohar*. For example:

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[108] Ernst Müller, *Die Sohar und Seine Lehre: Einleitung in die Gedankenwelt der Kabbalah*, Wein-Berlin 1920/1932, p. 8: 'Gliederung, *Ausgaben* und Kommentare. / Der Name des Buches. / Das Soharwerk stellt sich ebensowenig wie der Talmud, als einheitliches Buch dar. Es zerfällt vielmehr in folgende Hauptteile: den eigentlichen „Sohar", der die äußere Form eines fortlaufenden, nach den Wochenabschnitten gegliederten Pentateuchkommentars trägt; einige uralte Partien, welche die geheimnisvollen Titel führen: Idra raba (die große Versammlung), Idra suta (die kleine Versammlung) und Sifra di-Zeniutha (Buch des Geheimnisses) und in den üblichen Ausgaben einzelnen Soharabschnitten angeschlossen sind; ferner das Sefer Hechaloth (Buch der himmlischen Paläste) und Soharstücke zum Hohen Liede, zu den Büchern Ruth und Klagelieder, sodann verschiedene Erweiterungen und Erläuterungen, wie die Tikkunim (Ergänzungen), Midrasch ha-neelam (der verborgene Midrosch), Ra'aja Mehimna (der treue Hirte) und Sithre-Thorah (Geheimnisse der Lehre)'.

[109] Moshe Idel, 'Moses Gaster on Jewish Mysticism and the *Zohar*', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. Ronit Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 111-127 [Hebrew]. See also the rich footnote in his monograph, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, New York 2007, p. 487 n. 154.

[110] Ibid., p. 120 n.37 citing from *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, New York 1921, vol. 12, pp. 858-859.

> The character of the book alone shows that it is more of a compilation from various sources than the work of one man. The book is a kind of Commentary to the Pentateuch, with many excursions into totally different subjects. Fragments of various other similar books are interspersed throughout the *Zohar*, bearing each a distinct title. There are further similar commentaries to Ruth and the Song of Songs; and a mass of additional unclassified matter which is sometimes printed separately under the title of *Zohar Hadash*'.[111]

Gaster noted the divergence in style and content across the various parts of the compilation published as the Zohar. In the entry he wrote for the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1921) he stated his literary conclusions more sharply. He complains about the misconceptions of scholarship, based on their acceptance of the organization of disparate sources according to the printed format!

> But the whole investigation was vitiated by the fact that it rested exclusively on the printed text, which as will be shown, was of a composite character. Even in this form the *Zohar* is only a portion of a much larger mystical literature which has been preserved in part to this very day under various names. The relation of these independent treatises and works to the larger compilation commonly known as the *Zohar* has yet been investigated, and thus the true character of the *Zohar* has remained obscure, and the legendary origin which ascribes it to an almost unknown scholar of the 13th cent. Has most uncritically been accepted. It is utterly impossible to conceive that such a vast literature, containing elements of the most diverse and often contradictory character should be the work of a single man. It is much more probable that the real *Zohar* was only one out of many treatises of a similar kind, which by fortunate accident had come into the hands of a diligent scribe, who could easily make copies of it and profit by the sale.[112]

And further on in the same entry he lists the texts in the printed editions to arrive at particularly literary conclusions about the nature of the *Zohar* and so castigates scholars for ignoring the facts:

> The printers, however, endeavoured to make it clear that the book published by them was a compilation of various treatises pieced together by them, for they

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[111] Ibid., p. 119 n. 32 citing from Moses Gaster, *Report of the Year from 1st Tamuz, 5653 (1893) to 20th Sivan, 5654, Together with 'The Origin of the Kabbalah, Judith Montefiore College'*, Ramsgate 1894, p. 26. Idel cited only the first part of this passage.

[112] Idem, 'Zohar', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 858.

stated on the title-page that in addition to the *Sepher ha-Zohar*, they had included in this publication the following: *Sithrei Torah* (Mysteries of the Zohar); *Midrash hane'lam* (The Hidden Midrash), *Tosefta* (additions to some sections), *Ra'ya Mehemna* ('Pastor fides', The True Shepherd') – thus far in the Mantua edition, and in the Cremona edition the following are also added: The *Bahir*, *Midrash Ruth*, *Midrash Hazita* (on Songs), the section *Ta Ḥazi* ('Come and Behold'), *Hekhalot* ('The Halls of Heaven and Hell'), and again other additions, such as *Pikkudin* ('Ordinances'). *This fact, hitherto entirely ignored, is, of decisive importance for the history of the Zohar, inasmuch as it proves that in the very first editions both of Mantua and of Cremona we have only a compilation before us, and not a homogeneous work. All the investigators who have taken the Zohar to be a homogeneous compilation, the skillful forgery of an ingenious author, have been have been led completely astray.*

Moreover, no notice was taken by the scholars of the other books belonging to the same cycle. Nor have the two editions, which appeared almost simultaneously, been compared – the folio edition of Cremona (1558), which already contains various texts printed sided by side, and the other edition at Mantua (1558-60) with the introduction by Rabbi Isaac de Lattes, in three quarto volumes, which has since become the authorized edition, all subsequent editions being faithful reprints page for page of this edition. [...]

In addition it may now be mentioned that the present writer possesses separate MSS of those writings which have been incorporated in the *Zohar*, such as *Sitre Torah* and fragments of *Ra'ya Mehemna*, *all corroborating the view that the book in its printed form is a compilation made in modern times of older material.*[113]

In another study, Gaster wrote at length about his conception of the *Zohar*, here in sharp and clear terms about its literary construction.

Before proceeding further, a word must now be said about the Book Zohar. The current ideas about that book are to my mind absolutely erroneous. Those who have studied the book have, I am afraid, not even taken the trouble to read the full title-page. It is ascribed to a certain Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai, a sage who lived in the Galilee, in the second century, and it was not difficult for anyone reading the book to point out a large number of anachronisms. It was therefore alleged that the book was a spurious writing fabricated by a certain Moses de Leon in Spain at the end of the XIIIth century. The whole Book, which constitutes a huge volume, was treated as a unity and although many portions

[113] Ibid., p. 860, emphasis added.

> have separate titles, they were still considered as forming part and parcel of the original composition.[114]

Before turning to the another passage, it should be said that Gaster's comments have been eclipsed by modern scholarship, such that Scholem's and Tishby's argumentation covered over what should today seem a very obvious and straight-forward view of the textual data of the zoharic writings. Regarding the ideas that can be understood and presented from this corpus, he writes shortly thereafter:

> It is, therefore, an idle attempt on the part of scholars to formulate a mystical system of the Zohar. There are in that Book not one but many such systems standing side by side, sometimes supplementing one another and sometimes contradicting one another. Every mystical school of thought is represented in one part or another of that book.[115]

Gaster employs the term book critically, even ironically, pointing out that the book that was published contains various documents that should not be constructed as a single work.

Joshua Abelson

Joshua Abelson's 1913 monograph, *Jewish Mysticism*, was an early step forward in the critical appreciation of the history of ideas and literature of Jewish mysticism. In the chapter on the *Zohar* he wrote, 'that it could not possibly be the production of a single author or a single period of history'.[116] Abelson openly criticized the purported literary form of the *Zohar* as a commentary to the *Zohar*, claiming that the juxtaposition of certain passages was 'deplorable'.[117]

In 1931, the first volume of Maurice Simon's translation of the *Zohar* appeared with an introduction by J. Abelson. He described the *Zohar's* form

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[114] Moses Gaster, 'A Gnostic Fragment from the *Zohar*: The Resurrections of the Dead', *The Quest* 14 (1923), pp. 452-469; reprinted in idem, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*, New York 1971, pp. 369-386. The citation is from p. 458 [375].

[115] Ibidem. This passage was discusse by Idel in his book, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors*, p. 226, where he further offers similar and relevant insights into Heschel's view of the *Zohar*.

[116] *Jewish Mysticism*, London 1913, p. 118.

[117] Ibid., p. 123.

according to the printed format, calling it a 'Commentary on the Pentateuch' composed in Aramaic and Hebrew. He recalled R. Isaac of Acre's testimony, but nevertheless rejected the single-author theory that attributes the *Zohar* to the hand of Moses de León based on his appreciation of the multi-faceted nature of the text. Dismissing both the traditional ascription to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and the more historically sensitive attribution to de León, he wrote:

> But neither of these views can hold water in the light of these faces as we know them. No student of the *Zohar*, indeed no competent assessor of literature generally, can believe that it ever could have emanated from the brain of one man. To call it a book is to misname it. It is a literature – a literature of immense variety and compass. It embraces so many diverse themes, it holds within its folds such a number of views and doctrines which are often mutually irreconcilable, that it cannot possibly be the production of one individual, however gifted. And to credit a Rabbi of the second century with the authorship of a book which describes the sayings and doings of men who lived long after his time, is to adopt a standpoint which no one in these times will seriously countenance.
>
> The *Zohar* is a congeries of treaties, texts, extracts or fragments of texts, belonging to different periods, but all resembling one another in their method of mystical interpretation of the Torah as well as in the baffling anonymity in which they are shrouded. The ways in which these component parts are pieced together strikes one as arbitrary in the extreme. They often appear to bear little or no relation to that which precedes or follows. The arrangement is all so destitute of design that it might have been done by the printers and publishers of the first edition whenever they happened to come across some anonymous fragments which, in their unlearned opinion, could be suitably interpolated at a certain point in the main text.
>
> From a survey of the whole subject, one is drawn irresistibly to the conclusion that the *Zohar*, so far from being a homogeneous work, is a compilation of a mass of material drawn from many strata of Jewish and non-Jewish mystical thought and covering numerous centuries.[118]

Traditional Polemics: Revision and Re-Presentation

A basic assumption of the present review of textual criticism of the *Zohar* has been that modern academic methods grew out of the discussions that developed

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[118] Idem, *The Zohar*, London 1931, vol. 1, pp. x-xi. The first couple lines were quoted by Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 44 n. 1.

in the printed dialogues about this literature in the writings of the kabbalists. The fact that polemics and an ideologically motivated awareness of tensions between texts, traditions, and chronologies produced a greater sophistication of textual criticism should not detract from our appreciating the shared ground between these communities of text scholars. The lengthy introduction in Isaiah Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar* provided a rich review and typology of criticism about the *Zohar*. Boaz Huss' *Like the Radiance of the Sky,* has recently complemented this classic with a different set of questions and interests, mustering countless new sources to fill in the history of its reception in various communities of readers. The present review has sought to reorient the field in destabilizing the nature of the *Zohar* as a book and offer a history of literary appraisals that were not necessarily focused on the question of authorship. In transitioning from early modern and traditional critiques to those written by university scholars an admittedly artificial division is created since some methodologies are shared.

One such comment by Hillel Zeitlin will illustrate this overlap. In his 1920 article, 'An Introduction to the book "Zohar"', Zeitlin argued for the authenticity of the Zohar as an ancient literary text by showing that De León could not have been its author. Citing much of the known history of texts and criticism including Jacob Emden, who divided the various literary sections of the zoharic corpus into three books, Zeitlin wrote about 'the view[s] of modern criticism' followed by a section on whether de León composed the main work of the *Zohar* [*'iqqar ṭofes ha-zohar*]. Here, Zeitlin reframed the arguments offered by David Luria in his small volume, *On the Antiquity of the Book of the Zohar*,[119] and wrote:

> The second element [mentioned] by Luria is the works of Rabbi Moshe de León and the book of 'the Zohar'. He cites many places within the works of Rabbi Moses de León which are the *complete opposite* of what is written and repeated many times in the book of 'the *Zohar*', and moreover, that many times Rabbi Moses de León cites passages of 'the Zohar' and *misses the basic meaning of the text* [*ṭa'a be-pᵉshaṭ ha-devarim*]. If Rabbi Moses de León composed the main work of the *Zohar* [*'iqqar ṭofes ha-zohar*], how could he have contradicted his own words from one book to the other to such a great extent? Graetz himself commented on the tendency of Rabbi Moses de León to *repeat himself across his various books, and without any changes,* and why he wrote in the book of

[119] Koningsberg 1856; Warsaw 1887 [Hebrew].

> 'the Zohar', especially, he would write the *opposite* of what he wrote in other books.[120]

What is interesting here is that this textual observation, based upon a comparison of two bodies of literature forms the basis of criticism sparked in academic studies by Tishby, and was developed into a new theory about the composition of the *Zohar* by a circle in Yehuda Liebes' celebrated article. The question is not one of influence but the similar conclusions reached by textual scholars of vastly different orientations.

From 'The Book and its Author' to the 'Circle of the Zohar': Academic Research From Gershom Scholem through Present Times

The following history of academic scholarship about the *Zohar* in the twentieth century is an opportunity for reflection. Not only is an assessment being made of the past, but it offers the conditions for considering the more basic assumptions constructing the discourse that has often limited the possibilities of inquiry. The review is presented for the most part in chronological order of scholarly activity and publication history of the scholars described, even though some scholars have published a number of studies over a series of decades, which does not permit for a linear history. Moreover, toward the end of this review, covering studies of the last decade, the reader will note that this critical engagement falls back on itself, as some studies were composed, published, and re-published in later versions after the publication of the early version of this chapter appeared as an article in both Hebrew and English. The overwhelming impression remains that since the work of Scholem, scholarship has toyed with variations of the question of who wrote the *Zohar*, becoming increasingly aware that tensions and dissonance exist between a one-to-one correspondence between Scholem's construct of 'the book and its author'. As we shall see, this pressure was relieved by allowing for multiple voices in its authorship, preserving the uniformity of the book as the intentioned and collective result of the literary effort(s).

Here, I would like to speculate on the unspoken cultural agendas that

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[120] Hillel Zeitlin, 'Introduction to the Book of "the *Zohar*"', *Ha-Tequfa* 6 (1920), p. 330, *emphasis in the original*. For a fuller discussion of Zeitlin's relationship to the *Zohar* and a comparison between Zeitlin and Scholem, see Jonatan Meir, 'Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*: The History of a Translation and Commentary Project', *Kabbalah* 10 (2004), pp. 119-158 [Hebrew], see esp. pp. 135-136 n. 68.

determined the nature of this discourse. In the beginning of the twentieth century, and one could argue that this is true no less today, a century later, Kabbalah scholarship was pained to assert itself as distinct from the traditional character of its practitioners. No issue was more charged and representative of the difference in the methodologies and aims of traditional engagements with the texts and those of the academy than the identification of the *Zohar* as a pseudepigraphic document which in turn would threaten the periodization of kabbalistic literature and break off Kabbalah from its roots in early rabbinic Palestine. Authorship was, and remains, the crux of a cultural debate that is destabilizing to the traditional community no less than it is a defining factor of identity for the academic community. Note for example the response, and in fact, the polemic, on this subject published by Menahem Kasher, which opens with a discussion of Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.[121] In the academy, debate continues on the extent and nature of the participation in the 'Zoharic Circle' that composed the *Zohar* according to a basic acceptance of Liebes' theory of multiple authorship of the book of the *Zohar*. Of great interest here is the cultural meaning offered by the execution of Huss' study in the beginning of the twenty-first century and the conscious break from the methods of the previous generations.

Gershom Scholem

Gershom Scholem's early study on the *Zohar* oriented future academic research on the question of 'Did R. Moses de León compose the *Zohar*?[122] Scholem

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[121] Menaḥem Kasher, '*Ha-Zohar*', *Sinai* 50 (1958), pp. 40-56 [Hebrew]. See further Shmuel Yudaiqon, *Quntres Meqor ha-Zohar*, Bnei Beraq 1996 which includes appendices that reproduce Kasher's article as well as Reuven Margolioth's 'Inquiries of Zoharic Criticism based on Its Knowledge of the Land of Israel', *Sinai* 9 (1941-1942), pp. 237-240 [Hebrew], which in turn is a response to Scholem's similarly titled article, 'Questions and Criticism about the *Zohar* based on its Knowledge of the Land of Israel', *Meassef Zion* 1 (1925), pp. 40-55 [Hebrew]. (See also the series of articles by Margolioth, 'Maimonides and the *Zohar*', *Sinai* 32 (1952-1953), pp. 263-274; 33 (1953), pp. 9-15, 128-135, 219-224, 349-354; 34 (1953-1954), pp. 227-230, 386-395 [Hebrew]. The main part of Yudaiqon's small volume contains Tishby's review of the history of criticism to the *Zohar* from his *Mishnat ha-Zohar*. The recent printing of these items together demonstrates the persisting sensitivity of the issue as the focus of debate between the two approaches.

[122] See Isaiah Tishby, 'Gershom Scholem's Contribution to the Study of the *Zohar*',

developed ideas and questions that had been considered in the past two or three centuries of (mostly ideologically based) criticism. Nevertheless, there can no doubt that the studies published in recent decades continue to engage Scholem's research in a critical dialogue. This context does not permit a full discussion of his various conclusions on the *Zohar*. Here, I wish to focus on his methodological assumptions and to highlight the questions he chose to ask in his studies on the *Zohar*. My aim is that such an inquiry will offer the opportunity to consider the problematics of literary assumptions regarding the *Zohar* and pave the way to a fresh approach.

Scholem's academic career and research agenda began with his doctoral thesis on the *Book Bahir*, completed in 1923. Scholem's turn to the *Zohar* in the following years highly suggests his interest in the 'origins' of kabbalistic literature as a historical phenomenon. Scholem was clearly fascinated with the phenomenon of pseudepigraphic compositions. With a high degree of intellectual honesty and few suppositions, Scholem pondered the origin(s) of medieval esoteric traditions in the 'Orient', meaning that the sources originating in the Land of Israel and Babylonia in rabbinic times reached the Jewish esotericists of medieval Europe. While preserving methodological standards, Scholem had a vested interest in connecting European Kabbalah to earlier phenomena in the Orient. In the case of the *Bahir*, he argued that an early recension of the *Bahir* emerged from the East and was preserved in medieval Germany under the name 'The Great Secret' (*Sod ha-Gadol*), further equated by him with *Raza Rabba*, the magical worked mentioned by title only by a ninth-century Karaite. Even though this claim of the early dating of the *Bahir* proved to be spurious, due to an enthusiastic equation of similar titles alone, the attempt illustrates the complexities of Scholem's methodology in describing the literary innovations of medieval Jewish esotericism alongside its roots in antiquity.[123] To be sure, Scholem concluded that ancient sources from the Orient arrived in Europe, and that some pre-theosophic recensions of the *Bahir* that were edited by Jewish esotericists in Ashkenaz were eventually lost with the emergence and dominance of the developing Kabbalah – as indicated

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Gershom Scholem, the Man and His Work, Albany 1994, pp. 40-55.

[123] In a recent study Joseph Dan has argued for a single author of the *Book Bahir*. See Dan, 'Gershom Scholem and the Riddle of the *Book Bahir*', *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences* 9:4 (2008), pp. 87-120 [Hebrew]. See his earlier comments in Dan, *On Sanctity: Religion, Morality and mysticism in Judaism and Other Religions*, Jerusalem 1998, p. 222 [Hebrew].

by the highly important quotations that survived in the works of the German Pietists, R. Efraim bar Shimshon and R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan. Nevertheless, Scholem translated the text of the *Book Bahir* into German according to Ms. Munich. His translation was based on an unpublished transcription, which included 'corrections' that Scholem introduced into an eclectic rendering of the various witnesses and citations of the work by later kabbalists in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Scholem thus restored the Urtext of the *Bahir*, in the sense of the original theosophic edition that circulated amongst the early kabbalists. Of course, following the methodology current in modern textual scholarship, and the basic assumptions of reception history, no claims can be made for the existence of a single, ideal version that can or should be restored. Rather, such methodologies seek to identify and highlight the differences between the text in the history of its transmission and adaptation within the communities of readers.

Scholem attempted to place the final theosophic formulation and initial appearance of the *Bahir* amongst the earliest known social circle of kabbalists in Provence. In his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem charted the history of the text and its ideas according to his appreciation of social history, insisting on their necessary integration. His research outlines the linear progression of the major circles and trends along with the literature they produced – from the *Bahir* to the Provençal kabbalists and their students in Gerona, and on to Castile where the *Zohar* was composed. Scholem's work of the 1920s on R. Isaac and R. Jacob ha-Kohen of Castile served as a historical anchor for appreciating the *Zohar* as a literary creation produced in late thirteenth-century Castile. Scholem identified in the works of Isaac's a propensity to mention pseudepigraphic sources, and develop myths that display a close affinity with the *Zohar*. Here too, Scholem tried to group together kabbalists from the same time and place in order to identify and characterize kabbalistic 'circles', in their prior example naming the Kohen Brothers, the 'gnostic circle'. In order to achieve this uniform presentation Scholem enthusiastically understood the works of R. Jacob ha-Kohen through the interpretive lenses of the theosophic myths found in the works of his brother, R. Isaac ha-Kohen, thereby eclipsing the unique character of R. Jacob's thought.[124]

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[124] See Daniel Abrams, 'The Book of Illumination'; idem, 'Traces of the Lost *Commentary to the Book of Creation* by R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen: An Edition of a Commentary to the Book of Creation Based upon the Earliest Kabbalistic Manuscripts', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 311-342 [Hebrew].

In the final analysis, Scholem concluded that R. Moses de León was the sole author of the *Zohar*, thereby declaring that a single literary work was produced, known as the *Book of the Zohar*. Scholem devoted the fifth lecture of *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* to the '*Book of the Zohar* and its Author'.[125] A reconsideration of his statements will clarify, I trust, the modernist assumptions Scholem employed in evaluating the phenomenon of *Zohar*. From the following passage, it is clear that Scholem worked with a particular conception of the individual as a unique personality who ascribes to a specific worldview that is brought to bear in the expression of the author's intention.

> Everything goes to suggest that when writing the *Zohar* his [the author's] primary object was simply to find a congenial expression for is thought. His mind was completely immersed in the world of Kabbalistic thought, but the manner in which he deals with the subject bears the imprint of his own personality, much as he tried to obscure the personal aspect.[126]

Scholem poured over a book in order to uncover the author's inner world and learn about the personality of the author, his history, and additional writings in order to understand the work under discussion. As we shall see in the final section of the present study, these are modernist assumptions of the relationship between an author and his work, which presume the existence of both. To be sure, Scholem's methodology is quite complex and he considered other possibilities, even if he did so within this modernist framework. For example, he wrote:

> I have spoken of an 'author' of the *Zohar* and therefore assumed his existence, but we must now turn to the question whether there ever was a single author. On this subject it is still possible to hear widely divergent views. Was there one author or were there several? Was the *Zohar* the work of many generations, or at any rate a compilation from more than one author, rather than the work of one man. Do its several parts, of which we shall presently hear more, correspond to different strata or periods? In short we have to face the crucial questions of 'higher criticism'.[127]

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[125] For a modern appraisal of the complementary chapter of *Major Trends* on the *Zohar* as a theological appraisal see Moshe Idel, 'On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship', *Religious Apologetics Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Y. Schwartz, V. Krech, Tübingen 2004, pp. 152-157.

[126] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1956, p.15.

[127] Ibid., pp. 158-159.

Even though Scholem eventually arrived at the conclusion that there is but one author to the *Zohar* he considered the possibility that various authors composed the different parts of the *Zohar*. This is a well-known fact in the history of Scholem's research and anyone perusing his early works will readily become familiar with his voiced hesitations. Nevertheless, Scholem still maintained that the identities of the authors of these works could be uncovered. In other works, Scholem assumed the consolidation of the identity of the subject who composes a document of a certain character. We can thus appreciate the role accorded to pseudepigraphy in Scholem's analysis.

> The *Zohar* is written in pseudepigraphic form, almost, one might say, in the form of a mystical novel. In itself, this is not a new departure in style, for the pseudepigraphic form had been employed by many previous writers, including Kabbalists. Already the authors of the *Book Bahir* made use of the device and spoke through the mouths of older authorities – some of them mere names of fiction, such as Rabbi Amora or Rabbi Rehumai.[128]

Authorial intent is cast by him within the larger framework of the query to identify the self-understanding of the author who assumes the literary role of the historical personality in the Tannaitic period or, with distance, preserves his self-understanding as a kabbalist writing in the thirteenth century. Scholem was thus working within a dualistic, and possibly dialectic, relationship between two literary personalities responsible for the authorial intent and production of the work. Before turning to the scholarship published since Scholem's initial work, it is important to note that Scholem was the first to consider the five printed volumes of zoharic texts to be a 'literature'. In his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem enumerated the 'major components' of the 'the zoharic literature', a claim often attributed to Tishby or later scholarship. Scholem remarks that 'these are the main components of the *Zohar*, i.e. all except a few brief texts of little importance and some "forged" parts, imitations of the main works, written at a much later time and only partly incorporated into the printed editions'. Scholem sectioned off the last three as belonging to a different author, so that he could call the first eighteen 'the real Zohar'.

While the change in Scholem's position in his article 'Did R. Moses de León Compose the Zohar?' and his extensive treatment in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* are well known, a major question still remains whether there were

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[128] Ibid., p. 157.

later shifts in his position, which might mark the beginning of criticism that resulted in later movement on the status of the 'book and its author'. Note for example the comment published in 1944 in a little pamphlet entitled 'Jewish Mysticism and the Kabbalah'.[129] There he wrote about 'R. Moses de León (from the city of Guadalajara), who evidently died in 1305. Moses de León is to be considered the principal author of *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the major literary document of Spanish Kabbalah'.[130] The statement mitigates the earlier claim in *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism* that de León was the sole author, since it offers up the book of the *Zohar* as a literary construct that is greater than de León's contribution. The remark of de León as the principal author is particularly telling in this case as the pamphlet serves as a Hebrew summary of *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism*, published just a few years after the appearance of those lectures in print. Further reappraisals by Scholem of the literary status of the zoharic corpus can be gleaned from a comparison of *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism* to the much later entries he composed for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism	*Kabbalah (Encyclopaedia Judaica)*
1) The bulky part which has no specific title; 2) *Sifra di-Tseniuta*; 3) *Idra Rabba* 4) *Idra Zutta* 5) *Idra di-be-Mashkana*; 6) *Hekhalot* 7) *Raza de-Razin* 8) *Sava* 9) *Yenuqa* 10) *Rav Methitvtha* 11) *Sitrei Torah* 12) *Mathnithin* 13) *Zohar to the Song of Songs* 14) *Kav ha-Middah*; 15) *Sithrei Othioth* 16) Untitled Commentary to Ezekiel's vision of the Merkabah; 17) *Midrash ha-Neelam on the Torah*; 18) *Midrash ha-Neelam on the Book of Ruth*; 19) *Ra'aya Meheimna*; 20)	1) *The Main Part of the Zohar*; 2) *Zohar to the Song of Songs*; 3) *Sifre de-Zeniuta*; 4) *Idra Rabba*; 5) *Idra Zuta*; 6) *Idra ve-Vei Mashkena*; 7) *Heikhalot*; 8) *Raza de-Razin*; 9) *Sava de-Mishpatim*; 10) *Yanuqa*; 11) *Rav Metivta*; 12) *Kav ha-Middah*; 13) *Sitrei Ottiyot*; 14) An interpretation to the vision of the chariot in Ezekiel printed in *Zohar Ḥadash* 37c-41b; 15) *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*; 16) *Sitrei Torah*; 17) *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*; 18) *Midrash ha-Ne'lam to the Book of*

[129] Gershom Scholem, 'Ha-Mistorin ha-Yehudi ve-ha-Qabbalah', Tel Aviv 1944, 47 pages. The essay was reprinted in *Explication and Implications of Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Tel Aviv 1975, [volume 1], pp. 230-261 and in English translation in *his On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, ed. A. Shapira, tr. J. Chipman, Philadelphia-Jerusalem 1997, pp. 121-154.

[130] Hebrew original, p. 25; English translation, p. 137.

Tikkune Zohar; 21) Further additions to the last.[131]

Ruth; 19) The Beginning of the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* to the Song of Songs; 20) *Ta Ḥazei*; 21) *Ra'aya Meheimna*; 22) *Tiqqunei Zohar*; 23) Untitled work on the portion of Yitro; 24) A few tracts printed in *Zohar* (imitations of the *Zohar*).[132]

While the changes are not major, the expanded list does mark some instability in the literary makeup of the *Zohar*, or rather what constitutes the zoharic corpus.

Isaiah Tishby

The Wisdom of the Zohar by Isaiah Tishby and Fischel Lachover was the single greatest academic tool of zoharic scholarship to advance the study of the zoharic texts in the twentieth century. The volumes provided an anthology of passages from all five volumes of the printed corpus and were arranged them thematically with introductory studies. This move achieved two goals. First, in providing an anthology, the literary organization of the text in its printed form was overlooked. Second, the various texts and volumes were amassed together into the pool of sources for this anthology of 'Zohar', including *Tiqqunei Zohar* and the various texts printed in *Zohar Ḥadash*, such that any sense of the '*Book of the Zohar*' was negated even if the printed editions served this project.

The Aramaic text was not included. Their base text of the *Zohar to the Torah* was the very late Vilna edition (1882) with corrections from the first editions of Mantua and Cremona (1558-1560), and Constantinople (1736-1737). For *Zohar Ḥadash*, they relied on the Venice edition (1658), which in turn was based on the Salonica edition (1597). Texts from *Tiqqunei Zohar* followed the Amsterdam edition with emendations from the first edition, Mantua (1558). Additional 'corrections' were made according to Abraham Azulai's *Or ha-Levana* (Przemyśl 1899). In the English translation, Tishby requested that references from *Zohar Ḥadash* and *Tiqqunei Zohar* be modified to the editions

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[131] *Major Trends*, pp. 161-162. The beginnings of this list can be found in the fascinating handwritten sheets in Hebrew in Scholem's archives, The National Library of Israel, ARC 1599, file 60, numbered pages 7, 25-27, 28a-b. Here Scholem calls the first unit '*ha-Zohar ha-'iqqari*' and arrives at an intial listing of 22 literary units.

[132] Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 214-219.

of Margolioth, Jerusalem 1948 and 1978.[133] The point here is that their text followed the historical progression of the printed editions and was updated according to the commercial and cultural success of the distribution of these later editions. His introduction to *The Wisdom of the Zohar* opens with the following passage:

> The *Zohar* was for centuries commonly known as the Holy *Zohar*, and recognized as the work [*ke-ḥibburo*] of the tanna Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai. But in reality it is not a single, unified work [*sefer 'eḥad ve-'ahid*], but a great literary anthology consisting of sections from various sources [*ḥalaqim mi-ḥalaqim shonim*]. Bibliographically speaking, the zoharic literature comprises three book, which in the published editions are divided into fiver parts: The *Zohar* on the Torah – Genesis and exodus being in separate parts, and the rest of the Pentateuch in another part; *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* (*Arrangements of the Zohar*); and *Zohar Ḥadash* (*The New Zohar*). The books, apart from the *Tikkunei ha-Zohar*, are not unified works, but composed of various sections [*mi-ḥaṭivot shonot*], some of which are listed in printed books and manuscripts as separate works, with even their own individual titles, while others are completely integrated into the basic text without any exterior identification.[134]

Tishby adopts the definition of 'zoharic literature', a term he continued to use following its appearance in Scholem's *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism*. Tishby's discussion above is immediately followed by a list of the various 'sections of zoharic literature contained in the three books' (by which he means printed titles of the five volumes printed as the three-part *Book of the Zohar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash*). His list differs slightly from that of Scholem, now 23 instead of 21 units (or 'components'), which is important as a signpost of the incremental development of the formal identification of the literary units that comprise the *Zohar* in modern scholarship, a list which began with the writings of Milzahagi and Ginsburg: 1) *Zohar on the Torah*; 2) *Zohar on the Song of Songs*; 3) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on the Torah*; 4) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on the Song of Songs*; 5) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on Ruth*; 6) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on Lamentations*; 7) *Sitrei Torah*; 8) *Matntin* and *Tosefta* 9) *Sava de-Mishpatim*; 10) *Yenuqa*; 11) *Rav Metivta*; 12) *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*; 13) *Idra*

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[133] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. xxv-xxvi.

[134] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 1. In square brackets, I have added transliterations of key terms from his original Hebrew to the citation from the published English translation. Note how he weaves together the various terms which have very different connotations.

Rabba; 14) *Idra Zuṭa*; 15) *Idra de-ve Mashkana* 16) *Hekhalot*; 17) *Raza de-Razin*; 18) *Sitrei Otiyot*; 19) *Ma'amar Qav ha-Middah*; 20) *Commentary on Ezekiel's Chariot*; 21) *Ra'aya Meheimna*; 22) *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*; 23) Two pieces of the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* type without any particular title are found in the *Zohar Ḥadash*.

Tishby's opening statement about the nature of zoharic literature refers to a number of separate approaches. That is to say, in the wake of many years of research and published studies that sought to advance various theories, we can identify in Tishby's comments traits of previous approaches. Tishby indeed refers to the *Zohar* as a book and often uses the term '*Sefer ha-Zohar*' which by point of fact was printed in the well-known format of the three-volume editions and an additional two volumes of texts. This structure refers to the received text of the later history of zoharic literature, where certain editions became sacralized or canonized within traditional communities of readers and modern scholarship. So, even though Tishby terms the *Zohar* a 'book', he also states that 'it is not a single, unified work, but a great literary anthology consisting of sections from various sources'.[135] He additionally remarks that the *Zohar* is also a 'literature'.

One could summarize his claims in the introduction to *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, to the effect that he charts how the *Zohar* was identified by communities of readers who so understood the *Zohar's* structure in the printed editions, appreciating the composite nature of its literary section and finally that it amounts to a literature or a corpus. Tishby, then, supplies an annotated listing of 23 units or 'sections' of zoharic 'literature'. This list is slightly different from that of Scholem published in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.[136]

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[135] Ibidem.

[136] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 159-162; idem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 214-219. See further the listing of the literary strata of the *Zohar* in C.D. Ginsburg's work from 1863 in which the 'Body of the *Zohar*' is notably absent: Christian D. Ginsburg, *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development and Literature*, reprinted London 1956, pp. 160-163. Most recently, Israel Malka included a revised listing of the literary units in his monograph, *On the Paths of the Kabbalah: Mystical Dimension of Jewish Law in the Ra'aya Meheimna*, Jerusalem 2004, pp. 553-555 [Hebrew]. His list contains 26 items: 1) *Zohar on the Torah*; 2) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on the Torah*; 3) *Sitrei Torah*; 4) *Matntin and Tosefta*; 5) *Hekhalot*; 6) *Ma'amar Ta-Ḥaze*; 7) *Raza de-Razin*; 8) *Sava de-Mishpaṭim*; 9) *Idra de-Ve Mashkana* 10) *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*; 11) *Idra Rabba*; 12) Rav Metivta; 13) *Yenuqa*; 14) *Idra Zuṭa*; 15) *Zohar on the Song of Songs*; 16) *Sitrei Otiyot*; 17)

Additionally, Tishby questioned the literary nature of the *Zohar* as a book, even if he didn't formulate a precise theory about it. In one remark he questions the integrity of the book, following his suggestion that many authors might have contributed to its creation: 'Is the *Zohar* a unified whole, that is, was it written by one particular kabbalist, or can one see in the various sections the creative product of several kabbalists?'.[137]

Steven Wald

Stephen Wald published a critical edition, translation and commentary of *Sitrei Otiyot*, accompanied by a historical and conceptual survey of the context of this zoharic text.[138] Wald's work was ahead of its time in editorial practice and textual conceptualization of the zoharic literature. His comments about 'The Circle of the Zohar' appeared shortly before the publication of Liebes' article which argued for the collective effort of literary production headed by de León.[139] In Wald's presentation, however, the *Zohar's* production resulted in a literature and not a book, permitting a section or piece of this literature to be identified and studied separately from the rest as he did in this volume, even if it is contextualized within the greater theological context of zoharic literature. As can be surmised from the extended passage below, taken from the introduction to his volume, his identification of the *Zohar* as a literature does not significantly depart from Scholem's appreciation of the *Zohar* as a book. To be sure, the suggestion of multiple authorship, although not explored in any detail is an innovation, but he stops short of breaking down the commonly held presumption between the (multiple) author(s) and the multiple 'parts' of the zoharic literature.

> Another problem which Scholem and his disciples addressed was the single or multiple authorship of the text. The *Zohar* is not a book in the normal sense of

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Unnamed section on Physiognomy in *Parshat Yitro*; 18) Unnamed second on Ezekiel's Chariot printed in *Zohar Ḥadash* 37c-41b; 19) *Qav ha-Midda*; 20) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on the Song of Songs*; 21) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on Ruth*; 22) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam on Lamentations*; 23) *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*; 24) *Zohar Ḥadash*; 25) *Piqqudin*; 26) *Ra'aya Meheimna*.

[137] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 91.

[138] Stephen Wald, *The Doctrine of the Divine Name: An Introduction to Classical Kabbalistic Theology*, Atlanta 1988.

[139] On page 5 he refers to 'some scholars' who 'posit a multiple authorship for the *Zohar*', an apparent reference to Liebes' study published shortly thereafter.

> the word. It is a 'literature', a vast collection of numerous independent compositions of varying sizes, styles, and literary terms. Some pieces, written in classic midrashic form, follow the dynamic and order of whatever verses they happen to be expounding. Others are vast speculative treatises of mystical theology, organized systematically around the immanent structure of the object of analysis or contemplation. Some have a concrete earthly setting, a clear literary framework, and a familiar cast of characters. Others are wholly anonymous, or open with the mere name of Rabbi Shimon, never to be mentioned again. Some parts expound their content in great detail, using rational theological argumentation, and taking care to explain virtually every obscure point. Others seem to be prophetic exclamations, brief and obscure to the point of nearly total unintelligibility.
>
> Here too, Scholem and his disciples have made considerable progress. Virtually all the various parts of the *Zohar* have been shown to possess a remarkably high degree of consistency in both doctrine and terminology. This reinforced Scholem's final conclusion that the *Zohar* was composed by a single author, and that his name was Moses de Leon. However, this theory does not account for the bewildering variety mentioned above, a variety which has led some scholars to posit a multiple authorship for the *Zohar*, or even to incline toward the traditional notion of the *Zohar* as the creation of many generations. Scholem himself originally subscribed to this view, and published a work supporting it. Indeed the specific results of his later research are not necessarily inconsistent with the notion of a final harmonizing redaction of earlier material, or of the *Zohar* as the product of a fairly homogeneous school of kabbalistic thought. One conclusion emerges unambiguously from the many still obscure and disputed points: the *Zohar* in its present form represents the most fully developed and authoritative expression of a school of kabbalistic thinking and writing whose most notable historical representatives are Moses de Leon and Joseph Gikatilia. These two Kabbalists were both familiar with the various texts of the *Zohar* literature in their original intellectual and cultural context, and may have been intimately involved in one way or another in their very composition. This school constitutes the immediate context in which the *Zohar* must be interpreted.[140]

Wald appreciates the zoharic literature according to its 'pieces' and 'parts', noting that some systematically deal with specific subjects. While Wald notes that R. Shimon bar Yoḥai does not appear in all of these 'parts', seemingly retreating from any essential or common character of the zoharic literature, he

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[140] Ibid., pp. 4-6.

speaks of the 'remarkably high degree of consistency in both doctrine and terminology' throughout the 'various parts of the Zohar'. This enables him to offer his edition and study of *Sitrei Otiyot* as representative of the zoharic corpus and as 'an introduction to classical kabbalistic theology' as stated in the subtitle of the volume. To his credit, Wald placed both Gikatilla and de León within the circle or 'school' of kabbalists who participated in the 'multiple authorship' of the Zohar, but again produced the relatively homogenous literature as the intended product of this authorship.

Moshe Idel

In a series of studies on R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid, Moshe Idel explored the relationship between his kabbalistic writings, his citations from the *Zohar* and the Hebrew translation to much of the *Zohar* to Genesis, found in Mss Vatican 62 and 186.[141] As one of the first, or possibly the earliest significant commentators to major sections of the *Zohar*, the nature and form of the zoharic material he possessed is of tremendous importance.

Idel distinguished R. David from other contemporary kabbalists such as R. Joseph of Hamadan and R. Joseph Angelet who, as he wrote at that time (1980), imitated the language of the *Zohar*. R. David is, however, similar in many resects to R. Joseph Ashkenazi who influenced him, although only R. David produced Hebrew translations to zoharic materials. Idel rejected any suggestion that R. David amounts to a case of the 'passive reception' of the *Zohar*. In Idel's analysis, he suggests that R. David first produced translations, of which only the material on Genesis has survived, and freely used and adapted these Hebrew texts when composing his work, *Sefer Mar'ot ha-Ṣove'ot*.[142] Yet, Idel is not adamant on the order of R. David's works, he suggested alternatively that the translation might have been prepared between

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[141] Moshe Idel, 'R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid's Translation to the *Book of the Zohar* and His Commentaries to the Aleph-Beth', *'Alei Sefer* 8 (1980), pp. 60-73; and continued in volume 9 (1981), pp. 84-98 [Hebrew]. See also idem, 'Kabbalistic Material from the School of R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2 (1983), pp. 169-207 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Image of Man Above the Sefirot – R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid's Theosophy of Ten Supernal *Ṣaḥṣaḥot* and Its Reverberations', *Kabbalah* 20 (2009), pp. 181-212 [expanded translation of Hebrew article which appeared in *Da'at* 4 (1980) pp. 41-55].

[142] *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer Mar'ot ha-Zove'ot by Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid*, ed. D. Matt, Chico 1982.

the composition of *Sefer Mar'ot ha-Ṣove'ot* and *'Or Zarua*.

For our purposes, on the question of the literary form of the *Zohar*, R. David's translation *in these manuscripts* follows the literary frame of *guf ha-Zohar* which basically matches the printed edition. Thus Idel writes, 'One should not assume that the author possessed the *Book of the Zohar* in an arrangement that is different from the one we know'.[143] Idel here assumes a particular arrangement as a default. We might wonder, however, what zoharic texts were in R. David's possession, meaning that we cannot presume that he viewed a single or 'complete' manuscript of *guf ha-Zohar*, presented to him as an organized work. In the absence of any surviving manuscript witnesses of such a copy of the *Zohar* independent of R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid, it is equally conceivable that he compiled his translation from a number of sources, as did R. Moses Cordovero at a later date, or that the copyist of the Vatican manuscript or its precursor shaped the translations as a compendium from sections of his translations according to the order of the biblical verses. The importance of R. David's translation surely rests in the quality of the text that resides behind the Hebrew and in the interpretive layer that he added to his source, particularly in identifying the sefirotic referents, which Idel terms as his 'over-symbolizing' tendency, a point which removes him (and the circle Idel identified) from the circle of R. Moses de León. This point would later be challenged by a more encompassing thesis about the composition of the *Zohar* by Yehuda Liebes.

Nevertheless, Idel himself offered additional suggestions in the 1980s concerning the composition of the *Zohar*. In a number of studies, Idel backs away from committing to the single authorship theory of the *Zohar* and that a work was created at a specific moment. He appreciates the literary genesis of a work to be dependent upon a hermeneutic processes, which often blurs certain normative categories of production and leaves room for earlier influences. Thus, compositions that kabbalists and scholars later view to be the products of a single person and composed at a single time are seen to emerge over a period and can be attributed to the input of a number of figures. So he writes in *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (1988):

> This view of the *Zohar* as the zenith of a certain process taking place over the two decades of 1270 to 1290 is not, however, identical with the view that this work is the exclusive composition of R. Moses de Leon, as assumed by Scholem

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[143] Moshe Idel, 'R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid's Translation', p. 67.

> or Tishby. I believe that older elements, including theosophical views and symbols and perhaps also shorter compositions, were merged into this Kabbalistic work, which heavily benefited from the nascent free symbolism.[144]

His view here is commensurate with his reconstructionalist methodology that underlies this volume, whereby medieval works bring together earlier traditions, whether written or oral, to emerge as the constellation of the medieval form of Jewish mysticism known as Kabbalah. While Idel is careful not to claim that Kabbalah is ancient, he instead looks for earlier traditions and thinking patterns as precedents of what emerged later in the amalgam that took on its own character. The suggestion offered above is unique in his scholarly program in that he suggests that earlier written sources flowed into the literary production of the *Zohar* as a work. One such contribution is Idel's identification of a fragment from the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, cited in one of the early works of R. Ḥayyim Vital and preserved separately in a number of manuscripts.[145] Idel explicitly wrote about the preservation of disparate *Zohar* manuscripts by the Safedian kabbalists prior to the editing and printing of the corpus by the printers in Italy. Implicitly, he argues that scholarship should not accept or work with the assumption that the printers had preserved an older tradition concerning the original literary structure of the '*Book of the Zohar*', and that various sources exist outside of what is found in the printed edition.

Further comments by Idel seem to break down the connection between de León and the *Zohar* as author and book. In a 1997 study about music and Kabbalah, Idel referred to the *Zohar* as 'a book of teachings and philosophies *compiled* by Moses b. Shem Ṭov de Leon'.[146] In a later study entitled, 'The *Zohar* as Exegesis',[147] Idel writes about the literary 'layers' that amount to the *Zohar*, namely, (1) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, (2) 'the main bulk of the *Zohar* consists primarily of an extensive commentary on most of the parts of the Pentateuch – the commentary is based on a theosophical-symbol exegetical

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[144] Idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 380 n. 66.

[145] Idem, 'An Unknown Text from the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*', *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan, Jerusalem 1989 (*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8), pp. 73-88 [Hebrew].

[146] Idem, 'Conceptualizations of Music in Jewish Mysticism', *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions*, ed. L. Sullivan, Cambridge, Mass. 1997, p. 160 n. 2, emphasis added.

[147] Idem, 'The *Zohar* as Exegesis', *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. S. T. Katz, Oxford 2000, pp. 87-100.

approach. It also includes several smaller, though nevertheless important, theosophical tracts', and (3) *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'ya' Meheimna*. This listing aside, Idel casts the *Zohar* as the culmination of a hermeneutical process that took place in the thirteenth century, consisting of the gradual arcanization of the Hebrew Bible, the *Zohar* being the first comprehensive arcanization of Scripture. Viewing Idel's conclusions from a Foucauldian perspective, the *Zohar* is for him a symptom of the culture more than it is the intentional product of literary creativity. Idel types the *Zohar* as the 'massive remythologization of the biblical text', where the engine that drives this movement is the mythopoetic imagination of the Castilian author or authors.[148]

In his introductory study to Efraim Gottlieb's edition of a text composed by the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*,[149] Idel applies Liebes' theory of a zoharic circle of kabbalistic authors in Castile (to be discussed immediately below) to *Tiqqunei Zohar* and argues for the relatively earlier dating of the text, closer to the completion of the *Zohar*. Based in part on this conclusion, he adds that '[t]here is no doubt that the *Book of the Zohar*, in all its layers, indeed served as the primary source for imitation in the late layer [of *Tiqqunei Zohar*]'.[150] While not claiming that *Tiqqunei Zohar* was yet another product of the circle's activity, he did suggest that it was produced by a single writer within the cultural or fraternal context of another circle, indebted in no small part to the traditions that emerged from the previous one. Idel has at various times expressed his reservations concerning Liebes' claim of the zoharic circle that produced the *Zohar* through an act of multiple authorship is cited by Melila Hellner-Eshed. In the remark quoted in his name he states that 'it is difficult to believe that a group of kabbalists would meet regularly without arousing curiosity and without any record of such a group appearing in the writings of the members of the circle'.[151] This may in fact be the sharpest criticism regarding the theory, namely, that no hard evidence exists outside of the interpretive efforts of scholars.

In his most recently published monograph, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish*

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[148] Ibid., p. 92.

[149] Efraim Gottlieb, ed., *The Hebrew Writings of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar and Ra'aya Meheimna*, introduction by Moshe Idel, prepared for press by Shmuel Reem, indexes prepared by Michal Oron, Jerusalem 2003 [Hebrew].

[150] Ibid., p. 29.

[151] Quoted in his name in Melila Hellner-Eshed, A River Issues Forth from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar, Tel Aviv 2005 384 n. 19.

Mysticism, Idel writes about 'The *Book of the Zohar*', but explains that he is referring to it as an extensive kabbalistic literature. His survey of the ideas he finds in its pages excludes *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, which are treated separately. Comparing the ideas found in the *Zohar* to the Ecstatic Kabbalah he writes:

> 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.[152]

Idel's survey thus avoids intertextual interpretation that would gravitate toward essentializing the doctrine(s) of the *Zohar*, the author's (single) intention and other ideas that presume uniformity. Polyvocality does not lead to a dissolution of the history of ideas, as his aim in this chapter on 'theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah' is to place the work within the context of traditions that are found in kabbalistic works composed in the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries.

In his survey of traditions of Enoch as the son of Adam in the *Zohar*, Idel offers textual evidence of how Enoch inherited Adam's soul and proposes an 'oblique' type of sonship. The affinity of these traditions to older sources places the zoharic idea closer to *2 Enoch* than *1 Enoch* or *3 Enoch*. Most curious though is an explicit reference to a Book of Enoch which leads Idel to speculate, along with other parallels in ancient sources, that lost traditions, or even a work, were subsumed within the *Zohar* or were used to produce the traditions contained in it. Citing a passage printed in *Zohar Ḥadash* 22d about 'a book that was hidden within the tree of life', Idel writes, '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?'[153] He adds: '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?'[154] Evidence for this might be found in the text itself. Idel suggests that the reference to the book as hidden among the 'companions' in the passage just

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[152] Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, p. 404.

[153] Ibid., p. 485 n. 127.

[154] Ibid., p. 413.

cited, 'might be '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'.[155] In any event, in line with his reconstructionalist methodology, for Idel, much earlier sources were in play for the author or authors of the *Zohar*, significantly altering the way the authorship or composition has been viewed by much of the earlier scholarship. Moreover, Idel further compares his findings on sonship in the *Zohar* with the recognized works of de León, noting that his concept 'differs dramatically from the anthropomorphic zoharic one'.[156] These arguments allow Idel to rehabilitate much of the force of Gaster's argument regarding the editing and re-writing of ancient sources.[157]

More recently, Idel has published a series of articles on R. Neḥemiah ben Shlomo, the prolific Ashkenazi esotericists, whose writings were once confused as the product of R. Eleazar of Worms, from within the Qalonimide circle.[158] Neḥemiah developed a magical technique of preaching based on the inducement of a prophetic state linked to the divine name and through which writings were produced.[159] In tracing the works of Neḥemiah, their influence and related phenomena of pneumatic exegesis in Spain in the last few decades of the thirteenth century, Idel suggests that the composition of the *Zohar* be considered within the greater framework of the introduction of such (Ashkenazi) techniques into Spain. While Idel's study seeks to open up our understanding of how the *Zohar* might have been written by adding a new dimension that characterized the period and related types of writings, his insight does not significantly alter the question of the literary character of what was produced. Unfortunately, in this study Idel does not take a clear stand here on the theory of multiple authorship, namely that de León was chief editor of a circle of authors in Castile.[160]

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[155] Ibid., p. 485 n. 129.

[156] Ibid., p. 413.

[157] Ibid., p. 425 and pp. 487 n. 154, 488 n. 161.

[158] Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings'; idem, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back: On the Circulation of Jewish Mystical Traditions', *Kabbalah* 14 (2006), pp. 47-94; idem, 'The Commentaries of Neḥemiah ben Shlomo'.

[159] Moshe Idel, 'Incantations, Lists, and "Gates of Sermons" in the Circle of Rabbi Neḥemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, and their Influences' , *Tarbiz* 70 (2009), pp. 475-554 [Hebrew].

[160] See however his comments (p. 547 n. 548) on the prophetic character of de León's pneumatic phenomena and references to Mopsik's theory of his literary activity.

Idel thus offers the greater Ashkenazi background,[161] through the example of R. Neḥemiah and his school, writing that was initiated by the magical use of divine names (and angels). At the heart of this subject is the explicit suggestion found in the testimony of R. Isaac of Acre that de León used '*shem ha-kotev*', a phenomenon about which Amos Goldreich has devoted an extensive monograph.[162] Goldreich had additionally suggested in an earlier study that the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* had used a technique of '*shem ha-doresh*'.[163] Idel thus returns to Liebes' theory of multiple authorship of the 'Book of the Zohar',[164] seeking to expand the question of authorship to include the possible use of '*shem ha-doresh*' as magically induced or inspired preaching within a group of mystics, extending Goldreich's suggestion to the zoharic literature (most often termed in his article '*Sefer ha-Zohar*'). Use of the technique by various kabbalists would help explain, according to Idel, the multiple authorship theory advanced by Liebes, namely that conflicting traditions are found within the zoharic literature. Nevertheless, Idel further qualifies his comments by saying that the literary variation found here suggests that the different texts that comprise the literature were written from within a range of mental states, and only some may have used the technique which can be traced back to R. Neḥemiah.[165]

Anonymous Lecture in the Scholem Archives

Amongst Scholem's papers now housed in the National Library in Jerusalem, is a typescript of a lecture by an un-named author, entitled, 'Rabbi Mosheh Ben Shem Ṭov de León: The *Meḥabber* of the *Zohar* and his Ḥavraya'.[166] The lecture, composed in English, cites some manuscript passages with the text entered by hand in Hebrew characters. It can be suggested that the author is Jochanan Wijnhoven. Its conclusion anticipates a host of studies in recent years

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[161] Moshe Idel, 'Ashkenazi Esotericism and Kabbalah in Barcelona', *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 5 (2007), pp. 69-113.

[162] See further below for a discussion of his book.

[163] See Amos Goldreich, Appendix 1: On the Possibility of the [Magical] Use of the *Shem ha-Doresh* by the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*', MASSU'OT: *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 493-495 [Hebrew].

[164] For explicit references see pp. 541, 547.

[165] Ibid., p. 541.

[166] Arc 1599, File 65a; 21 page lecture, not by Scholem, typescript on orange paper.

that questioned Scholem's single-author thesis:

> In reading the *Zohar*, then, we may assume that Rabbi Shimon speaks for Rabbi Moshe. Who, though, are the Havraya, that mystical circle of Kabbalists, and who do they represent? Apparently the entire cast is the product of Rabbi Mosheh's liberated imagination. The *Zohar* is thus a full-fledged novel with a dozen or more fictional characters created and animated by the author. They too, are assigned the names and personalities of famous rabbis, Rabbi Hiyya, Rabbi Abba, Rabbi Yosi, all of whom, according to the *Zohar*, studied under the Master, Rabbi Shimon. As the *Zohar* unfolds we come to know this Havraya. They wander through an imaginary Palestinian landscape and share their mystical teachings, basking in the light of 'The Holy Lamp', Rabbi Shimon, who reveals to them the most pro-found secrets. The Havraya, then, represent Rabbi Mosheh's different mouthpieces. They provide him with a whole range of literary possibilities for through them he can advance alternate interpretations on the same theme or even arrange discussions between several different rabbis. In general, the Havraya's tales and interactions provide color, drama and comic relief in the *Zohar*.
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> According to this view rabbi Mosheh invented the Havraya as literary device. Given his creative powers and unorthodox style, and the grand scope of the *Zohar*, this is certainly a plausible explanation. There exists another possibility, however, Rabbi Moshe as we know was not a lone mystic in Castile and had made contact with a circle of kabbalists including Yosef Gikatilla and others. As spiritual brothers committed to an intense religious search, it was only natural for the kabbalists to band together. They would lend and borrow the precious kabbalistic manuscripts, and recited the daily prayers using *kavvanot* (meditative techniques). They probably studied together, sharing and refining their knowledge. In the Kabbalistic literature of the late 13th century there are occasional references to such a group of mystical comrades, and the name applied to them is 'the Havraya' (see introduction to MhZ p. 89 n.33 also *Zohar* I 170b, 222b).
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> Is the *Zohar*, then, a chronicle of Rabbi Mosheh de León and his circle of fellow kabbalists, all disguised in Talmudic identities, projected back through time and space by the author/editor Rabbi Mosheh? Such an hypothesis is, at present, wild and speculative, though also quite intriguing, and certainly worthy of further examination. Before it can be adequately tested, scholars must publish and scrutinize all the relevant kabbalistic texts of the period, note the parallels between these other Kabbalistic authors and the *Zohar*, and try to reconstruct the social reality of the 13th century Hevraya.
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> Even now, though, the careful reader can discern Rabbi Mosheh's hand at work throughout the *Zohar*. Whether the mystic of the moment be Rabbi Shimon or

> one of the Havraya or a strange character they met on the road, Mosheh de Leon's unique and colorful style is evident in all the wondrous dialogue and narrative. He may have drawn on certain מילי דאורייתא which he had learned among the Hevraya. Then, however, he composed the *Zohar* on his own, casting everything in the mold of an ancient kabbalistic circle which never existed but whose fantastic nature and purpose reflect the spirit of Rabbi Mosheh de León and his Hevraya.[167]

While little evidence is amassed, the thesis offered suggests collective authorship which opens up many literary questions.

Yehuda Liebes

Liebes' scholarship on the *Zohar* span's decades of research and treats various themes. These studies have set the tone for much of zoharic scholarship and dominate the working assumptions of present-day scholars, particularly on the question of how *Book of the Zohar* was written, even when others have departed from specific conclusions or taken his suggestions further in different directions. In subjecting his various studies to methodological scrutiny in terms of the literary presumptions of the zoharic material, I will show the shifts in his methodology and the privileged role of the myth of the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in reconstructing the social relations of the mystical fraternity in Castile that produced the *Book of the Zohar*. While Liebes' erudition and authority as an expert reader of *Zohar* is beyond question, his studies demonstrate a strong reliance on the reception of the *Zohar* in Safed as the key to reading these thirteenth-century texts. I will show, further, that despite an acknowledgement that the zoharic corpus is a literature, Liebes' studies are committed to the idea that the *Zohar* was produced as a book, a necessary linchpin in the related convictions of the centrality of myth, the narrative framework surrounding R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his thesis concerning the Castilian circle of kabbalists who wrote the *Book of the Zohar*.[168]

Liebes' method of analyzing the ideas interpreted out of the *Zohar* is informed by a synchronic appreciation of the living tradition of *Zohar* throughout the history of Kabbalah, from R. Moses de León and his Castilian contemporaries through the Lurianic and early modern kabbalistic interpreters

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[167] Ibidem.

[168] Compare to the earlier use of the 'narrative framework' in Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 9-12.

of these texts.[169] One of the research implications of these assumptions is an analysis of the Hebrew and Aramaic of the group of texts composed by de León and all of the zoharic literature.[170] This reading is noticeable most prominently in his lengthy study of 1982, 'The Messiah of the Zohar',[171] where the Lurianic circle of kabbalists is placed center stage as the prism through which the messianic themes concerning R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in the text of the *Zohar* became historically manifest in the social reality of the Safedian circle of kabbalists headed by R. Isaac Luria.[172]

Liebes' hermeneutic is informed by the later history of the zoharic texts, including the literary reception of the literature in its printing as a book, as well as the perception of the book by later figures, from the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* through the Safedian kabbalists who received the first printing and wrote commentaries to the *Zohar* as an ancient book with clear literary boundaries. The *Idrot* more than any other section of the *Zohar* frames his discussion in his earlier studies, because there the literary personalities achieve their full expression, so that R. Shimon's death marks the culmination of the narrative and so the literary conclusion, 'the end of the book'.[173] Liebes refers in this study to drafts of the *Idrot*, suggesting that the author refashioned the text for

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[169] For example, the Baal Shem Ṭov and the Sabbatean movement. See Liebes, 'The Messiah of the *Zohar*', pp. 111, 113 [Hebrew]. See more recently his use of the R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, 'The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*: From Renaissance to Revolution', pp. 253, 272, 290.

[170] See Yehuda Liebes, 'The Use of Words in the *Book of the Zohar*', *A Lecture in Memory of Efraim Gottlieb*, Jerusalem 1975, pp. 17-19 [Hebrew]; idem, *Chapters in the Dictionary of the Zohar*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976, facsimile edition, published Jerusalem 1982 [Hebrew]. See more recently idem, '*Zakkain 'Inun Yisrael*: A Blessing in Zoharic Language and its Jewish-Christian Background' *Iggud; Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*. Volume 3: Languages, Literatures, Arts. Editors: Tamar Alexander [et al.], Jerusalem 2007, pp. 85-94 [Hebrew].

[171] Yehuda Liebes, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought: A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Gershom Scholem Held 4-5 December 1977*, Jerusalem 1982/1990, pp 87-236 [Hebrew]. A partial English translation was published as 'The Messiah of the Zohar; on R. Simeon bar Yoḥai as a Messianic Figure', *Studies in the Zohar*, Albany 1993, pp. 1-84, 163-193.

[172] Stated explicitly on p. 109 (omitted from the English version), and elsewhere.

[173] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 192 (omitted from the English version). Indeed the article opens with a division between the zoharic interpretations to the Torah and the *Idrot* as the basic literary structure of the book under discussion.

its inclusion in the book he was intentionally creating.[174] That is to say, the received, printed structure of the 'book' is renegotiated based upon another received tradition, in this case the impressions of later kabbalists 'This passage appears in several places in the *Zohar*, but it seems that it should be regarded as part of the *Idrot*, since [*she-ken*] the kabbalists who lived prior to the printed edition cite it by the name of *Idra*'.[175] Referring to the two versions of *Idra Rabba*, he writes: 'The difference between the two works may be explained as resulting from a deepening and refinement that took place in the author's thought during the time that passed between the composition of the former and that of the latter. It would surely be incorrect to try to reverse their order and argue that the more primitive work was composed after *Idra Rabba*, a contention that makes no psychological sense'.[176] Liebes thus presumes that textual units or passages that are similar to each other amount to stages in the linear progression of the author in producing the final literary work to be included in the book, even if the earlier versions were retained. Here we have the view that the printed *Zohar* is *de facto* a collection of literary efforts that are signposts to the construction of the book intended by the author. The scholar thus works backwards from the idea that a book exists in the collection of material and needs to be sorted out according to these literary and psychological assumptions. Liebes continues:

> The existence of several versions of *Idra Rabba* is not so extraordinary, for in fact we find an early version of *Idra Zuṭa* as well. It appears in *Zohar Ḥadash* (18d-19a) and again in *Tosefeta* (III, 309a-309b), and is part of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the Torah portion of *Bereshit*. [...] The earlier 'draft' is referred to explicitly at the beginning of *Idra Zuṭa* (III. 287b). R. Simeon relates that after the scene recounted there his life was extended, and that is why he is still alive; only now has this time come to depart from the world. The author of the *Zohar* most likely inserted this comment into the more developed version of *Idra Zuṭa* in order to escape the contradiction arising from the existence in his work of two different accounts of R. Simeon's death (no such contradiction arises in the case of *Idra Rabba*, the two versions of which can be viewed as depicting different events). It seems that the author either did not want to excise the first version or was unable to do so, since the *Zohar*, as we know, was issued as separate tracts, and the tract containing the first version may already have been

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[174] Ibid., Hebrew p. 99 n. 50; English p.167 n. 34.

[175] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 97; English (modified), p. 9.

[176] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 99; English, p. 11.

> published [*hufaṣ qunṭrasim qunṭrasim*]. Whatever the case, the reference to the first version is a clear indication that *Idra Zuṭa* was a later composition and should be regarded as a more profound reworking of the more primitive version. I wish to establish the same relationship with respect to the two 'versions' of *Idra Rabba*. These examples of the author of the *Zohar* returning to earlier sections and reworking them on a deeper level sheds light on his method of working, yielding an insight that might fruitfully be brought to bear on other parts of the *Zohar* as well.[177]

That is, instead of evaluating parallel or similar texts as part of a phenomenon of zoharic writing outside of the literary structure of the book, Liebes views the texts as residual by-products of the linear process of producing the book, which survived due the early dissemination of the drafts in leaflets.[178]

It is best to consider the implications of this view on how this literature is read as a book, or in other words, how do these assumptions affect meaning. We might wish to frame the question in terms of reception history or reader-response criticism. If the *Zohar* is a book, then the reader presumes that the author intended the reader to uncover a consistent, aggregate or progressive line of thought in the (final) literary form of the work from the written texts. If, however, the book was invented by later communities of readers, then scholarship is better positioned by measuring the gap between localized meanings of texts within a broader corpus and those gleaned from an inter-textual approach aimed at the overall meaning in the book. According to this mapping of hermeneutical stances, in 'The Messiah of the Zohar', Liebes states

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[177] Ibid., Hebrew, pp. 100-101; English p. 12.

[178] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 101 n.53 further cites a comment made by Moshe Idel that characteristic of later thirteenth century (Castilian) kabbalists was the tendency to expand earlier compositions into later versions or separate works, such as Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Ṣedeq* and *Sha'arei Orah*. Again, we see here a presumption about linear progression (and not just charting literary activity chronologically) and the intentions of the author in producing works where the later is necessarily evaluated and privileged in relation to the earlier text. This is clearly a modern imposition on a medieval phenomenon. Even though one cannot rule out such a view from the mind of the kabbalist, there is no evidence to reach this conclusion and I note the free forms of style and the lack of any pre-determined literary program on behalf of such figures. Various versions exist in manuscript of Gikatilla's *Sod ha-Niqqud*, only one of which has been published and studied. See Orna Rachel Wiener, 'The Mysteries of the Vocalization of the Spanish-Castillia[n] Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century', Ph.D. thesis, Bar Ilan University 2008 [Hebrew].

his allegiance to the book, or corpus, as a whole when he writes:

> The *Book of the Zohar* is not a philosophical book, and it is not clear cut in its means of expression. Many of the passages are filled with differing associations and ideas, and [the reader who] studies [the *Book of the Zohar*] should be sensitive with a sharp eye in order to deal with them all. (On the other hand, one should be careful not to adduce the *Zohar* and find in it what is not there. The existence of every element found in the *Zohar* should be proved by a careful examination of parallels). This character of the *Zohar* is the source of its power, and contributed, in my view, to its clearly wondrous influence. Various kabbalists from different trends and period were able to find the emotions of their hearts expressed in the *Zohar* and expected to develop them there.[179]

While Liebes is careful to outline an exercise of returning to the text after appreciating his engagement of later kabbalistic texts, the two are clearly intertwined throughout the study. Moreover, even as the *Idra* is deemed in this study of the messiah of the *Zohar* as the pinnacle of the book, and worthy of an isolated analysis, the keys to understanding the text (on its own) emerge from a comparative reading of passages *throughout* the *Book of the Zohar*. The *Idrot*, as is well known, tell the story of the gathering of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's circle and so serve to structure a reading and organization of other zoharic texts, namely by placing the 'narrative structure' of their mystical learning together as a circle, with their messianic teacher, R. Shimon, at the forefront of the book's agenda. Liebes argues that this is the natural and organic structure of the book:

> I will try to illustrate the degree to which the 'content' and the 'frame' are interconnected. I must note, that the negative value given to the 'narrative frame' stands out in the orientation of modern *Zohar* scholars, and their use of the term frame. The term frame has been employed in scholarship in order to demonstrate the *Zohar's* lack of historical authenticity, and so to establish the true pseudepigraphic [character] of the work. This move comes at the expense of appreciating the organic place of the frame in the *Book of the Zohar*.[180]

The mystical and interpretative activity of the literary personality of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his charisma as the impetus for a fraternity of kabbalists is so strong in Liebes' reading that he extends this understanding to the psychological presumption that the *Zohar* is a literary expression of kabbalists who produced the work as the by-product of their own mystical engagement

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[179] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 101 (omitted from the English version).

[180] Ibid., Hebrew, p. 103 (omitted from the English version).

with the tradition in the thirteenth century. In other words, the power of this mystical text in its symbolic expression and narrative details is so great that it compels us to presume the identification of its author with the characters described, such that it becomes a small step for the scholar to reify the text in projecting the narrative back onto the known Castilian figures who were active at the time as its authors. It is therefore no coincidence to him, that the Safedian kabbalists fashioned themselves according to this same model, given that they deeply understood and identified with the text – that is pneumatically, enthusiastically – and so both imitated the geographical context of the zoharic narrative by moving to the Galilee and identified with its personalities according to a belief in metempsychosis, namely that they were reliving the mystical life of their souls' origins from rabbinic times, and so reinvented the circle described in the text.

Future research, including later studies of Liebes himself, may demonstrate the veracity of his claim, despite its presumptions. What concerns us here however, are the mythic underpinnings of the hermeneutic stance that first led to this claim in scholarship, based to a large extent on a religious identification of the mythic assumptions of the text itself. Liebes' narrative reification of a historical, social myth may be characterized as a romantic textualism, one that affirms the hegemony of the text, much like the assumptions of the kabbalists themselves. Stated simply, the unique contribution of the academic scholar, beyond that of the medieval kabbalist is to see beyond the veil of pseudepigraphy and so to apply a projection of the social relations of the text from rabbinic times onto the life of the kabbalists in Castile. In both cases, the text represents a social reality even if the object or focus is redirected from Palestinian antiquity to medieval Spain. To be clear, no evidence exists for the social relations or cooperative efforts of known figures in editing a *Zohar*, or the *Zohar*, and certainly not an intentional effort of an author or authors to construct a book out the disparate styles and structures of writing.

In his article 'How the [Book of the] *Zohar* was Written' (1989),[181] Yehuda Liebes revisited the parallels, inconsistencies and contradictions between the

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[181] Idem, 'How the *Zohar* was Written', chapter 2 of his *Studies in the Zohar*, Albany 1993, pp. 85-138. The Hebrew version appeared in *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 1-72. Note that the English title lacks the word *sefer*/book and the placement of the verb offers the title as a statement and not a question. Although equivocal in the Hebrew, '*keiṣad niṯḥabber sefer ha-zohar*', nevertheless, it lacks a question mark.

writings of R. Moses de León and the *Book of the Zohar*. This article is of great importance because it suggests other possibilities of authorship than the single-author thesis argued by Scholem. Even though Liebes formulated his question 'How the *Book of the Zohar* was Written', more openly than did Scholem, 'Did R. Moses de León compose the Zohar?, his question that framed his analysis assumes that a book was composed and edited, even if by a circle of kabbalists in Castile.[182] The theory of a circle of authors is dependent upon this 'book' as the literary product of their efforts, in order to assert the parallelism between the Castilian kabbalists and the 'mythic description of the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai'.[183] Liebes further presupposes that de León's psychological identification with the zoharic circle did not afford him the ability to *simultaneously* compose his Hebrew works under his own name.

> The explanation that the *Zohar* was written concurrently with the Hebrew books is unacceptable, since it is difficult to imagine that anyone immersed in the tremendous psychological tension of composing a book such as the *Zohar* would be at leisure [*yitpane*] to write 'conventional' books at the same time. Even the transition from writing kabbalistic books such as the Hebrew writings to independent writing of the *Zohar* is not easily acceptable, unless the author had teachers and friends and assistance inspiring him with the correct spirit and even providing bricks and mortar.[184]

Liebes' theory is thus based on the centrality of the myth of the circle as the main feature of the *Zohar*. This idea defines and limits the self-awareness of the author or authors and decides that the literary efforts of the members of the circle led into a single product, the *Book of the Zohar*, or put more sharply, the *Zohar* as a book.

Liebes' study returned to the parallels and discrepancies between the known Castilian kabbalists and the zoharic corpus and spurred new thinking about the topic. Apparently, many scholars understood Liebes' hypothesis as a proven theory about a circle that definitely existed as a historical fact, as if R. Moses de León presided as chief editor in meetings of the zoharic circle when they met to edit the final recensions of the collective work as a book. It should be stressed

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[182] Ibid., p. 88.

[183] Ibid., p. 89.

[184] Ibid., p. 86. See the earlier comment by Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 94, referring to Scholem's chronology of de León's writings: 'This division gives the impression of an artificial pattern, and cannot be easily explained psychologically'.

that Liebes did not offer such a description, but instead rejected the single author thesis and pointed to other possibilities.

Of note here is the intermittent personification of the *Zohar* which embodies the voice of intent given within its pages. Sometimes, the body of this work captures multiple voices as in his 1994 study, 'Zohar and Eros', where Liebes explains away the inconsistent and multiple expressions of ideas as characteristic of zoharic myth (and presumably midrash as a genre and style of writing and thinking) and then asserts that 'the Zohar' displays self-awareness of its internal contradictions by placing these various traditions in the mouths of distinct literary figures, namely the members of the esoteric fraternity of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai.[185] Here myth seems to be the overarching category that finds its literary expression in what Liebes often terms the 'narrative frame' of the social circle of adepts in the *Zohar*, loosely mapped onto various Castilian kabbalists and imitated later by the strong readers in sixteenth-century Safed. The *book* of the *Zohar* seems to emerge as the literary structure or platform in which the erotic and creative play identified as '*zohar*' finds its expression. Liebes, therefore, is able to avoid in this case a clear definition of the *Zohar* as a book or other literary plan as it collapses under the rubric of eros which according to Liebes' understanding avoids, by its very nature, 'any definition or precise analysis' and 'where any attempt to do so is opposed to its nature and only kills it off'.[186]

Despite the title of his study, 'How the *Book of the Zohar* was Written', Liebes did not in fact determine the literary boundaries of the *Book of the Zohar*. It seems that he used the term book, *sefer*, even though he meant a collection of different works, namely a literature. In subsequent articles, Liebes significantly changed his conceptualization and terminology when referring to the literary nature of the *Zohar*, without making explicit this reconsideration of his earlier article. So for example, in 1997, he referred to the *Zohar* as a 'corpus' and 'an entire literature comprised of complete strata in which a common infrastructure can be found, but also differences which cannot be easily dismissed'.[187] Referring to de León's citation from the *Zohar* in his *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, Liebes added the following:

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[185] Idem, '*Zohar* and Eros', *Alpayyim* 9 (1994), pp. 67-115 [Hebrew], and see p. 68.

[186] Ibid., p. 69.

[187] Idem, 'Review of: *R. Moses de León's Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, critically edited and introduced by Charles Mopsik, foreword by Moshe Idel, Los Angeles 1996', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), p. 272 [Hebrew].

> It seems that the text which de León quotes is not the *Zohar* we possess. Apparently, the *Zohar* once was made up of late midrashic and pseudepigraphic sections, like the fragments and pseudepigraphic sections, like the fragments of the *'Iyyun* Circle, which served as a basis for the speculations of the authors of the *Zohar*. (R. Moses de León was, apparently, the editor of large parts of zoharic literature). The *Zohar* itself often cites such passages and in my study cited above, I was able to confirm their existence with the help of an internal zoharic analysis, and quotation from various kabbalistic works. It seems that also the quotes in *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* point in this direction as we now see.[188]

In a later study, published in 2001, 'The *Zohar* as Renaissance', Liebes retreated even further from his earlier assumption, apparently disavowing the claim that the *Zohar* is 'a book':

> In my view, the *Zohar* is not a book, but rather a complete literature, whose borders were not precise and are not marked as such in the bound volumes [of the printed edition] as 'the' canonical volumes of the *Zohar*. This literature was not written by one man, rather it is the creation of a complete circle [or fraternity, *ḥavura*], full of variation and contradiction. Maybe it is more correct to describe it as a spiritual, literary movement. This movement is not limited to a single decade, but rather existed and developed over three generations from the middle of the thirteenth century (if not earlier), until the end of the first third of the fourteenth century (if not after that), as I have shown in my article 'How the *Book of the Zohar* was Written'.[189]

While this quote might seem to be an explicit denouncement of the literary identity of the *Zohar* as a book, it is clear from the context that Liebes' intent is to expand the understanding of *Zohar* to include all related texts that fed into the book that was created, and that those books imitated its style and *should* be included in the wider corpus of zoharic literature as he understands the construct. That is, instead of understanding his intention as a reversal of his earlier thesis, that 'the *Zohar* is not a book', Liebes holds on to the earlier construct and claims *that it is a book*, but that it is *also* more than just a book, in fact 'a whole literature', which spawned a movement that reached beyond the bound volumes. Thus, Liebes concludes by referring back to his earlier study, 'How the *Book of the Zohar* was Written', in order to emphasize his ongoing conviction to his earlier claim that the *Book of the Zohar* was indeed created by

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[188] Ibid., p. 275

[189] Idem, 'The *Zohar* as Renaissance', *Da'at* 46 (2001), pp. 5-12 [Hebrew].

a circle of Castilian kabbalists and on that basis extended his definition of *Zohar* to be a more expansive literature, with the book of the *Zohar* as its center or originary creation.

Related to this argument is Liebes' work on *Sefer Yeṣira*, which he interprets to mean and to have been understood as *ars poetica*, the text of work that captures the creative, and at times sexual, impulse of creativity that produced the literary creation on this subject. The erotic connotation is mirrored in his reading of the operative term and title of a similar canonical text, the *Zohar*. Weaving the two together in an appreciation of Liebes' hermeneutic, *Sefer Yeṣira* and the *Zohar* each tap into the mythic creativity of literary expression occasioned by the composition of books. Accordingly, these are works which describe the creation of worlds – narrative, material and scholastic – and the erotic impulse that gave expression to the authors' literary imagination was a form of autogenesis, such that the work unfolded, that is, 'literally' came into being as the expression of *Yeṣira* and *Zohar*.[190]

In Liebes' reading of the literary creativity of *Zohar*, *Tiqqunei Zohar* embraces the spirit of '*Zohar*' and takes it to another level. In a paper delivered in 2004 (and published in 2007), Liebes characterizes the self-awareness of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, particularly in relation to what he considered to be '*Sefer ha-Zohar*' or the 'earlier composition' *(ḥibbura qadma'a)*.[191] Nevertheless, Liebes also acknowledges that the author of

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[190] Idem, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira*, Tel Aviv 2000, pp. 127-140; 141-148 [Hebrew]; idem, '*Zohar* and Eros', *Alpayyim* 9 (1994), pp. 67-115 [Hebrew].

[191] Idem, 'The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*: From Renaissance to Revolution', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. Ronit Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 251-302 [Hebrew]. See p. 252 n. 2 and earlier references there. The reference found in *Tiqqunei Zohar* is not a strong reading of the title and work of the *Zohar*. Rather in two place printed in III, 218a and 219a, the text of *Ra'aya Meheimna* refers to 'the first composition' and to 'this first composition', וחו אחמר בחבורא קדמאה and זכאה חולקנא דזכינא לחדשא חבורא קדמאה דא, respectively, which in both cases are self-referential to this later author's own work, *Ra'aya Mehmena* and/or *Tiqqunei Zohar*. See the criticism of Liebes reading of these terms in Wolfson, 'The Anonymous Chapters of the Elderly Master of Secrets', p. 174 n. 160. In the *Zohar* conference sponsored by Monash University and held in Prato, July, 2009, Ronit Meroz commented in a discussion about a manuscript of zoharic collectanea that correspond to the sources mentioned. The scholarly community eagerly awaits the publication of the relevant data and text for further future scholarship on the relationship between these sources.

Tiqqunei Zohar might not have intended to name his work such.[192] Liebes adopts the enthusiastic view of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* to connect the works and authors under the construct of an organic whole, which he calls the zoharic movement:

> The author of the *Tiqqunim* is intoxicated with [the] *Zohar*, and with the entire zoharic movement, which began with the 'early composition', in which he found the messianic period. He sees himself as a mere logical development and the apex of this movement, with which he cannot exist without. It seems that his feeling has much basis. In my view, we cannot view the literature of *Tiqqunei Zohar* as only a late imitation of the zoharic text, as can be surmised from Scholem's research, rather as an organic growth from the circles of the zoharic movement.[193]

Perhaps for these reasons, Liebes returns time and again in this study to his earlier language of the *Zohar* as a 'book', identifying what scholarship has termed '*guf ha-zohar*' as *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the book which was created by an earlier author, who served as a reference point for this later author. Throughout this discussion, Liebes emphasizes the centrality of the organizing myth of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's circle, even if in this article he steps back from the presumptions that scholarship has or can identify the correspondence between the members of the Castilian circle of authors and the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai who composed the traditions in the narrative frame.[194]

By contrast, Liebes further reified his own earlier suggestion that the *Zohar* be seen as a movement, calling all zoharic literature the 'zoharic movement'. I thus summarize Liebes' treatment of the literary forms of the texts as fraught with tensions, between the myth of a circle formalizing itself in discrete books and the plurality of the individuals, narrative and historical, spanning across conflicting ideas and unclear literary boundaries. In short, while unstated, Liebes' conflicting methodologies in fact grapple with the questions of the new orientation of certain advances in recent scholarship concerning questions of

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[192] Idem, 'The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*', p. 297 n. 291. On the possibility of additional authors to the *Tiqqunim*, see p. 255.

[193] Ibid., p. 293.

[194] Liebes speaks as well of this narrative frame as the later stratum [*shikvah*] of *guf ha-Zohar* (Ibid., p. 256 n. 31). See also the voiced reservations on p. 284. Elsewhere he refers to *guf ha-Zohar* as the first stratum of the *Zohar*, in relation to *Tiqqunei Zohar* (p. 294).

form-criticism (including, I presume, the earlier published comments of the present author and the earlier version of this article, published in Hebrew in 2004, even if never cited), taking specific steps forward on the subject of inquiry to place the medieval expectation of defined books in the modern academic discussion.

In a later study on the power of the word (2007), which presented and interpreted a number of zoharic passages, Liebes returns to his central argument concerning the 'Circle of the Zohar' and *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Liebes presented a passage from the 'Body of the *Zohar*', *Zohar* 1:217a, which he understood in relation to the *Idrot*'s narrative of the death of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. In this passage, R. Yehuda attempts to shew away the birds with shouting and the hurling of stones, to no avail, even though he had succeeded in doing so in the past. In Liebes' reading, the birds serve as a negative metaphor for the unnamed kabbalists outside of the circle proper, who illegitimately seized upon the new literary movement of zoharic composition, and proceeded to write in its vein.

> It seems that the birds who prey on the plunder [*Zohar* 1:217a] symbolize what happened in the circle of the *Zohar* after the death of its leader, represented by the figure of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. Kabbalists who weren't at the appropriate spiritual level and who didn't truly belong to the Circle of the *Zohar* (according to the opinion of the author of this passage), awarded themselves the honor of continuing to compose zoharic literature, and did not restrain themselves in the face of the efforts of the true members (in their opinion) of the Circle of the *Zohar* to silence them and to cause them to cease their activities. This failure as well symbolizes the decline that followed the death of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, because as long as he was alive, it was possible to control those who falsely presumed to imitate [the zoharic circle] and who were thus compared to the birds who crack open of their own doing. Regarding such groups, who purport to continue the zoharic movement in a different mystical direction than that of the [main] 'Body of the Zohar' [*guf ha-Zohar*], and who did so out of interpersonal conflicts with the men [who wrote] the [main] 'Body of the Zohar' who preceded them, we learn much about the literature of their rivals, especially from the literature of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, and so also [we learn about] the beginnings of this conflict in other places in the [main] 'Body of the Zohar'.[195]

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[195] Idem, 'The Power of the Word as the Basis for Its Meaning in Kabbalah', *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, ed. M Bar Asher, et al, Jerusalem 2007, pp. 163-

In Liebes' analysis here, writing is about power, hegemony and legitimacy. The conflicts described within the zoharic texts now reflect historically upon the social tensions within and without the 'Circle of the Zohar', reaffirming their existence to the modern reader and extending to the Circle their own legitimacy, both from their own perspective and for the benefit of their readers, regardless of their historical position. What is interesting here is that the interpersonal dynamic of the narrative characters of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's circle in the *Zohar* is read by Liebes as evidence for the existence and parallel activities in the actual lives of the kabbalists in Castile at the end of the thirteenth century, itself a mythic reading by a scholar. Liebes' theory has come full circle, as is it were, from a comparison of the *Zohar* to the writings of Castilian kabbalists in order to challenge the single-authorship theory and expand the responsibility of authorship beyond that of R. Moses to León, to a reading of the *Zohar* on its own, namely that the lives of the literary figures serve as a portal to viewing external events of the social and literary activities of actual kabbalists.

In a rare comment, added parenthetically to the electronic version of his printed study from 1998, Liebes remarked that he had subsequently changed his mind, awarding de León a lesser role than he held when the study was first published.[196] And a final note regarding subtle changes in Liebes' position in 2008. In a public lecture at the Ben Zvi Institute,[197] celebrating the publication of Boaz Huss' book on the *Zohar* to be discussed below, Liebes offered a slightly different stand on the identity of the *Zohar* as a book. Here, he insisted on preserving the construct of multiple authorship of *the book* despite his recognition of literary multiplicity as argued by others.

> I do not accept the view that the 'idea of the *Book of the Zohar*' is not found in the main literary stratum because it does not present itself as an unified literary unit and does not call itself *'Sefer ha-Zohar'*. A book [*sefer*] can be comprised also of different literary units with a common feature. Indeed in zoharic literature, which has many features, there is much that unifies from a linguistic,

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178, pp. 174-175.

[196] Idem, 'How the *Zohar* was Written', prior to note 23: לפי המשך המחקר אחרי פרסום המאמר הנוכחי, מייחס אני לרמד"ל משקל מועט יותר. See also his reference the 'kabbalists of the circle [*ḥug*] of the Zohar', and R. Ṭodros Abulafia in his article Yehuda Liebes, 'God's Attributes', *Tarbiz* 70 (2001), p. 74 [Hebrew], reprinted in his *God's Story*, p. 162.

[197] This lecture, read from a prepared text, was published on Liebes' web site: http://pluto.huji.ac.il/~liebes/Zohar.

> literary and ideational [perspective]. There is a high degree of self-awareness of this unifying principle in many zoharic texts, and to express this they use no other than the word '*Zohar*' which discloses the book's self-understanding, which Boaz Huss himself writes in the first chapter of his book, in agreement with what I wrote. Therefore, one can surmise that the name '*Sefer ha-Zohar*' was conferred ['*alah*] already in the main stratum of the *Zohar*, at least in its last stages, with the consolidation of its consciousness, and so, at the very least in the epic layer, to use the term given by Ronit Meroz.

Liebes' paper is a rich presentation of his methodology and perception of the *Zohar* and its proper study in the academy by scholars who should offer their own interpretations of texts, a matter which is deserving of a fuller treatment elsewhere. For the subject at hand, it is significant to address Liebes' need to demonstrate a continuum between the self-awareness of the authors concerning their collective project, the text's own presentation of its self-understanding, and its later perception and reception as such a literary creation, which then becomes the guiding principle for its interpretation by scholarship. As we see in the passage cited above, the title of the *Book of Zohar*, as *Zohar*, is a necessary feature of the inception and later refraction of its literary layers, such that the texts amount to the literary implementation of the erotic impulse that forms its frame and content of discursive myth.

It seems that in line with the arguments offered by Liebes, the *Zohar* is a literary phenomenon of diverse styles of writing and thought of different authors in Castile, and the well-defined literary character of the activity is not necessary, even if at its privileged core there is a body (*Guf ha-Zohar*) that modern academics can identify. My understanding from Liebes' evolving perspective(s) and its conclusions, is that he claims that each zoharic section was written as an independent literary unit with some ideational connection and literary affinity to the other writings, and was organized around a central myth of its creation, a scholarly myth – or myth of its scholarship – regardless of its correspondence to the texts and actual lives of the kabbalists. If so, it might be more precise to speak of a circle, or a fraternity of texts that were gradually introduced or identified as belonging to a wider family of (the) *Zohar*, than to claim that the authors followed a particular editorial program in order to produce a book and then defended its integrity from within and without. The main difference in perspective here is a presumption of the description of how a concept unfolded versus a later reflection on how a phenomenon was constituted.

As the most recent addendum to his ongoing work on the literary

production of the Zohar, Liebes has published on-line at his web site a study entitled 'The Year of the Death of R. Moses de León', which will appear in print in a memorial volume for Meir Benayahu.[198] The brief study reviews in great detail all the literary evidence from manuscript and early printings regarding the last known dated literary activity of R. Moses de León, his famed meeting with R. Isaac of Acre and a review of the related scholarship of these sources beginning with Graetz and Scholem and continuing on through Tishby and Liebes' own writings. In this study, Liebes offers a correction to past understandings of de León's death in 1305, so that now he shows that he died in 1295, shortly after the composition of his last known dated work.

The importance of this assertion is foremost a re-evaluation of Scholem's claim that there were three periods to his literary activity, the production of the *Book of the Zohar*, followed by the composition of Hebrew works that for the most part de León signed and dated, culminating in the final period of his life in which he was active in disseminating copies of the *Zohar*. Scholem, it will be recalled, was most interested in offering a precise inversion of the chronology forwarded by Graetz which was based on the attempt to show that de León was foremost interested in selling manuscripts copies of whatever work he could produce and so abandoned his earlier Hebrew works in his name for the *forged* works of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. Scholem was thus able to transform forgery into pseudepigraphy. Tishby pointed out problems in the correspondence between the Hebrew and Aramaic texts, noting inconsistencies in some apparent internal references and suggesting overlap in the production of the two corpora. Liebes would later expand upon such contradictions in order to develop a theory of a circle of authors who collectively produced the *Zohar*, so that now contradictions could be attributed to the material provided to de León who served as chief editor of the literary project or *book*. In this latest contribution, however, Liebes, utilizes the 1295 date to break off the *Idrot* from the rest of *Zohar* as the product of Castilian kabbalists who continued to write in a new and different vein after de León's death. Here Liebes returns to his earlier work, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', wherein he noted the unique character of these literary sections, and so continues to change his view as noted above, giving de León a lesser role than he had suggested in 'How the Zohar Was Written'.

Quite surprising is the omission in this study by Liebes of claims that multiple circles existed, particularly a second circle after the one headed by de

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[198] http://pluto.huji.ac.il/~liebes/zohar/ramdal.doc.

León, as found in the works of Ronit Meroz and Shiloh Pachter, as detailed in the following pages. Moreover, other possibilities, including the breakdown of the literary integrity of the '*Book of the Zohar*' as a single literary effort, as found in the earlier published forms of the present study are amiss to him as well. The affinity between his view of the *Idrot* as a separate literary effort alongside the rest of the *Zohar(ic* literature), regardless of its new designation in Liebes' thought, and my own conclusions should be apparent, as not only has the authorship been destabilized from a uniform author or organized group of collective authors to the contiguous literary efforts by various kabbalists, but the literary identity of a single book has clearly been abandoned, even if not acknowledged.

In his latest composition, available on line and awaiting publication in print, Liebes explores select written traditions in Aramaic by R. Isaac of Acre, who famously met with R. Moses de León in pursuit of the original manuscript of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. The linguistic and thematic affinity of some features, including the pseudepigraphic use of Tannaitic figures, as adduced by Liebes leads him to conclude that 'its seems that it is possible to add R. Isaac of Acre as well to the respectable list of kabbalists of this generation who composed zoharic writings [or: 'wrote zoharically', *she-shalhu yadeihem be-khtiva zoharit*], such as R. Joseph Angelet, R. Joseph of Hamadan, R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid and *Sefer Berit Menuḥa*'. My comments here are not aimed at the argument itself, but to characterize the move the preserves and expands the circle that composed the circle, instead of identifying a broader textual phenomena within which the disparate zoharic writings might have been composed.[199]

Charles Mopsik

For a period of over twenty years, Charles Mopsik issued volumes of annotated French translations of the first volume of standard editions, the *Zohar* to the Book of Genesis, as well as translations to the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the *Book of Ruth*, the *Zohar* to the Song of Songs, and works from the Castilian kabbalists, R. Moses de León and R. Joseph of Hamadan.[200] Mopsik translated

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[199] Yehuda Liebes, 'A Mystical *Midrash Halakhah* Attributed to Shimon ben Sheṭaḥ', http://pluto.huji.ac.il/~liebes/zohar/benshetah.doc, *Kabbalah* (forthcoming).

[200] Charles Mopsik, *Le Zohar. Traduction de l'araméen, introduction et notes: Genèse:* Tomes I (1981), II (1984), III (1991), IV (1996); *Le livre de Ruth* (1987); *Cantique des Cantiques* (1999); *Lamentations* (2000); Verdier, Lagrasse. Idem, 'Un

all of the texts included in the printed edition, according to the popular, modern edition of Reuven Margolioth and consulted manuscript witnesses from the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the first edition, printed in Cremona 1558. In the first volume of his translation, he followed the pericope divisions of the Pentateuch as found as well in Margolioth's edition. In the third volume of his translation Mopsik began to divide the zoharic text into smaller literary units, naming each one according to its central theme.

In an article on the titles to the various literary units of the zoharic corpus,[201] Mopsik noted, over against later traditions which claimed that R. Shimon bar Yoḥai was the author, that in the generations prior to the printing of the *Zohar*, kabbalists considered R. Shimon bar Yoḥai to be the central figure of a circle that produced the traditions that were recorded in what became the *Zohar*.[202] Mopsik produced the history of various literary units and their names in the zoharic corpus in order to destabilize the nature of the composite work, flushing out its parts and identities.

> Le caractère pseudépigraphique des mentions du Zohar, d'une part, et la multiplicité et la variabilité de ses titres et de ses appellations, d'autre part, permettent d'affirmer que la forme du livre n'était pas encore cristallisée, ni son étendue fixée, peu avant son édition imprimée. L'étude des titres qui lui ont été donnés confirme le fait que l'ouvrage n'a pas été publié comme une entité unique et stable, mais comme des séries de carnets ou d'opuscules qui ont été peu à peu collectés et organisés. En conséquence, les titres étaient modifiés en fonction de la combinaison des diverses parties dan les manuscrits. Les premiers imprimeurs du Zohar, à Mantoue en 1558, présentement les trios volumes du Zohar qu'ils publient comme le regroupement de plusieurs manuscrits différents issus de propriétaires différents.

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manuscrit inconnu du *Sefer Tashak* de R. Joseph de Hamadan suivi d'un fragment inédit', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 169-205.

[201] Idem, 'Le corpus Zoharique ses titres et ses amplifications', *La Formation des Canons Scripturarires*, ed. M. Tardieu, Paris 1993, pp. 75-105, reprinted in *Chemins de la cabale: Vingt-cinq études sur la mystique juive*, Paris and Tel Aviv 2004, pp. 163-199.

[202] Scholarship needs to further explore Asi Farber-Ginat's suggestion that parts of the *Zohar* were known to R. Joseph Gikatilla when he composed his *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*. See her study, 'Traces of the *Book of the Zohar* in the Writings of R. Joseph Gikatilla', *'Alei Sefer* 9 (1981), pp. 70-83; reprinted in her book, *R. Joseph Gikatilla's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, edited for publication by Daniel Abrams, Los Angeles, 1998 [Hebrew].

> Ces caractère fluctuant et instable du texte zoharique, sensible dans les variations de ses titres, a contribué à faire de l'ouvrage un corpus ouvert, disponible aux amplifications et aux additions, donnant le sentiment à ses lecteurs de l'existence d'un écrit originel aux contours indéfinis dont le livre qu'il a entre les mains n'est jamais qu'un reflet partiel. C'est ce livre idéal, mais en fait inexistant, qui a suscité paradoxalement la formation d'un volumineux corpus, sans cesse augmenté et modifié, qui tend toujours, comme une asymptote, vers la reconstitution écrite de l'enseignement ésotérique originel et essentiellement oral de R. Siméon bar Yoḥaï et des autres maîtres des premières générations rabbiniques, à la fin de l'Antiquité. Le titre populaire donné à ce corpus, *Ha-Zohar ha-Qadoch*, le Saint Zohar, n'atteste pas seulement le caractère sacré et inspire attribué dans les milieux populaires à l'ouvrage – et bien sûr dans les milieux cabalistes – , il témoigne aussi de l'admission du lent travail de constitution d'un nouveau corpus littéraire, constitution qu'aucun principe ni aucune norme de délimitation n'est venue, jusqu'à présent, achever en droit.[203]

Mopsik's insight was to view the *Zohar* as an anthology that was very much in flux in the first centuries after the composition of its various parts. Mopsik further showed how the various titles given to the literary units are informative of the self understanding of the copyists and the *Zohar's* readership. Finally, he argued that the widespread title of 'The Holy Zohar of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai' points to the desire to consolidate the corpus into a distinct anthology.

Mopsik is distinguished as the first scholar to have challenged the methodological assumptions of Liebes' theory of a zoharic circle that produced the text or corpus as their collective product of multiple authorship. In a claim first offered in his Hebrew introduction to his critical edition of de León's *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, which inspired a debate that unfolded in a review and a later response in French. Mopsik emphasized the central role of de León in composing the *Zohar*, possibly while influenced by the prophetic spirit.[204]

> It seems to me that R. Moses de León remains the most likely of all the kabbalists to be identified as the author of the *Zohar*. And, in any event, as Liebes claims, R. Moses de León is the main figure in the composition of the *Book of the Zohar*. If other hands had a part in writing the *Zohar* and

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[203] Mopsik, 'Le corpus Zoharique', p. 85; idem, *Chemins de la cabale*, p. 173.

[204] Charles Mopsik, 'Introduction', *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, Los Angeles 1996, pp. 1-8 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Moïse de León, *le Sheqel ha-Qodesh* et la rédaction du *Zohar*: Une réponse à Yehuda Liebes', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 177-218.

participated in a particular circle which distributed their edited product, R. Moses de León is the central author and the majority of the book, was the product of his hand. [...]

The *Zohar* could be the product of prophetic experience of thirteenth-century kabbalists, and the rabbinic midrashim which are found in it are part of the revelations of the holy spirit which were revealed to the kabbalists of Castile, with R. Moses de León as their head [*u-ve-rosham*, alternatively translated: and most prominently, R. Moses de León – DA]. Did the inner voice which R. Moses de León heard produce his [mystical] awakening, to commit his secrets to paper or possibly to transmit these secrets in the name of the rabbis of ancient midrashim that R. Moses de León included in his book. If so, it seems that the zoharic passages contained in his books and that are not found in the *Zohar* we possess are the fruits of the prophetic experience of R. Moses de León, for which he did not have sufficient time to include in full in the 'body of the *Zohar*', but instead scattered them in the works he composed after completing his composition of the *Zohar* as a completed literary product. That is to say, that the *Zohar* that we possess under this name, is but one formulation of the prophetic movement [*zerem*] whose beginning should be identified within a particular circle and kabbalist, who continued to develop in different ways, similar to the works of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*, some of the writings of R. Joseph of Hamadan and other works. Prophetic experience of this type was widespread amongst the Castilian kabbalists at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. The *Zohar* and books like it, are not forgeries, but fruits of sincere thought of kabbalists who wished to record 'words from heaven', that is, a voice that emerged from within them. These kabbalists experienced a religious drive and actual prophetic tension, as we have seen in the words that introduce *Ginat Egoz* and *Sefer ha-Rimmon*. One should not distinguish [too sharply] between prophetic experience and the ideational effort. A single mystic could write with theoretical awareness and at the same time feel that all of his words, interpretations and books are drawn down to him from the fountain Above. Such was the situation with the composition of the *Zohar* and the books that ensued, which imitated its style and language. These were not the result of pseudepigraphic activity, but rather the literary product of a collective spiritual movement [*qevuṣah ruḥanit qevuṣatit*].[205]

I do not understand Mopsik to be confirming the possibility of a zoharic circle, that the *Zohar* is the product of multiple authorship. Rather, I understand his

[205] Idem, 'Introduction', pp. 5-6.

comments to mean that de León was the sole author of the *Zohar*, and his work should be appreciated as the symptom of a larger phenomenon of prophetic experience of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century kabbalists. The contextualization of de León's self-perception of literary creativity along the continuum that begins with experience explains the parallels to some of his contemporaries but preserves the *Zohar* as a book as his authorship. Mopsik thus rejects Liebes' theory and describes the various texts and their individual authors as part of a larger phenomenon of Kabbalah at the time. Key to this understanding is that Mopsik identifies the role pseudepigraphy plays in integrating the prophetic spirit with anonymous literary production.

Mopsik's volumes of the *Zohar* and related literature in French translation, with introductions and copious notes is of extreme importance to the scholarly treatment of what is the *Zohar*. At first blush, one might believe that he has held a traditional view of the text, from the history of printing in translating the printed edition with all its literary strata as the received text, and from a scholarly point of view in producing similar volumes of the works of R. Moses de León. However, in a comment of self-reflection he flagged his methodology as being separate from the emerging consensus and history of zoharic scholarship, from Scholem through Liebes.

Mopsik's methodological assumption has been to read the zoharic texts and de León's works on their own and not in any necessary dialogue with each other: 'J'ai par le passé étudié le Zohar sans Moïse de Léon et j'étudie à présent Moïse de Léon sans le Zohar'.[206] Uniquely, Mopsik has attempted to illuminate de León with *Zohar* instead of the reverse, or as he puts it 'Moïse de Léon est plus utile pour comprendre le Zohar que le Zohar n'est utile pour comprendre Moïse de Léon'.[207] I would like to present one last passage, in extenso, which illuminates his methodology, one that emerges from his conception of a book and an author and has significant implications for the question of how one should read these texts.

> Dans sa revue critique, le prof. Liebes rappelle que, malgré la relation profonde qu'il y a entre le *Zohar* et Moïse de Léon, il existe aussi des différences évidentes : 'dans la langue, dans le contenu, dans la compréhension et dans le

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[206] Idem, 'Moïse de Léon, le *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* et la rédaction du *Zohar*: Une réponse à Yehuda Liebes', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), p. 189 (reprinted in: *Chemins de la cabale*).

[207] Ibidem.

goût littéraire'. La question ne réside plus, grâce en grande partie aux travaux de Liebes, dans la reconnaissance de ces différences, mais dans leur explication. Et c'est là que la discussion est ouverte, ou plutôt qu'elle a été ouverte par le même chercheur dans son article 'Comment le *Zohar* a été composé' (en hébreu), dans lequel la thèse que l'on croyait définitivement établie par Gershom Scholem d'une rédaction intégrale du *Zohar* par Moïse de Léon a été critiquée et qu'une autre thèse a été avancée, celle d'un groupe de cabalistes qui auraient rédigé le *Zohar* en traduisant et adaptant divers écrits en hébreux, dont ceux de Moïse de Léon. On pourrait énoncer la difficulté d'un arbitrage entre les deux thèses en présence de la façon suivante : comment observer les différences sans oublier les ressemblances et comment regarder les ressemblances sans ignorer les différences. Liebes considère que je reviens, dans une large mesure, à la méthode et au style de Gershom Scholem pour avoir dit 'qu'il me semble que R. Moïse de Léon reste le cabaliste auquel il est le plus vraisemblable d'attribuer la rédaction du *Zohar*' (p. 5), et il s'étonne que dans mon introduction (p. 7), je parle aussi, à la suite de ses propres recherches, 'd'un cercle', 'd'un courant', 'd'un mouvement spirituel collectif' qui s'est étendu sur plusieurs générations. Sortis de leur contexte, ces mots isolés paraissent contredire les propos cités plus haut. Remis dans leur contexte, ces mots disent seulement que le *Zohar* – quel qu'en soit le rédacteur – vit le jour dans un milieu marqué par une effervescence religieuse de type prophétique qui est non seulement responsable de la publication du *Zohar* mais aussi de plusieurs ouvrages (comme le *Tiqouney Zohar* et quelques autres). Même si Moïse de Léon était le seul à avoir rédigé le *Zohar* – ce que je ne dis pas -, ce travail d'écriture particulier et ce qu'il implique, à savoir la possibilité d'une diffusion, d'une recevabilité minimale de ce livre par ses contemporains – suppose un milieu et des conditions sociales particulières, et j'essaie de montrer que parmi celles-ci une certaine activité prophétique a pu jouer un rôle éminent. Dans les phrases d'où Liebes extrait les mots précités, il n'est pas question de la façon dont le *Zohar* a été rédigé, mais des conditions religieuses et socioculturelles, voir psychosociales, qui président et entourent sa rédaction, que celle-ci soit l'œuvre d'un individu unique ou d'un groupe plus ou moins organisé, hypothèse que je n'exclus nulle part et contre laquelle je n'entre pas en controverse.[208]

Mopsik is negotiating between similarity and difference, and views, I believe, the difference between the theories of Scholem and Liebes to revolve too strongly around only one. I believe this passage affirms my reading of his Hebrew introduction to *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, that he sees the *Zohar* as the

[208] Ibid., pp. 190-191.

product of a 'collective spiritual movement'. While Mopsik still entertains other possibilities, including those suggested by Liebes, he works forward from the shared cultural and religious milieu which explains the affinity between the various kabbalists instead of a focus on the identity of works that would lead one to presume a collective effort of composition. I thus read Mopsik as seeking to mitigate what he understands as a hypercorrection to the field through a return to the religious worldview that extends beyond the textual record.

Daniel Matt

Daniel Matt has devoted many studies and volumes to the zoharic corpus. Before turning to his translation project, I would like to note that his sustained publishing on these texts offers the opportunity to evaluate some of the changes in the field. Matt's published work on the *Zohar* both predates and antedates Liebes' article on how the *Zohar* was written. The changes in his writing are indicative of the mixed reception to Liebes' thesis, namely appropriating the claim of collective authorship, but retaining the central role of de León as editor and responsible for the (final) authorial intent of the *Book of the Zohar*. In his 1993 article on the aura of secrecy in the *Zohar* he writes:

> We must refine our conception of Moses de León's role in the composition of the *Zohar*. As Yehuda Liebes has demonstrated, we can no longer attribute the entire work to this one, overburdened Kabbalist. Certain portions, e. g., the *Idrot*, represent his editing and reformulation of older, shared kabbalistic material that was reworked differently by other Kabbalists, some of whom had close connections with De Leon. Group authorship of certain parts cannot be ruled out, but it is clear that De León himself wrote most of the *Zohar*. I refer to him as the composer of the *Zohar* because even the material that he shares with others, Ramdal remodels in his idiosyncratic style. He is undoubtedly the author of all, or nearly all, of the Zoharic material that I discuss in this paper, including the literary framework created for the *Idrot*.[209]

Matt has appropriated Liebes' hypothesis about the 'Circle of the Zohar' in a particular fashion. Matt's study captures the ways in which the zoharic style interweaves ancient and medieval rabbinic tropes to forward the pseudepigraphic agenda of the mystical midrash composed in Castile as the product of the fraternity of Tannaitic figures. Matt's modification of Liebes'

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[209] Matt, Daniel. 'New-Ancient Words: The Aura of Secrecy in the Zohar', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, p. 183.

claim *offers de León a stronger role than that suggested in Liebes' study*. This affords Matt the parallelism between the recasting of rabbinic traditions in a kabbalistic vein with the rewriting of the textual contributions of the 'Circle of the Zohar' by de León as editor of the *Book of the Zohar*. The two forms of editing come together in Matt's evaluation of the layering of the literary units within the *Book of the Zohar* as a whole:

> In effect the composer of the Zohar has assembled an alternative Rabbinic literature including *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*. In a certain sense, the main body of the *Zohar* is like a Talmud to the brief and cryptic passages of the *Matnitin*. Apart from the *Matnitin*, the *Zohar* includes about thirty references to *Matnita di-lan*, 'our Mishnah', Ramdal also composed responsa dealing with kabbalistic subjects and other responsa that combine authentic teachings of Hai Gaon with kabbalistic material.[210]

The individual and collective literary products conform to the aura of secrecy forwarded by the impression the *Zohar* was seeking to achieve. One cannot avoid the air of the canonical, reflected in both the medieval sources and modern scholarship, which in tandem construct the library of the authoritative books produced in these rabbinic circles. We can now turn to another form of canon, namely the new English translation of the *Zohar* undertaken by Daniel Matt. To date, Matt has issued five volumes of an annotated English translation of the *Body of the Zohar* (*guf ha-Zohar*). The Pritzker edition is intended to provide an academic edition for a wide readership. Matt compared his base text of the Vilna edition to various manuscripts, utilizing lists of variants prepared for his study and with which he constructs a better text. This new version, a 'clean text', which is published on the Stanford University Press web site,[211] is the reconstructed Aramaic source used for this new English translation.[212] The PDF versions of the zoharic text do not indicate the sources of the particular readings in the manuscripts, but one of the two formats on-line provides underlings marking the points of departure from the 'standard printed version' (along with an additional version prepared by Jonathan Matt with page

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[210] Ibid., pp. 184-185.

[211] The decision to separate the media of the presentation of the Aramaic text and its English translation is apparently a commercial as well as cultural decision and statement, worthy of further reflection and (cultural as well as academic) criticism.

[212] www.sup.org/zohar. See also Daniel Matt, 'The Aramaic Text of the *Zohar*', online *www.sup.org/zohar/intaram.pdf*.

references to the printed English translation and Aramaic editions, and with scriptural references inserted in brackets).[213]

Most important here is that the text project undertaken by Matt presumes that a single zoharic text exists behind the problematic printed edition widely available for the last century. To be sure, the version he provides does not exist in any source, nor does he claim to have reconstructed the lost original. His text is rather eclectically informed by a multitude of manuscript variants to the printed edition such that the modern, received text is *improved upon* by removing latter glosses and attuning the text to Matt's familiarity with zoharic language according to what he has found in an array of sources. It should further be noted that Matt does not adhere to any one source or family of sources and in the Aramaic text edition does not tell the reader the origin and location of any particular reading. Certain comments relating to the manuscripts are to be found in the notes to the English edition, but the theory behind his editorial practice is that various manuscript sources can at will be brought to bear in providing a much improved text to that of the printed edition.[214]

Matt's reconstructed text of *Guf ha-Zohar* is based on a selection of the best manuscripts from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries: 'This edition reflects a newly constructed, precise text of the *Zohar*, based on original manuscripts'. Matt further intends to translate the other zoharic literary units, such as *Raza de-Razin*, *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*, *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*, *Idra Rabba* and *Idra Zuṭa*, *Rav Metivta*, and *Yenuqa*, following the order in which they appear in the printed editions. Matt then intends to issue another two volumes, translating *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, *Matnitin*, *Tosefta*, *Sitrei Torah*, *Hekhalot*, *Sitrei Otiyyot*, *Perush le-Merkevet Yeḥezqel*, *Ma'amar Qav ha-Middah* and the *Zohar to the Song of Songs*. *Tiqqunei Zoh*ar and *Ra'aya Meheimna* will not be translated.[215] In terms of these other texts, excluded from his project, Matt does not explicitly deal with the question of the *Zohar* as a book and the literary form its author(s) intended. He further comments that there apparently never existed a 'complete' *Zohar* manuscript since it was disseminated in booklets.

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[213] See the review of Joel Hecker, '"New-Ancient Words" and New-Ancient Worlds" ("The Zohar: Translation and Commentary, 2 vols.", "A Guide to the Zohar") (Book Review)', *Hebrew Studies Journal* 47 (2006), pp. 403-431.

[214] Daniel Matt, 'The Zohar: Pritzker Edition', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. Ronit Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 3-17 [Hebrew].

[215] Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume 1, p. xv n. 2.

> If I could have located a complete, reliable manuscript of the *Zohar*, this would have provided a starting point. Unfortunately no such manuscript exists anywhere in the world; in all likelihood it never did, since from the start the *Zohar* was circulated in sections or booklets. Probably no single complete *Book of the Zohar* existed until it was printed nearly three hundred years later in the sixteenth century, collated from various manuscripts.[216]

Daniel Matt has in effect produced a *new Zohar*, a book which has not existed until now, with a new and distinct textual version and literary boundaries. To be sure, Matt follows the lead of the manuscripts he has consulted to guide his choices along with the weight of precedent of the printed editions, such as the inclusion of the 'Introduction of the Zohar' before *Parshat Bereshit*, as appears in the Mantua, but not the Cremona edition. At times it is unclear to the reader, however, whether he has chosen to follow a modern academic's determination of what should be identified as *Guf ha-Zohar* based on style and content, or whether he is guided by the transmissional history of this unit according to manuscript witnesses. For example, in the fourth volume, Matt translates a passage from the *Matnitin*, with this title, as an introduction to the body of his text, noting in his commentary that:

> The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* of the *Zohar* consist mostly of anonymous enigmatic revelations often addressed to the Companions. The terseness of these passages recalls the style of the Mishna, and they appear distinct from the *Zohar*'s running commentary to the Torah. I have included this passage of *Matnitin* here because it appears here in numerous manuscripts. (Ct1, Ct2, Ly3, M5, M8, Ms5, N6, N41, N47, O17, V16, Z2). This passage concludes below at note 278. It appears with some variation in *Zohar* 1:151b-152a as *Tosefta*. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 163-214.[217]

In some senses, Matt's program mirrors that of Mopsik's annotated French translation which realized the completion of all of the Book of Genesis (in addition to related projects), except that Mopsik chose to translate the full text of the printed edition in all its editorial decisions as the received text. Matt's ongoing edition selects the 'Body of the *Zohar*' as its text, ignoring the form-critical decisions of the printers, but begins its inquiry with their text, 'correcting' it according to manuscripts and following their lead in the interpolation of passages that scholarship recognizes as separate units.

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[216] Ibid., p. xvi.

[217] Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume 4, p. 61, n. 271.

Matt's edition has followed the program that was conceived, prior to the preparation of the first volume, with the help of scholars in the field who comprise the 'academic committee' of the project. The collective input compelled the choice of editing and translating of the *work* of the *Zohar* that resides somewhere between the manuscripts and the printed edition(s), ultimately being unfaithful to both formats. In the interests of expediency and with a desire to realize the completion of some (full) definition of 'the *Zohar*', Matt began with a translation of the 'Body of the *Zohar*', skipping over all other literary sections. As the project progressed the methodology evolved from a general perception of publishing this 'Body of the *Zohar*' as a section found within the printed *Sefer ha-Zohar*, to a more deconstructed view of the zoharic literature. So in the fifth volume, Matt states quite plainly that *Zohar* was not a book until the printers made it into a book. Nevertheless, the Pritzker edition that Matt is producing, seeks to address the cultural and literary expectations of the *Zohar* as a commentary to the Torah, more so than the textual evidence of the manuscripts to the 'Body of the *Zohar*' provide. A comprise is thus offered which is informed by the printed editions, and so imitates, and at times replicates, their editorial decisions, such as including *Sabba de Mishpaṭim* (and *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*) when insufficient material is located in order to fill the frame of the Zohar as a running commentary to each pericope. Note the conflation of both methodological foci in the preface to the new volume:

> The unique styles of both including *Sava de Mishpaṭim* and *Sifra di-Tsni'uta* remind us that the *Zohar* is not really a book, but rather a compilation of books – a body of literature comprising over twenty discrete sections written in a circle (or circles) of authors over many years, then gradually revised edited, and compiled into what became known as the *Zohar*. In a genuine sense, the Zohar only became a book when it was printed in Italy in the sixteenth century.[218]

In providing a new frame of the flow and arrangement of the zoharic texts and in reconstituting the text itself through consultation with manuscript sources, *Matt's edition is thus the most recent chapter in the modern perceptions of the literary nature and identity of the zoharic literature.* From another perspective, we could say that Matt has not placed himself outside of the scribal traditions of the transmission history of the manuscript texts, but has reopened this tradition and inscribed himself within these methods and the process

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[218] Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume 5, p. xiii.

through which the texts have evolved since the Middle Ages. Looking back on its printing history, Matt comments on the fascinating phenomenon of revisions made to the text in later manuscripts, as well as between its manuscript witnesses. This inner life of the zoharic texts can be documented from studying the manuscripts.

> Upon further examination, I noticed something more intriguing – a phenomenon familiar to scholars of medieval texts. Within the manuscripts themselves were signs of an editorial process: revision, reformulation, and emendation. *After careful analysis, I concluded that certain manuscripts of older lineage reflect an earlier recension of the Zohar, which was then reworked in manuscripts of a later lineage.*[219]

Future research will need to investigate the meaning(s) and history of '*Guf ha-Zohar*', the 'Body of the *Zohar*', often identified as the *Zohar to the Torah*. My cursory check of its history places the first reference in the works of R. Jacob Emden, although this might not have been employed as a technical term or proper name of a literary section (*guf ha-sefer ha-qadosh*).[220] Here, we should recall the remarks recorded in the name of R. Isaac of Acre, who categorized texts by the main language employed in the composition, Aramaic and Hebrew, in order to identify 'the authentic work (of the *Zohar*)' (*ha-sefer ha-'amiti*): 'He said in truth, that the forger fabricated some of it and claimed that he received [it all], because what was written in Aramaic should be believed to come from R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. And if you view a text in Hebrew, believe that these are the words of the forger because the authentic book is entirely in Aramaic'.[221] With such distinctions in mind, it is important to understand what was Emden's understanding of the '*guf ha-zohar*' and how it is defined or appears functionally in modern scholarship. Does it refer to the collection of (midrashic) interpretations of the *Zohar* to the narrative frame of the Torah? Did such a collection ever constitute a book or a midrashic anthology of midrashim that participates in this genre of edited midrashic collections? Or, as I suspect, is

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219 Ibid., volume 1, p. xvi (emphasis added).

220 See Jacob Emden, *Miṭpaḥat Sefarim*, Jerusalem 1995, p. 20. Also see p. 61 where he refers to the author of *guf sefer ha-zohar*. See further Milzahagi, *Sefer Raviah*, fol. 32a: '*guf ha-Zohar ha-'iqqari*'. See also Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 315. The term '*iqqari* seems to have been adopted by many scholars today when they use the designation 'the main body of the *Zohar*' when referring to *guf ha-Zohar*.

221 Tishby , *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 13.

this concept of such a book, a virtual work that has been constructed by scholars who enthusiastically presumed all these years that such a book could lay beneath the aggregate textual body of zoharic literature, that is in between the various textual units, waiting to be redeemed by a modern editor.

Arthur Green

In the companion volume to the Pritzker translation, Arthur Green devoted a chapter to 'the question of authorship'.[222] As evidenced by the following passage, Green incorporates much of the current theories about the *Zohar's* composition, particularly Matt's analysis of old-new traditions in the *Zohar*[223] and Liebes' theory of the zoharic circle.

> The question of the *Zohar's* origins has puzzled its readers since that first appearance, and no simple and unequivocal statement as to the question of its authorship can be made even in our own day. There is no question that the work was composed in the decades immediately preceding its appearance. It responds to literary works and refers to historical events that place it in the years following 1270. The 1280's seem like the most likely decade for composition of the main body of the *Zohar*, probably preceded by the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and possibly certain other sections. Indeed it is quite possible that the *Zohar* was still an ongoing project when texts of it first appeared, and that parts of it were being written even a decade later. [...] Fragments of the *Zohar* were first distributed by Rabbi Moses de Leon, who claimed that they were copied from an ancient manuscript in his possession. [...] While they may have known that de León was the writer, and may even have participated in mystical conversations that were reflected in the emerging written text, they did believe that the *content* of the *Zohar's* teaching was indeed ancient and authentic. They probably saw nothing wrong in the creation of a grand literary fiction that provided for these ancient-yet-new teachings an elevated literary setting, one worthy of their profound truth.[224]

Green's phrasing reveals a number of assumptions about the literary status of the *Zohar*, foremost the presumption that an author existed who, with intent, designed an overriding literary structure that organizes the *Zohar* as a whole,

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[222] Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar*, Stanford 2004, pp. 163-168.

[223] Daniel Matt, 'New-Ancient Words', idem, '*Matnita Dilan*: A Technique of Innovation in the *Zohar*', *The Age of the Zohar* [=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8], ed. J. Dan, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 123-145 [Hebrew].

[224] Ibid., p. 163.

from the 'fragments' which were distributed as part of the 'on-going project' of the 'work' *of* the *Zohar*. On the following page, Green comments on Isaac of Acre's testimony in which it is suggested, amongst other options, that de León wrote the *Zohar* using a magical technique of the divine name, often understood as 'automatic writing'. To this Green offers another explanation, 'that he saw himself as a reincarnation of Rabbi Shimon and through the name had access to his teachings'.[225] This idea was stated more explicitly years earlier in another article by Green:

> But the problem of the *Zohar's* authorship, and especially of the relationship between Moses De Leon and Simeon ben Yohai, is not yet fully solved. True, the entire *Zohar* was composed by one man, an individual of breathtaking imaginative scope who was surely one of the great religious authors of the Middle Ages. But how did he write the *Zohar*, and what did he believe was the relationship between his writing and his claim that the book was authored by Rabbi Simeon? Many a passage in the *Zohar* is written with such an extra measure of spiritual intensity and transcendent enthusiasm that one could reasonably believe the author had felt himself possessed by a spirit other than his own as he was writing it. Could De Leon have felt that Rabbi Simeon was speaking through him, that he was the mere vessel the ancient sage had chosen for the revelation of his secrets? Here we will do well to remember that the Kabbalists were believers in reincarnation, an idea that plays a major role in the *Zohar* itself. Could the author have seen himself as Rabbi Simeon *redivivus*? Did he believe that the soul of that earlier teacher had been reborn in him and was now seeking to reveal ancient truths that had long been preserved in silence? It is to these questions that the current generation of scholars, with their keen interest in mystical psychology, will surely turn. Here the author of the *Zohar* will have to be studied not only in his own cultural context, but also in tandem with such figures as Jacob Boehme or William Blake, masters of a poetic imagination so extraordinary that any attempt to account for it, either by the author himself or by his readers, seems to lead beyond theories of poetics and towards some form of prophecy or revelation.[226]

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[225] Ibid., p. 164. See also the formulation to Green's introduction to Daniel Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume one, p. lv.

[226] Arthur Green, 'The Zohar: Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Spain', *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. P. Szarmach, Albany 1984, p. 113. On page 115 Green writes that 'The *Zohar* must be viewed as a great compendium of all the kabbalistic thought that had come before it, reworked and integrated into the author's

While I am not familiar with any historical source prior to the Kabbalah in Safed that seeks access to a text through some form of attachment to the soul of Tannaitic figures (namely this appears to be an anachronistic reading of the tradition),[227] Green's suggestion could imply a greater organizing principle of the *Zohar* as a book in that an ancient author resides beyond its composition.

Michal Oron

In a host of studies, Michal Oron has offered literary evaluations of many zoharic sections. The importance of these studies rests in the methodology she has employed that has challenged the set assumptions of much of previous scholarship regarding the literary integrity of the *Zohar* as an edited book, composed by a single author, or group of authors. In her study, 'Three Commentaries to the *Account of Creation* and Their Significance to the Study of the *Zohar*',[228] she integrated an appraisal of the textual flow of various texts in the printed edition, their configuration in the manuscript traditions, and a literary analysis of each (including themes, style and use of literary figures from Tannaitic times). Her findings show that different authors composed the various texts she analyzed and at different times. And while she casted her findings in terms of Liebes' theory of collective authorship, she indicated that the separate identity of the literary units accords well with the presumption that the manuscript traditions transmitted these units separately and that they found their place within a singular flow of the text of the *Book of the Zohar*, only in the printed editions.

> Indeed, a manuscript has not been found which contains all of these units in the entirety as they appear in the printed editions. In light of the variations and differences in style and content between these three exegetical sections covering *parshat bereshit*, we should surmise that these units were not written by a single person. It should be assumed that an editor and collector of these units was aware of the differences and separated them one from another [when arranging them in the printed edition].

Oron's research is unique in that, more than any other scholar, she has

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own all-embracing poetic imagination'.

[227] See Fine, 'Reaction of Mishna'; idem, 'Benevolent Spirit Possession in Sixteenth-Century Safed', *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. M. Goldish, Detroit 2003, pp. 101-123.

[228] *Daat* 50-52 (2003), p.197.

identified the greatest gap between literary units which were printed together in the printed editions and afforded them the greatest amount of independence with separate authors, and all without constructing a larger narrative of scholarship regarding the collective authorship of these units. So, despite her own claims to the contrary, which place her within the school of thought established by Liebes, that the 'Circle of the Zohar' was responsible for editing disparate literary traditions together, Oron has argued that later scribes, serving as editors, juxtaposed discrete units that were not edited into a document or book in the founding moments of their initial composition in Castile.

Boaz Huss

In his article published in 2001, 'The Appearance of the *Book of the Zohar*',[229] Boaz Huss offered a history of the *Zohar* as an 'imagined text', that is, the history of those who held the idea of the *Zohar* to be a defined literary work, even as the scope and essence of this 'imagined' book were perceived differently in the minds of various figures. The idea of the *Book of the Zohar* came about only after the composition and dissemination of significant parts of the *Zohar*, and which were first presented to a reading audience in different ways.[230] I wish to emphasize that no necessary connection is offered in Huss' analysis between the reception of the *Zohar* and the actual existence and dissemination of an edited corpus of zoharic literature in manuscript form. To be sure, the citation of a passage or even a large number of passages from zoharic literature under the title '*Zohar*' or '*Book of the Zohar*' is, to my mind, insufficient proof that a particular figure possessed an edited corpus of the *Zohar*. At best, these passages are telling of the consciousness, or maybe just the expectations, of reading texts that surround a book these readers never viewed.

Before further delving into the differences between the consciousness of particular kabbalists regarding the literary form of the texts and the existence of a text as an edited book, we must ask if identifying a reference to texts according to one name or another, in fact, reveals anything about the assumptions of an author. For example, if a kabbalist referred to some zoharic text by the name '*Zohar*', or 'The Midrash R. Shimon bar Yoḥai', without

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[229] Boaz Huss, 'The Appearance of the Book of the *Zohar*', *Tarbiz* 70 (2001), pp. 507-542 [Hebrew].

[230] Ibid., p. 510.

utilizing the term *sefer*, he might nevertheless have the (modern?) concept of a 'book' in mind, that is, a work with clearly understood or intended literary boundaries that presumably might be found elsewhere in an identical or similar form. The inverse is also possible, that a kabbalist might refer to a text with the term *sefer*, '*Sefer ha-Zohar*', without intending any such literary distinction between edited materials and scattered passages.[231]

Huss' article advances the scholarship on the reception of the *Zohar from a cultural perspective* in evaluating the role various zoharic texts played in kabbalistic circles leading to its sanctification and canonization, in ritual and Jewish literature.[232] Nevertheless, careful distinctions must be made between the reception of the *Zohar* as a cultural icon in kabbalistic circles (and in Jewish society in general) and the concept of a 'book', by which the surviving textual witnesses were gathered and shaped. These phenomena must further be distinguished from the organization of the actual zoharic texts in manuscripts, which present themselves as a literary entity or unity of the *Zohar* as a work.

In his article, Huss cited a number of examples of internal references by which one passage in the *Zohar* recognizes other passages within the same literary unit sharing the same literary style, and other references that possibly point to a familiarity of other literary units of the zoharic corpus. Here too, we must cast doubt on the conclusion that these examples demonstrate that the *Zohar* was composed or existed as a book according to the text's appreciation of itself and even by the kabbalist readers in these early years of its dissemination. The point is crucial, as this valuation of the cross-references in the *Zohar* is a question of its intended form within the process of its production, not its

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[231] For one of the earliest references to the *Zohar* see Joseph Weiss, 'A Contemporary Poem on the Appearance of the *Zohar*', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 8 (1957), pp. 219-221. 'There are mysteries and there is no end to books. These are ancient in the eyes of wise men; they seem new only to the cattle'. This sentence appears to refer to the *Zohar* as a book, even if by way of an allusion to Eccl. 12:12. What is interesting in this context is his emphasis on the different impressions of the readership regarding its authenticity or pseudepigraphy.

[232] See also idem, '*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 7 (1998), pp. 257-307; idem, 'The Anthropological Interpretation: The Emergence of Anthologies of *Zohar* Commentaries in the Seventeenth Century', *Prooftexts* 19 (1999), p. 119, now chapters in his book, *Like the Radiance*; Moshe Idel, '*Zohar*: A Commentary that Became a Canon', (forthcoming).

consumption. As Scholem wrote in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 'A careful analysis of all the cross-references in the *Zohar*, and of those passages which necessarily imply certain other passages leads to the conclusion that in many cases the first reference is to be found in the two sections of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, but never vice versa'.[233] Scholem thus sought to demonstrate the periodization of the composition of a 'book' by an 'author', justifying its intended form as a matter of its production. Note, of course, the resistance implicit in Scholem's comment, in that he is seeking to merge together different literary units into the unity of a *Book of the Zohar* and does not seek to establish the internal integrity of any one unit, such as the by the use internal references *within* the 'Body of the Zohar'.

No systematic work, however, has been provided regarding such references, and this remains a *desideratum* of the field. Such work is highly sensitive methodologically due to its dependence on the (subjective) interpretation of the modern reader to supply the target of the apparent allusion to existing material such that prior assumptions presume or predict the conclusions. It may very well be that 'internal references' were inserted in the zoharic text to give the *impression* of a cohesive document, even if the author(s) did not to provide such a document, initially or even ultimately, or even seek to imply that one ever existed as the product of their (collective?) hand. At a minimum, the author(s) did not wish the reader to believe that any one passage or text, anachronistic terms to be sure, were independent of the zoharic project or corpus they were producing, and this does not presume the existence or intention of a work. From my reading of *Zohar*, particularly within what is known as the *Body of the Zohar*, it seems that references such as 'it has been established by the comrades' [*'oqmuha ḥevraya*] should be distinguished from others which discuss existing interpretations of verses [*hai qera 'oqmuha*] that may refer back to Talmudic discussion, which should be better understood as part of the imaginative leap of the author(s) who saw himself or themselves as being part of the ancient time and place and so were participating in the ongoing project of rabbinic lore.[234]

I suggest that the *Zohar*, as a collection of pseudepigraphic works, was interested in presenting itself as a work which was written in, and survived in,

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[233] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 181-182.

[234] Note that other literary units, such as *Sitrei Torah* refer explicitly to the *ḥavraya*, possibly as an allusion to the *Body of the Zohar*, which this author possessed. See for example, *Zohar* 1: 146b.

incomplete forms from Tannaitic times. This self-impression further entails that *the author's (or authors') intention was to compose these texts as fragments that survived from some 'imagined' original* (in sharp contrast to the imagined book they did produce), that did not survive the vicissitudes of history. This sense of an imagined book substantively departs from Huss' use of the imagined book as a psychological marker of cultural impressions and refocuses the discussion to what was produced in written form, instead of the historical focus on the expectations and impressions of later figures as agents of culture. Moreover, the merging of the literary technique of pseudepigraphy in the sense discussed here with the appreciation of the literary form (or the intentional indeterminacy of form), reconfigures the methodology and aims of zoharic research on the early history of the *Zohar* for both its production and its reception.

If indeed the *Zohar* was not produced as a book, then the early reception history on the question of its literary form is necessarily based on the emerging interface between the intended impressions of its character and the presumptions of its readers who accepted and rejected similar constructions. Alternatively, and possibly complementary to this notion, the *Zohar*'s pseudepigraphic character was additionally chosen in order to present itself as the living tradition of the Tannaitic past when orality was privileged over literacy, venerating a time when the only fixed text of scribal documents was Scripture. Oral traditions, even if understood as textual, had greater authority precisely because they were not part of a fixed literary structure. I therefore suggest that today we should appreciate the literary products of the zoharic authorship according to intentionally competing interests, willfully composed and distributed in sections or quires, and distributed as fragments from an ideal (edited) book that in fact (and quite possibly also in the mythic consciousness of the Castilian kabbalists who penned these documents) never actually existed.

In 2008, Huss reprinted the above-cited study as chapter two of a volume on the reception of the *Zohar*, entitled, *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and the Construction of its Symbolic Value*.[235] His book discusses many aspects of canonization, sanctification and other features of the reception of the *Zohar*. In the present context, our concern is the appreciation of the production of the literature in its intended and earliest

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[235] Jerusalem 2008 [Hebrew].

forms as distinct from its reception history, namely how these materials were received and packaged in the generations following its composition and initial formation. As I wrote in the earlier version of this study, published in Hebrew in 2004, a proper delineation of the two is essential for the study of any one, so as not to confuse the categories. Once again, our subject of inquiry is the nature of the literary assumptions and presentation of the first zoharic materials, the later constructions in the minds of readers, editors and printers, and finally, the presumptions of scholars who don't always distinguish between these categories. My understanding and use of the term 'reception' differs from those employed by Huss in the above study and so the sustained use of a different methodology has led to important divergences in the results of our inquiries.

Significant conceptual changes were made by Huss to the second chapter, 'The Appearance of the *Book of the Zohar*', now sub-titled 'The Appearance of the *Idea* of the *Book of the Zohar*'. While the apparent shift in methodology as expressed in the title – from the literal claim of the existence of the book, to a history of the impressions or mindsets of early figures, regardless of their having seen an actual book – is not noted, so that the focus remains on the use of the term, 'the *Book of the Zohar*' as a possible indicator of its authority and sanctification, which then unfolds into its later canonization. Published again seven years later, Huss returns in this chapter to much of his earlier formulations and claims of the state of the field in *Zohar* scholarship:

> The emergence of the idea of the *Book of the Zohar*, the meaning of the change that took place in the dissemination of zoharic literature and the causes of this change have not been discussed in the scholarly literature. In the following I will deal with the beginning of the reception of the zoharic literature, and distinguish between the term '*Sefer ha-Zohar*', the construction of the books as a single literary unit, sanctified and authoritative, and the social forces that aided in the formation of the idea of the *Book of the Zohar* and its dissemination.
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> As Isaiah Tishby claims in the beginning of his monumental book, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, '*The Book of the Zohar* [...] is not a single, unified work, but a great literary anthology consisting of sections from various sources'. Similarly, Yehuda Liebes claimed that the *Zohar* is 'truly not a "book" but rather an entire literature with many different layers'. Avraham Elqayam offered the suggestion that the *Book of the Zohar* was not in existence before it was assembled in a codex in Byzantium in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and Daniel Abrams claimed that a critical edition of the zoharic could not be based on the assumption that *Zohar* was originally a single literary unit.

> The idea of 'the *Book of the Zohar*', that is, the idea that a literary unit by the name the *Book of the Zohar* (or *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* or the *Midrash of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai*) as that which was composed by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai was formulated some time after the writing of a significant part of the zoharic texts and their dissemination to a reading audience. That is to say, the *Book of the Zohar* is an imagined text, an idea of a literary unit whose expanse and essence were conceived and described in different ways.[236]

Leaving aside for the moment the inverted chronology of the more recent history of scholarship, Huss' claim revolves around the cultural import of the reader's responses to some zoharic materials, literary forms that remain unidentified by him in this context, amounting to a psychological record of the hopes and expectations of a readership that does not necessarily account, in his analysis, for the existence of an actual book. To be sure, Huss details various *collectanea* of zoharic materials in manuscripts in the following chapter. His methodology, however, leads him to discuss these witnesses as evidence of the 'formation of the zoharic canon', namely evidence of the emerging cultural value of the *Zohar*. My method would utilize these same manuscripts in order to look backwards historically into the literary patterns of its production and transmission, constructing a reception history internal to the story of the documents, outside of the question of their cultural status, in order to shed light foremost on what was produced at the end of the thirteenth century as a baseline or starting point of historical inquiry of the text and the quality of its versions and the literary forms which gave it expression.

At the heart of my reservations here is the understanding of reception history. Huss has well-documented the history of the cultural function of relations to the *idea* of the *Zohar* as a book, but still has not engaged the question of when the *Zohar* became a book and the reception history of the zoharic corpus outside of its cultural value. In other words, a different type of reception history is needed to begin such a project, one that records and appreciates the way the zoharic texts were composed and transformed over time, from the earliest surviving manuscripts through and including its late printing in the sixteenth century and the later permutations of its form(s) in other printed formats. Of course, an interface exists between the two, such that the assumptions and expectations of the learned reading audience that reflected upon the documents they were acquainted with are signs of how these or

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[236] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

similar figures molded the texts to meet their needs and wants, from the textual quality of the wording to its edited forms. My point is, though, that Huss' study ignores the latter and engages the cultural changes the *Zohar* evoked within its reading communities and *not* the history of the *Zohar* as a book.

I therefore wish to recall the main interest of my inquiry: the literary nature (as distinct from the perceived status) of the *Zohar* as evidenced by the surviving witnesses of materials in particular literary forms and the history of comments about these forms that supply evidence of its history. This will allow us then to measure the growing gap that was created between the assumptions and expectations of kabbalists and scholars and the material as it was initially composed and transmitted. My work on the reception of the *Book Bahir* is an example of such a methodology, where, under the heading of reception (*hitqabblut*), I charted the vicissitudes of the text in its textual quality, from manuscripts, external citations, commentaries, printing history, inclusion in later anthologies and the full history of its use in traditional and scholarly literature.

Ronit Meroz

Ronit Meroz oversees a research project of manuscripts of the *Zohar*, focusing on the pericope of *Shemot*. In a number of studies published since the project's undertaking, she expands upon Liebes' theory of 'How the *Zohar* was Written', offering in some a new thesis for understanding the literary strata of zoharic texts.[237] As we will see below in a detailed review of all that she has published to date, various methodologies are utilized and numerous conclusions suggested, some mutually exclusive and even contradictory, and some quite independent of each other. They all, however, participate in a basic assumption of collective authorship of the *Zohar*, creating a constructed literary work. The guiding principles throughout are the identification the points of similarity and difference, nearly always based on literary analysis of themes and the function of the characters in the narrative as presenting divergent views within their circle, cast back in her analysis upon the Castilian figures. In all, textual divergences are a point of departure for proving multiple authorship, namely Liebes' hypothesis of a zoharic circle, against the presumption of earlier scholarship, Scholem and Tishby, that an author produced a unified book.

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[237] Idem, 'Zoharic Narratives and their Adaptations', *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 3 (2001), pp. 3-63.

I begin with a short essay by Meroz that presented three zoharic passages that each offer different positions on messianism. Based on this description she concludes with the rhetorical question, 'can we truly and naively say that one author wrote these three stories?'.[238] In a separate article, 'Zoharic Narratives and the Adaptations', she describes the literary fraternity of kabbalists who wrote the *Zohar*, whose members were organized hierarchically with an editor presiding as head of the circle. In developing the thesis of the circle, Meroz strengthens Liebes' assumption that the literary idea of the circle was actualized in the social reality of thirteenth-century kabbalists. She substantiates this claim by citing additional literary parallels to the historical personalities of the kabbalists in Gerona and Castile. Meroz describes in this study, the existence of a separate project that will investigate the history of editing of the *Zohar* in manuscripts. Accordingly, in her literary analysis, she tracks the development of a number of epic units in their different literary contexts (of the zoharic texts). Amidst the complex and multiple uses of narrative motifs that are cast across a series of versions, Meroz concludes that there were many authors, and not that the textual differences point to stages in the composition of a single author. Meroz summarizes her conclusions as follows:

> I am inclined to conjecture, on the grounds of the existence of parallel phenomena in the *Zohar* literature, that the stylistic divergence of the narrative aspect already found in the earlier variant also attests to its stratification; I conjecture that at the beginning, the Hebrew homily stood alone and only afterwards was the narrative aspect – written in Aramaic – set into the homily.[239]

Meroz describes the process of textual development undertaken by the authors and editions, progressing from the Hebrew to the Aramaic, from a shorter to a longer version, and adding ethical or moral themes to the earlier source. The development demonstrates the new investment of ideas and places the circle of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai at its center.

In another article, 'And I was not there?',[240] Meroz analyzes an unknown

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[238] Idem, 'Messiah Now? Different Messianic Positions in the *Book of the Zohar*', *Various Views and Perspectives in the Culture of Israel: Various Views on the Beginning and the End*, ed. D. Kerem and A. Zion, Jerusalem 2000, pp. 59-72 [Hebrew], citation from p. 72.

[239] Ibid., p. 44.

[240] Idem, '"And I Was Not There?": The Complaints of Rabbi Simeon Bar Yoḥai

zoharic story she uncovered in a manuscript of the *Zohar*. In this study, she asks what was the place of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in the early layers of zoharic composition and how the literary character of these texts changed regarding R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. Meroz identifies numerous literary units which constitute the texts of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*.[241] Meroz additionally concludes that the different stories 'engage in a dialogue with one another, or more specifically, argumentation and competition between the different narratives'.[242]

In a study written in Hebrew and published in German, Meroz types the literary units uncovered in analysis as belonging to the smaller epic stratum or the larger grouping of the 'epic collection'.[243] These divisions of the epic material belong in her reading to those found mainly in the 'Body of the *Zohar*', which is distinguished from three other groupings of text in the zoharic corpus, a) the materials presented as earlier Tannatic literature which she terms *Mishnayot*, b) *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, and c) *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*. Her analysis admittedly abandons this typology in favor of a literary comparison. The stated motivation of such comparisons is to identify independent literary units that would prove the stages of redaction within the circle of the *Zohar* as described by Liebes, and correct some of the editorial judgments made by the printers, who impaired their original full form [*shlemutan ha-meqorit...nifge'a*], in order to restore them to their original form, as guided, but not determined by, future manuscript work. Meroz continues with this method, placing the life of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai at the center of the epic stratum, subdividing it into the early, middle and late periods of his life. She notes that de León's writings do not mention this stratum at all, indicating that it was composed after the completion of his (Hebrew) works in 1293, even if the dating of the composition of the larger frame of the epic collection is spread out over many decades. Ultimately, Meroz divides the *Zohar*'s composition into four stages and literary styles, apparently by smaller social or scholastic groups, even if she doesn't explain how this accords with the earlier theory of the circle.

Meroz then attempts in this study to qualify or expand Liebes' question of how the *Zohar* was written to how it was edited. Indeed, Liebes' study presumed an editing of the *Zohar*, concluding that disparate traditions and

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According to an Unknown Zoharic Story', *Tarbiz* 71 (2002), pp. 163-193 [Hebrew].

[241] Ibid., pp. 185-186.

[242] Ibid., p. 187.

[243] Idem, 'Der Aufbau des Buches Sohar', *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdischen Studien* V.II (2005), pp. 16-36.

documents were combined into the book of the *Zohar*, implying an editing of the book, but not describing or suggesting in any detail how this took place. Meroz's question is thus welcome in advancing Liebes' argument. Nevertheless, her adherence to his theoretical frame, in fact, to the assumption of their literary frame he so often mention, prevents her from asking the larger questions, which first require one to relinquish the idea of a book. In many instances, both in this study and in others, I have sensed that her conclusions have gone beyond this frame, even though all theoretical discussions restrain the material and revert back to the multiplicity within the book and the circle.[244]

Continuing with this type of inquiry, Meroz analyzed additional passages in her study 'The Weaving of Myth: A Study of Two Stories in the *Zohar*',[245] analyzing two stories and in one of the cases comparing a shorter version in manuscript to the printed version. These stories are not counted amongst nearly twenty such passages she has identified as the epic stratum [*ḥativah*] concerning the life of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai which existed 'independently from the remainder of the book'.[246] Nevertheless, she again states her claim that '[t]he *Book of the Zohar* has many authors and is made up of distinct ideational and literary units'.[247]

Many questions arise from the identification of these stories as independent literary units and the analysis of their textual versions outside of their editorial context in the zoharic manuscripts and place in the printed editions. If we are to evaluate these conclusions critically in order to understand the *process* of

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[244] One example of such a departure, even if not cast as such, is found in her article, 'Ezekiel's Chariot: An Unknown Zoharic Commentary', *Te'udah* 16-17 (2001), pp. 567-616 [Hebrew], where she writes (p. 573) of 'zoharic literature in the broader sense of the term (namely, not only that which was printed in the *Book of the Zohar*, but rather also that which was written by people who were close it its authors)'. See also p. 591 where multiple circles in the thirteenth century are discussed including 'the gnostic kabbalists', even though this definition has long been dismissed given the tremendous gap between the brothers Isaac and Jacob ha-Kohen, where the former displays a clear doctrine of evil in his celebrated 'Treatise of on the Left Emanation', while the latter composed a very different commentary to Ezekiel's chariot.

[245] Idem, 'The Weaving of Myth: A Study of Two Stories in the *Zohar*', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, volume two, pp 167-205 [Hebrew].

[246] Ibid., p. 168.

[247] Ibid., p. 167.

composing and editing the *Zohar* as a book, we must ask whether we should assume that there is an 'original' text, an Urtext,[248] which can be identified as the starting point of the literary development of the various versions of a particular literary unity? Studies in folklore and oral literature[249] have developed methodological tools for evaluating stories as a phenomenon whose formative history is not linear, progressing, as it were, from a brief textual base to an expanded literary structure. Rather, different versions could have been developed for different reasons and we might therefore presume that similar versions had different authors.

We might benefit also from rethinking the boundaries, as understood by pervious scholars, between the first author and the second author, or even edition, who in effect rewrote the text. Such adaptations were undertaken by active readers of a text who interacted with the source by expressing their understandings with marginal and interlinear glosses that eventually became part of the text through its transmission history or though a more aggressive rewriting of the document. As I have argued in the first chapter of this volume, such a figure becomes one of the authors of the work, or at the very least, the author of one of its version. In these cases, the dividing line between commentator and the (second) author is blurred, and the various textual layers of texts no longer demonstrate the linear development of a single author's efforts.[250] The conclusion is based of course on the assumption that there is a necessary identification between the personality of an author and the doctrines and mythic characters developed in a text. I am inclined to more maximally expand the literary range of what might have been produced by a particular author. That is to say, one figure might significantly alter his writing style, or serve as editor to a revision of a work he once composed at an earlier time. Even if we were to conclude that multiple authors produced the various literary units

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[248] See for example Martin Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, Tübingen 1985; Peter Schaefer, *Hekhalot Studien*, pp. 75-83.

[249] Jan Vanisina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison and London 1985; John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1988.

[250] In another context, Meroz's study outlines the progressive stages in the thought of R. Isaac Luria at the expense of reception history amongst Luria's students as authors who rewrote or reinterpreted what they received. See Ronit Meroz, 'Faithful Transmission Versus Innovation: Luria and his Disciples', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, pp. 257-274.

of the *Zohar*, and possibly even different authors to the literary sections of each unit, methodological restraint should be exercised so as not to exaggerate the divisions and radically atomize its literary structure in the aim of uncovering the identity or character of the author behind each type of composition.

Thus, it becomes difficult to accept scholarship's prior assumptions concerning the psychological conditions of authorship. From Scholem to Liebes and Meroz, scholars have assumed that the psychological tension that would be created within an individual wrote in various styles is so great that it could not be assumed that a single author was responsible for various literary products. I would challenge this assumption and leave open the possibility for a complex figure who was able, at different times or even simultaneously, to assume various roles and writing styles. Methodological caution is nevertheless in order when considering the authors of all the literary units of the *Zohar*, including the midrashic commentary to the Pentateuch. Consensus seems to have been reached amongst scholars that the process of composition shifted from Hebrew to Aramaic and from allegorical to mythic forms of writing.[251] It is not self evident though which texts were written from an earlier version in order to enhance the centrality of the character of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. Further research will map out these texts across various manuscripts.

One may further wish to engage the more basic question of the degree to which the role of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai is necessary to characterize the literary phenomenon of '*Zohar*'. Such analyses presume a particular understanding of the *Zohar* and most likely are based on the assumption that the full form of the *Zohar*'s composition is its identity as a book, thus allowing for a comparison of zoharic texts to other kabbalistic works. Put differently, is the myth of the circle of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai the foundational myth of the 'Book of the *Zohar*', the myth which was realized in the composition of the *Zohar*, or as formulated in different ways by Liebes and Meroz, does this myth reflect back upon the

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[251] On the choice of Aramaic as the language of composition see Charles Mopsik, 'Le judéo-araméenn tardif, langue de la Cabale théosophique', *Les Cahiers du Judaisme* 6 (1999-2000), pp. 4-13, reprinted in idem, *Chemins de la cabale: Vingt-cinq etudes sur la mystique juive*, Paris and Tel Aviv 2004, pp. 353-368. And see now: Idem, 'Late Judeo-Aramaic: The Language of Theosophic Kabbalah', *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006), pp. 21-33; Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Late Aramaic: The Literary and Linguistic Context of the "*Zohar*", Ibid., pp. 5-19; Yehuda Liebes, 'Hebrew and Aramaic as Languages of the *Zohar*', Ibid., pp. 35-52.

social circle of the Castilian kabbalists at the end of the thirteenth century?[252]

In an additional study on an unknown zoharic story,[253] Meroz returns to her methodology of weaving assumptions about the Castilian fraternity with a literary analysis of the interactions of the members of the fraternity within the pages of the *Zohar*. In a very telling passage, she states her more basic assumption of how these two foundations correspond to the state of the surviving manuscripts and her assumptions about the nature of the *Zohar* as a book.

> Historical sources indicate that the 'Book' of the *Zohar* was disseminated in separate quires. The copiers who handled different types of texts combined and edited them in various ways, each copier on the basis of his own considerations. Moreover, pages were lost or got mixed up, which led to a situation where there are hundreds of *Zohar* manuscripts, none of them complete, and not two of them identical. It is no wonder, therefore, that in all this confusion there still remain *Zohar* texts that have never been published. At the same time, upon close examination, one gets the impression that confusion alone cannot account for this situation. There is a strong basis for the view that occasionally particular texts were deliberately removed from the *Zohar* literature due to censorship, probably executed by editors or copyists.[254]

In reading these introductory remarks it seems clear that Meroz is working with a concept of a book as an intended literary frame constructed with editorial

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[252] Was *Tiqqunei Zohar* initially edited as a 'Book' composed of seventy chapters (*Tiqqunim*), and later additional chapters were added? If so, we might consider the possibility that the myth of the *Zohar*'s composition or distribution in distinct quires came to fruition in the literary context of the composition of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. See the proofreader's comments at the end of the printed edition (fol. 148a): 'The proofreader said: Until here I found [in the original manuscript], and perhaps these eleven *Tiqqunim* are part of the seventy, except that no one noticed and marked them. And I have found other collectanea. And since my heart told me that they were not part of the *Tiqqunim* but were rather scattered tracts [*ma'amarim mefuzarim*] from the *Book of the Zohar*, I set them aside to save them for myself for later until I discern what they are. And if God will be with me and I will be placed on the correct path, I will print these precious and awesome words which have not been revealed until this day. And blessed is the Lord who has not set my prayer aside and His love from me, awarding me this merit.

[253] Ronit Meroz, 'The Path of Silence: An Unknown Story from a *Zohar* Manuscript', *The European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (2007), pp. 319-342.

[254] Ibid., p. 320.

intent from parts that were composed by different members of a circle who were consciously, and with forethought, contributing to this literary project. The quires are mentioned as a function of the dissemination of the book already in existence at that time, and thus the state of the *Zohar* manuscripts, including a unique story identified by her in manuscript, is attributed to the later intervention – censorship and copying – of figures who are part of the transmission history.

Her method here seems to maintain the literary integrity of the *Zohar* as a book and explain away any textual instability through the tensions she uncovers between the Castilian kabbalists who produced these documents. But note, no evidence is found outside of the text that speaks only about the literary figures *within* the zoharic narrative, building once again upon the strong assumptions that the actual characters of the presumed Castilian fraternity correspond in a very literal way to the literary figures of the *various* zoharic texts:

> The following analysis of the text will proceed from the premise that the *Zohar* was not written by one person but rather by a large group of people — a vibrant and creative group, whose activities spanned many years. Naturally, such a group was not homogenous. It included teachers and leaders, namely people who were more dominant and who influenced the others, as well as less dominant members who willingly accepted the formers' opinions and often admired them. One would also evidently encounter different views and disagreements, disputes, and diverse writing styles.[255]

As she writes later on, 'consistency' and 'ambiguity' are the motivating forces of her hermeneutic for an intertextual reading and analysis of the social reality behind the text. The scholar's expectations have thus been brought to bear upon the material from without, such that the conclusion of multiple authorship seems to be offered in advance of the literary analysis.

In another study, and along different lines, Meroz opened up the literary process of what we know to be the *Zohar*, namely its texture as an Aramaic text, accomplished through acts of rewriting, revisions of translations conducted by various individuals and culminating in the 'definitive version' of the (first) printed edition(s).

> When we compare the Hebrew and the Aramaic in these bilingual passages, we cannot escape the conclusion that these passages were originally composed in Hebrew—with the Aramaic serving as its translation [...] Thus, it seems that the

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[255] Ibidem.

> translation was undertaken simultaneously by a number of different people who worked independently of one another over the course of the centuries between the *Zohar*'s composition and the fixing of the definitive version of the zoharic text, with its printing in the 16th century.[256]

Once again, yet another thesis is offered here, that the revisions continued on through the centuries, alongside an additional thesis that material from Geonic times in Babylonia was 'inserted' or re-worked into the zoharic text. She dates a passage which she names 'the midrash of Rabbi Isaac', to sometime before 1068, based on calculations of the end of days. She writes:

> The calculations of the End-time noted in the unit supply the reasoning for this dating. Over the years, this unit evolved from generation to generation, and was adapted and enlarged upon until it became absorbed into the zoharic text as we know it now from the printed editions. We also find that the multiple-authorship thesis for The *Zohar* is simply the most likely conclusion one can derive from the evidence presented about the early strata of the *Zohar* and their gradual development. Thus, it would seem that the hidden roots of the zoharic tree were planted in the Moslem East, while its top spread out in Christian Spain.[257]

To my mind, the text is not necessarily a messianic speculation, with a specific date, but a proverbial and rhetorical expression of the many years of exile that should be anticipated after the destruction of the Temple and exile of the people. The air of this textual tradition, which, it should be recalled, was not discovered in any text from Geonic times, but was so interpreted based on her argument, could be explained better, perhaps, by resorting to the historical consciousness of a Castilian kabbalist in the thirteenth century who could have projected himself pseudepigraphically into Tannaitic times and used the number 1,000 as a nice, round number to mark a lengthy period of time.

Most recently, Meroz published a lengthy article entitled 'R. Joseph Angelet and his Zoharic "Writings"'[258] in which she identifies numerous passages from the printed edition of the *Zohar* as the literary product of this early fourteenth-century kabbalist. Returning to Liebes' study and method in 'How the *Zohar*

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[256] *Idem*, 'The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah', *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (2007), pp. 39-56. citation from page 41.

[257] Ibid., p. 49.

[258] Idem, 'R. Joseph Angelet and his "Zoharic Writings"', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. R. Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 303-404 [Hebrew].

was Written' in order to reassess the status of Angelet, Meroz responds to Liebes' characterization of him as an 'authoritative continuer'[259] of the zoharic circle, and now includes him as 'one of the authors of the *Book of the Zohar*', further extending the activity of the 'Circle of the *Zohar*', beyond the death of its presumed editor, R. Moses de León.[260] While these textual identifications are an important discovery and a refreshing step forward in understanding the literary contributions of the various Spanish kabbalists, the analysis suffers methodologically when it evaluates the literary phenomena under discussion.[261] So that there be no misunderstanding, let me be clear at the outset that my critique here is not about the importance of the material presented and the discovery of new parallels of this kabbalist, but rather my critique is limited to the theoretical structure of how a modern scholar engages such written materials in terms of the questions of authorship, literary production, reception history, and the medieval culture of textuality, from orality through the various forms of manuscript composition and its reification in print.

Meroz outlines her method for considering the identification of Angelet's style in the various passages of the printed edition she analyzes with an aim of appreciating its zoharic quality. To this end, she speaks of the 'Zoharicity' [*zohariyuto*][262] of a text, determined by the four criteria of its affinity to accepted zoharic texts according to its a) content, b) style and the approval of such by c) the printers, d) commentators and academic scholars from the fourteenth century to the present:

> How is it customary to decide and determine if a particular text is zoharic or not? The two litmus tests which serve scholars are content and style. Moreover, since till this day we have no hard facts abut the character and time of the *Book of the Zohar*, in our attempts to determine if a particular text should be considered zoharic, our leaning is to rely on the decisions made by those who

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[259] Ibid., p. 309, citing Liebes p. 64.

[260] Ibid., p. 310.

[261] These failings include foremost the categories and ideas offered in the earlier version of the present study, delivered at the same conference and published three years prior to the article on Angelet.

[262] A term coined by Yehuda Liebes. See Liebes, 'The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*', p. 290; idem, 'Review of: Melila Hellner-Eshed, A *River Issues Forth from Eden*', *Dimui* 25 (2005), pp. 65-69 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Hebrew and Aramaic as Languages of the *Zohar*', *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006), pp. 35-52, where the English translation (p. 39) worked itself around and out of the phrase found in the original Hebrew posted at his web site.

> came before us. As parts of our deliberation in deciding the 'Zoharicity' of a text, we use a third test, of a bibliographic character: we check if a certain text is found in the printed editions of manuscripts which include the title '*Zohar*', or if it is included in manuscripts which are exclusively *Zohar*, that is to say, if they belong to one of the 'Zoharic anthologies'. We thus rely in fact on the knowledge and judgment of the scribes and printers of the previous centuries. In a similar fashion we are inclined to rely on a fourth test, in depending on the [determinations of] commentators and academic scholars from the fourteenth century to the present.[263]

Note how the first two tools which serve modern scholars are devalued relative to the historically positioned opinions of the kabbalists, thereby conflating independently obtained decisions about production with the history of its reception. Meroz holds steadfast to the presumption that the *Zohar* is a book, referring time and again to *Sefer ha-Zohar*, and not just in reference to the bound volume(s) of the printed format. Indeed, amidst her discussion, she also embraces the idea of the *Zohar* as a book with imagined borders, a larger anthology[264] and at times identifies it as a book comprised of strata [*shekhavot/revadim*], which comment or textually relate one to another. Due to the multiple, and at times, mutually exclusive definitions, it becomes difficult to follow when the *Zohar* is a book or a writing style, defined by its appearance in manuscripts that existed, exist today, or by the printed format that possibly restored what she believes to have been produced by the extended (and multiple) circles of its authors. The problem of the working definition for evaluating the nature of the material under discussion is exacerbated by the claim that a later figure was clearly active when the *Zohar* was thought to have been completed and by anonymous figures who began their own works in similar styles. So, Angelet's use of titles and literary references from earlier zoharic production prompts Meroz to state that:

> We must acknowledge the fact that the term '*Zohar*' changed its meaning over the centuries that passed since its composition, especially because it contains more and more texts that are counted within the same literary movement, and even [the same] ideological movement. It makes sense that we cannot decide to term certain strata *Zohar* and the interpretive strata as post-*Zohar*. If we insist that one of the characteristics of zoharic writing is the interpretation to other

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263 Ibid., p. 310.

264 Citing Elqayam's application of the concept from related scholarship concerning the Bible. See Meroz, Ibid., p. 310 n. 17.

> zoharic texts, the fictitious border between them will disappear. We should view the *Zohar* as a book that represents literary activity that was produced over a number of generations. As far as we can tell today, the creators of the *Book of the Zohar* became active the seventies of the thirteenth century, at the latest, in the Iberian Peninsula, and continued over a number of generations until the end of the third decade of the fourteenth century at the latest. That is, until the end of the years of activity of the author of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and R. Joseph Angelet. The activity of editing of these texts began in its early stages, and continues to this day, and incidentally so the Books of the *Zohar* changes anew.[265]

Meroz raises yet another consideration, emphasizing in the footnote to this paragraph that, contra Liebes, she claims the existence of 'multiple circles and the continuous process of commentary and editing of the [zoharic] text and its endless dynamism'.

I cite Meroz's statements at length so that there be no question regarding the stated methodology that I am critiquing. Meroz's study oscillates between competing methodologies, to a large extent, due to the conflation of interests in the complex production of zoharic writings – based on the unstated presumption that a book or defined corpus was intentionally created, *and* the partially explored critique of the editorial decisions of its printing history, curiously sanctified as the prism through which manuscripts are evaluated. My claim, therefore, is that, as scholars, we must distinguish between the perception and assumptions of the medieval kabbalists regarding the zoharic texts and the actual evidence of the surviving manuscript witnesses. Both are important questions that must be kept distinct, precisely because the demands of textual scholarship require the separate evaluation of production and consumption, texts as they are recorded and texts as they are perceived (as works and books). The case in point is Angelet's imitation, citation and reworking of the zoharic text. While one can blur these boundaries to subsume him under the larger activity of writing in zoharic style – forcing an expanded definition of Liebes' thesis of a zoharic circle – Angelet recognized that a work or discrete text already existed for him to imitate. That later scribes and printers appended his text to the zoharic corpus does not entirely break down the identity of the *Zohar* as distinct from later imitations and reworkings. The analogous case of Angelet is the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* who both perceived himself to be and wrote outside of the literary

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[265] Ibid., p. 312.

form of the *Zohar*, even if the printers were often confused about this difference and fused them together in their determinations of the printed boundaries of the texts.

Separating these categories out of methodological vigilance, I would affirm that both are part of the larger phenomenon of zoharic literature and that in this case the literary self-awareness of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* converges with the distinct style and structure of his literary product as separate from the earlier zoharic texts, whether or not scholarship can clearly define their boundaries as works. In the case of Angelet, I would suggest that his late date and the new evidence of his writing in zoharic style stretches Liebes' paradigm to the point that those who still hold fast to the idea of a circle should consider the breakdown of the circle proper, or at least reconsider the need to define the activity as organized, with prior intent, as a literary effort of redacting a fixed text and form by R. Moses de León. To be sure, the strong affinity of R. Moses de León's works (again, presumptuously referred to for many years as his 'Hebrew writings') to the zoharic corpus will always place him at the center of any theory concerning its production. Nevertheless, the mounting evidence of the multiple roles and variegated literary activity of his contemporaries with whom he did not necessarily work with in person and who continued to be active after his death begs the question whether scholarship should still hold on to the idea of the *Zohar* as a book and work backwards from that conviction to identify the authors and thereby modify this thesis, stage by stage, to accommodate new evidence regarding new observations and discoveries about Castilian Kabbalah. It might be helpful to abandon any hard and fast distinction between authorship, redaction and imitation, as growing literary evidence continues to defy a clear literary program, the clarity in form being the product of later generations of editors and printers.

Meroz's methodology is anchored by a constant return to the editorial decisions of the late printers, noting with surprise any deviation in structure or phrasing with the manuscript witnesses. Not considered, at least not explicitly, is the creative hand of these later editors in reshaping, renaming and re/presenting the sources at their disposal to achieve their editorial product. While on the one hand, one could inscribe the printed edition within the medieval culture of scribal transmission, relating to it in current scholarship as yet another signpost in the text's transformation, such an orientation is an unfortunate step backwards in that it detracts from an appreciation of the *Zohar*'s production and a fruitful inquiry into the earliest sources that record its transmission from the first stages of its production.

Meroz's inquiry into the texts of Angelet is accomplished through the prism of the printed edition that she uses as her basic reference for its text and pagination. Significant constellations of his text appear in manuscript witnesses, indicating the later juxtaposition and inclusion of the material into the printed editions. That is to say, the correction to scholarship is by far less than it might seem, as the role of the scholar is, or should be in such cases, to outline the historical process of composition, redaction and reception of the literature, showing how and when a text became a work and not a critique of the printed form of a book in its later eighteenth- through twentieth-century formats.[266] The manuscript evidence brought by Meroz highly suggests that Angelet's material was woven into some of the manuscripts and the printed editions that invented the *Book of the Zohar* as we now know it.

Once again, from a form-critical perspective, the starting point of an evaluation of the identify of a figure who composed passages of a particular style or content should begin with the earliest known forms of the materials, tracing their appearance through the literary structures and means through which they were transmitted, including their eventual publication in print. A methodologically sound basis of such an inquiry, in my view, would *begin* (and not end) with the publication of the complete outline of all the known manuscript witnesses to the zoharic literature, analyzing the recurring structures and patterns of editing, which could be used to outline the trajectories of editings into their received forms amongst later communities of readers. Put sharply, I fail to see why modern scholarship continues to privilege the sixteenth- through twentieth-century shaping of the *Zohar* over the manuscript witnesses (or worse, demonstrating an inability to distinguish between them), transforming it into the starting point of an inquiry. Indeed, it is necessary to deconstruct the arrangement of the printed edition in order to understand the later development of manuscript sources, but more importantly, we should deconstruct our own presumptions and build up conceptually, textually and historically. These methodological clarifications

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[266] References to the Margolioth edition, to the exclusion of Cremona, are most curious. Margolioth's edition was the most common edition amongst scholars since the 1950s but was popularly replaced by Ashlag's edition, 'The Sulam', and then by the newer two column Aramaic and Hebrew translation. Margolioth's text and format is based on that of the Vilna printing, which in turn was based on earlier version, most notably the expanded integration of the first two editions of Mantua and Cremona, according to the synthesis of the Amsterdam 1715 edition.

should help the reader to critically sift through Meroz's claim for the multiple roles of Angelet, as author, copyist, imitator and commentator of zoharic sources.

Elliot Wolfson

In his edition of Moses de León's *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, Elliot Wolfson charted countless parallels between this work and the *Zohar*. This fully annotated edition is of special importance in light of Scholem's claim that de León composed the *Zohar* between 1280 and 1286, so that the *Zohar* was available as 'a completed work' to de León for citation when composing *Sefer ha-Rimmon* in 1287.[267] Following the critique of Tishby, Wolfson noted a 'few significant inconsistencies between *Sefer ha-Rimmon* and the *Zohar*'.[268] Most importantly, Wolfson writes that de León does not display a 'uniform approach' to the zoharic materials and rabbinic texts. The zoharic character of some of de León's Hebrew locutions which cannot be located in the surviving zoharic literature suggests to Wolfson that de León imitated or 'invented' sources in the zoharic style, writing in 'the vein of the *Zohar*'.[269] He adds that 'the borrowings flow so effortlessly from de León's pen that he leaves one with the impression that he is not so much using the *Zohar* – as some external sources – but rather thinking in its very modes of language and thought'.[270] Most interesting are the 'discrepancies' he noted between the *Zohar* and *Sefer ha-Rimmon* that fall under another category. Following an examination of such examples with respect to the *Idrot*, he suggested that 'Scholem's claim that "a detailed analysis" of all the books written under de León's name "proves that they presuppose the existence of the *Zohar* as a completed work" is not fully substantiated, at least not in the case of *Sefer ha-Rimmon*'.[271]

In numerous studies which followed this edition, Wolfson's understanding of the literary status of the *Zohar* underwent significant changes. As will be discussed below, his study, 'Left Contained in Right' uniquely offered a holistic view of the narrative structure of the pericopes of *shemot* through *yitro* in the printed format of the *Zohar* as a book, tracing the structure and progress of the *Zohar* as a literary creation from Genesis through Exodus. In a study on 'Forms

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[267] Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 192,

[268] Wolfson, *The Book of the Pomegranate*, p.44

[269] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[270] Ibid., p. 48.

[271] Ibid., p. 55.

of Visionary Ascent' in the *Zohar*, Wolfson retreated from much of the language that has dominated *Zohar* scholarship and began to write about the 'authorship of the *Zohar*',[272] even if as we shall see from the concluding passage of this study, he wrestles with the correspondence between the narrative drama between the members of the circle in the zoharic text and the actual, mystical lives and practices of Castilian kabbalists.

> That is, are we justified in reading these passages as allusions to a contemporary mystical rite that the Spanish kabbalists in the last decades of the thirteenth century (and perhaps also the first decades of the fourteenth century) experienced? Were there midnight study groups in Castile that provided the context for communal kabbalistic study and visionary ascents to the divine pleroma? It is likely that the zoharic description of a similar ritual connected with the night of Pentecost, involving the study of different aspects of Torah throughout that night, was in fact rooted in some actual practice on the part of this circle of kabbalists which, as Liebes has argued, may have had messianic implications. It seems to me that the zoharic references to the communal midnight study of Torah also reflect actual practice and are not to be construed simply as imaginative constructions of one idiosyncratic individual (Moses de León), that actual gatherings set the stage for the narrative drama that unfolds in the pages of the *Zohar*. The biographical data of the thirteenth-century mystics are cloaked in the mythical garb of R. Simeon bar Yoḥai and his colleagues. Like all mythologies, however, the mythic portrayal in the *Zohar* is anchored in an historical reality. If that is the case, then perhaps some of the kabbalistic practices discussed in zoharic literature are not, as Scholem suggested, rites which its author had only dreamed of and projected back into a remote archaic past Many of these new rites recommended by the *Zohar,* which attributed them to Simeon ben Yoḥai and his circle, were practiced for the first time in Safed. That the mystical rites mentioned in the *Zohar* were projected back to second-century Palestine cannot be denied; however, the question of when they were first actually practiced or whether the zoharic descriptions sometimes represent kabbalistic interpretations of existing rituals remains open. It may be the case that some of the rites described in the *Zohar* refer to actual practices that were preserved in small circles of kabbalists or were recovered by the Safedian kabbalists and eventually popularized through the influence of Lurianic Kabbalah on pietistic, devotional and moralistic literature

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[272] Idem, 'Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in Zoharic Literature', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, p. 211; see also p. 219, 'zoharic authorship', and p. 221, 'in the main body of zoharic literature'.

> as Scholem concluded. The determination of whether or not actual practice underlies the kabbalistic rites recorded in the *Zohar* depends upon one's orientation towards the literary nature of this work and the priority that one gives to practice and experience as opposed to symbols and myths. In point of fact these two issues are not unrelated: by shifting the focus from single to multiple authorship scholars will begin more readily to acknowledge the historical group behind the fictional fellowship of R. Simeon bar Yoḥai and will therefore appreciate the lived and living experiences underlying many of the theoretical and exegetical deliberations in the *Zohar*. The particular motif of visionary ascent, analyzed in detail in this study, provides an excellent window through which one can view the profoundly ecstatic and mystical elements of zoharic theosophy.[273]

I read Wolfson's comments as a marker of the shift away from Scholem's scholarly disposition to identify the author and appreciate his book as the product of his religious and literary imagination, to a new scholarly interest in social phenomena that produced a complex text on many levels. Wolfson's hermeneutic, as demonstrated in various other studies, is clearly interested in the continuum between experience and interpretation, a point mentioned as well in this passage. In his historical survey of the theme of vision and imagination in Jewish mystical literature, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, the *Zohar* figures as an 'anthology', so that the 'zoharic literature' (or 'corpus')[274] as a whole phenomenologically and historically serves to capture a chapter in the history of ideas that he presented in this monograph.[275]

Many of Wolfson's studies on the *Zohar* were recently collected in a volume, entitled *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature*.[276] In the introduction, Wolfson aptly describes the progression of his own research within the greater context of how the field has developed on the literary questions of authorship. His reflection is thus indicative of the broad strokes that have shaped scholarship over the past few decades.

> The essays gathered in this book span a period from 1986 to 1999, formative years in my development as a scholar, thinker and writer. Since the time these studies were researched, composed and published, the field of zoharic studies

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[273] Ibid., pp. 234-235.

[274] idem, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 310, 333.

[275] Ibid., pp. 11, 124. Note his use of the 'zoharic authorship' on pp. 280, 334-337, 342, 345, 352, 354-355, 363, 366 and many more such uses.

[276] Oxford 2007.

> has continued to evolve. ... [Initially] I was operating with a sense of a unified textual whole (excluding of course, *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*, following Scholem's suggestion), as if there were a literary consistency that justified referring to it, and its author, in the singular.
>
> The other essays [...] all derive from I would call now a middle period [...] which is marked by leaning in the direction of a group, of seeing the zoharic work as a lattice woven from different textual threads that wind round the spool of several centuries, reaching a crescendo in the sixteenth century as the links between Palestine, especially Jerusalem and Safed, and kabbalists in Italy helped secure the publication of the first printed editions of the *Zohar*. In this period, I assume, one can discern organizing patterns in spite of the obvious multiple voices.
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> In more recent work, I have tended to refer to 'zoharic homilies', a term that I use to convey the sense of literary discreteness, leaving open the question of the authorship of these homilies. Being occupied with other matters, philosophic and hermeneutic, I have not focused on the textual issue, that is, the manner by which the fabric of the gathering of these homilies has been woven together to create the semblance of a garment. The curious thing, however, is that one can discern different voices speaking from within the weave of the fabric, and this does not disrupt the possibility of discerning iteration that renews itself indefinitely, a unifying factor that allows for difference, to think the other without assimilating the other to the same, achieving indifference, in the Levinasian sense.

Wolfson's studies thus progress along the lines of the field as a whole, from single authorship, to the product of the zoharic circle, and lastly to the zoharic homilies as literary units which participate in the textual body of *Zohar*, or following Wolfson's imagery, homilies that are cut from the same cloth of the literary product known as *Zohar*. Admittedly, he points to the future direction of research that deconstructs its literary form such that it is best to speak of the anthologizing efforts that preserved the multiple voices in the text. In this sense, he writes, we can speak of 'Zoharic Kabbalah'.[277] On the literary question, however, he concludes by stating that he is 'no longer comfortable speaking of "the *Zohar*"'.

More recently, Wolfson has written about the legitimacy of speaking of the 'Zoharic Kabbalah', and interpreting the corpus as such, while still acknowledging the differences between the literary units and the various

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[277] See already idem, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 335, 342.

authors who might have produced them, similar to the methods of modern Biblicists. Responding to Idel's critique of an earlier discussion by Wolfson on a certain topic in the *Zohar*, wherein Idel called for scholars to avoid interpretations that merge traditions in order to offer harmonistic or homogeneous explanations, Wolfson writes:

> My approach, by contrast, is based on a 'totalizing reading' of 'different theosophical narratives as if they are part of one unified pattern'. I readily admit that I have assumed a unified pattern for the zoharic literature. But this supposition does not equal a rejection of the hypothesis proffered by Liebes. One can posit several authors of a treatise and continue to speak on hermeneutical grounds of a unifying factor that allows for difference; the weave of the textual fabric does not disrupt the possibility of iteration that renews itself indefinitely. Scholars of *Zohar* can benefit from the wisdom and experience of Biblicists who do not deny the form-critical approach but who nevertheless discern repeating thought-patterns.[278]

Wolfson's point is well-taken, even if he walks a fine line between accepting Liebes' hypothesis of multiple authorship of a book and a holistic approach to a literature, comprised of (defined?) literary units, which serve a hermeneutic project that can appreciate the common discussion between texts that share

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[278] Idem, 'Structure, Innovation, and Diremptive Temporality: The Use of Models to Study Continuity and Discontinuity in Kabbalistic Tradition', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 6 (2007), pp. 143-167, citation from pages 155-156. The discussion by Idel appears in his *Kabbalah & Eros*, New Haven and London 2005, pp. 129-130. Similar remarks were offered earlier in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 48: 'In my earliest studies on *Zohar* I assumed, reflective of the more general consensus, a unified textual whole (excluding, of course, *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*, following Scholem's suggestion), as if there were a literary consistency that justified referring to it and its author in the singular; in studies from what I now deem to be my middle period I assumed, in accordance with the pioneering study of Liebes, that the body of *Zohar* is a work produced by a fraternity of kabbalists; in the third and present stage, I still think the zoharic anthology preserves multiple voices, including ideas that are either absent from or contradictory to treatises of Moses de León, but I nevertheless maintain on hermeneutical grounds that it is possible to continue to speak of a unifying factor that allows for difference; the weave of the textual fabric does not disrupt the possibility of iteration that renews itself indefinitely, a point to which I shall return below. On this score, scholars of *Zohar* can benefit from the wisdom and experience of biblicists who do not deny the form-critical approach but who nevertheless discern repeating thought patterns'.

connective tissue. The advantages of Wolfson's approach are foremost that *Zohar* scholarship does not thereby become paralyzed with open-ended textual questions and so permits the scholar who positions zoharic writings against the backdrop of kabbalistic literature as a whole to appreciate uniqueness and difference at once. The disadvantages of such an approach in light of the literary questions that preoccupy us in this study are, of course, that *Zohar* scholarship has not yet tested Liebes' hypothesis, nor applied the methods first suggested in the Hebrew version of the present essay, which stated that the *Zohar* may never have been a book. To be sure, neither necessarily contradicts the viability of a holistic approach. Rather, as the above survey of scholarship has shown, various camps have emerged in *Zohar* scholarship and it is best to identify them as such, highlighting their interests, in order to construct the agenda for future study.

In 2009, Elliot Wolfson published an edition of 'The Anonymous Chapters of the Elderly Master of Secrets'.[279] This text is positioned sometime in the end of the thirteenth century, since it refers to *'Sefer ha-Zohar'*, and passages known as *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, but no mention is made of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, leading Wolfson to conclude that the text was written at a relatively early stage in the timeline of the *Zohar's* literary development prior to the inclusion of the fraternity as a central theme.[280] Wolfson's claim is that to speak of the author of the *Zohar* misses the point, as this is irrelevant considering the literary structures and types of exegesis used in the related texts of the period as evidenced by the *'Sha'arei ha-Zaqen'*. He writes:

> It would seem more advantageous to think of the matter in terms of authorship, though even this term may presume too much with respect to authorial intent. More work remains to be done in sorting out the paradigm shift from presuming that there is a definable structure evident in the incipient stages of composition and redaction to viewing the zoharic phenomenon as a loose aggregate of homilies that were eventually woven into the fabric of a text. One thing that seems clear is that the new approaches lend support to the hypothesis, articulated already by Yitzhak Baer, that cloaked in the fictional

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[279] Elliot Wolfson, 'The Anonymous Chapters of the Elderly Master of Secrets: New Evidence for the Early Activity of the Zoharic Circle', *Kabbalah* 19 (2009), pp. 143-278.

[280] Ibid., 146.

fraternity that appears in the zoharic narrative is the 'real-life setting' of an actual group of Spanish kabbalists.[281]

Wolfson argues for evidence of social relations that exist behind and appear within the Castilian texts about kabbalistic esotericism, but holds back from equating a direct correspondence between the figures of the Zohar and named kabbalists in Castile, as in Liebes' studies. For Wolfson, the anonymity of the Zaqen exemplifies 'the mystical depths of the phenomenon',[282] and I would add that in the spirit of his study, that this applies also to the literary phenomenon of zoharic literature and certain forms of Castilian literary esotericism. The publication of the *Sha'arei ha-Zaqen* thus expands our purview of what activity could have produced the zoharic literature and the evolving methods of esotericism that produced the zoharic texts in the image that are commonly conceived of today.

Amos Goldreich

No discussion of the literary object produced in Castile would be complete, nor current, without a review of the major contribution by Amos Goldreich, in his detailed and highly erudite monograph, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism*.[283] This study is replete with nuanced insights and analyses of major phenomena and specific passages from zoharic texts and related manuscripts sources concerning to the magical and mystical techniques of inducing changes of consciousness that directly affect the production of a literary document. The consideration that some or all of the zoharic writings were so produced places these texts within a larger nexus of literary phenomena that include figures outside of what scholarship has been traditionally considered to be the author or collective authorship of the *Zohar*. But it is here that Goldreich has been forced to grapple with the unresolved debate concerning the 'Circle of the Zohar' and to work backwards, as it were, from a literary identification of the text (and its boundaries) to its free flowing and associative character – or alternatively its well-edited style and organization –

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[281] Ibid., p. 175, referring to Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, translated by Louis Schoffman, Philadelphia 1978, vol. 1, p. 267.

[282] Ibid, p. 178.

[283] Amos Goldreich, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism*, Los Angeles 2010 [Hebrew].

to the question of who wrote these documents and by what means.[284] Nevertheless, these questions, which have so often been discussed separately, are brought to bear on the other in this comprehensive study.

In one particular discussion, Goldreich contrasts the highly refined and aggressive use of the magical technique of automatic writing by the anonymous author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, who composed other works which bear the mark of highly associative writing, such as the as-yet-unpublished *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot* to more casual and only apparent use of the technique in the 'body of the *Zohar*'. It is here that Goldreich carves out a unique place in his discussion of the *Zohar* as a singular literary effort, ignoring for the moment the other zoharic literary units. At the heart of this move is an attempt to give credence, and indirectly to rehabilitate, Scholem's reading of the remark attributed to R. Isaac of Acre that R. Moses de León may have used the divine name as magical technique to produce 'the *Zohar*'. Following Scholem, the *Zohar* (but understood by Goldreich in the more limited framework as the 'body of the Zohar'), is discussed functionally according to the constructs of the 'the book and its author', even though he notes his veiled dissent with the widespread notion amongst contemporary scholars that a larger body of works was produced as an edited work by an act of collective authorship. An interesting exchange thus occurs between Goldreich and Liebes, between the lines, and literally in the footnotes, whereby the authors and works of the 'Body of the Zohar' and of *Tiqqunei Zohar* are animated in a near total identification of the authors with the literary identity of the texts, their styles and the techniques employed that match these styles, such that a chronological mapping of zoharic literary production is generated in which one figure influenced the other as the technique was passed on and used with greater intensity.[285]

8. *The Zohar is Not a Book – Nor Does It Have an 'Author'*

Gershom Scholem, like many other scholars, viewed pseudepigraphy as a literary technique that allowed the author to hide behind alternative identities, usually narrative personalities from Tannaitic literature. As we have seen in the previous pages, Scholem wrote about the '*Book of the Zohar*' according to the categories of 'the book and its author'. In this final section I will show that the

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[284] See especially, Ibid., pp. 45-50

[285] Ibid., p. 173 n. 11.

conclusions of others' research about the *Zohar* concerning its status as a book and the identification of its author, require *Zohar* scholarship to proceed with the assumption that the 'book' and its 'author' are modern constructs that in/formed the assumptions of readers from the Enlightenment to modern times. My claim is that these categories are anachronistic to the self-understanding of the kabbalists in the late thirteenth century, or at least of the authors of the *Zohar*, and a definition of the work, its composition, and the later formation of the corpus known as '*Zohar*'. Scholem was thus applying romantic conceptions of the individual onto the case study he constructed of R. Moses de León and the *Zohar*, or put more sharply we can best appreciate 'the book and its author' as the emergence in early Kabbalah scholarship of the academic [literary] critic who identifies the author, in Barthesian sense, as he who put together 'a new tissue of past citations ... and [which] are redistributed within it'[286] (especially appropriate considering the creative re-use of rabbinic traditions), so that the text as a work can bear the burden of historical-literary inquiries.

I begin this part of the inquiry with the literary forms of the sages in Tannaitic and Amoraic times. Midrashic literature does not contain books in the modern sense of the term. Midrashic works are, for the most part, later anthologies that were edited many times, displaying various layers of their content and arrangement. This is true even for the Mishnah, which is also not a book. In his article, 'The Publication of the Mishna',[287] Saul Lieberman demonstrated that R. Aqiva assembled oral traditions into a particular arrangement and taught this Order to various students. Over the years, changes were entered into this oral text by the students who were supposed to passively transmit the material to the next. R. Judah the Prince sought to rectify the situation of corrupt, or better, multiple versions and chose that of R. Akiva's student, R. Meir, as the base for a new editing that would standardize the text for future generations. In this instance it is not possible to identify 'the' editor

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[286] Roland Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited and introduced by Robert Young, Boston 1981, p. 39.

[287] Saul Lieberman, 'The Publication of the Mishna', *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, New York 1950, pp. 83-99; Dov Zlotnick, 'Memory and Integrity of the Oral Tradition', *Journal of the Ancient Near East Society* 16-17 (1984-1985), pp. 229-241; Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, Copenhagen 1964, p.121. In the context of the *Zohar* see Mopsik, 'Le corpus Zoharique', p. 81.

of the Mishna, and certainly not its author, according to any modern understanding of these terms. Moreover, by comparison, Talmudic research has questioned the veracity of all the attributions of textual traditions to the figures to who they were ascribed. Even if we were to accept the historical truth claims of such attributions, that there was an actual person behind the narrative personality and that he taught the particular tradition to his students, certainly the term and construct of 'author' would not be appropriate for describing the written text.[288]

The Tannatic rabbis transmitted their teaching orally, but did not consider themselves to be the 'authors', even when he taught the traditions in their own names and guided their students to continue to teach the same in their names. This situation does not change with the move from oral transmission to the written and printed word. Oral literature is subject to the same conditions as written text in that changes and major revisions to its structure are also evident in many cases.[289] The main point here is that in the rabbinic world of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, especially in the midrashic mode of writing, the modern construct that provides for the identification of the author is inappropriate. As members of the rabbinic community and scholastic culture, the kabbalists were similarly removed from this construct.

Further, it is necessary to sharply distinguish between the causes and nature of the creative process that produced texts and their reception history. A fresh reappraisal of these phenomena can be undertaken if we adopt certain theoretical tools described in Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility',[290] in which he distinguished production

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[288] David Kraemer, 'The Intended Reader as a Key to Interpreting the Bavli', *Prooftexts* 13 (1993), pp. 125-140; idem, 'On the Reliability of Attributions in the Babylonian Talmud', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 60 (1989), pp. 175-190.

[289] Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*, Cambridge 1987.

[290] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, edited with and introduction by Hannah Arendt, tr. Harry Zohn, New York 1968, pp. 217-251; see now 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version', *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and others, eds. Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge and London 2003, pp. 251-283; 'The Author as Producer: Address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism, Paris, April 27, 1934', *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. M. Jennings, H. Eiland, G. Smith, Cambridge and London 1999, pp. 768-782; Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, London and New York 1989, pp. 55-70.

from consumption. The *Zohar* apparently was never composed nor disseminated – 'published' in the medieval sense of the term – as a book until the editorial efforts of such sixteenth-century figures as R. Moses Cordovero and the Italian printers in Cremona and Mantua, who intentionally sought to produce a complete (*Book of the*) *Zohar* as a (commercial) product for wider distribution and cultural impact. Manuscript copying of kabbalistic works, as with other works, permits the easy alteration of its text. Every handwritten manuscript (and codex) is thus a cultural artifact,[291] recording the particular text that was in use in a particular place and time, meaning that in many senses it renders meaningless the existence or function of an 'original'. In Benjamin's words, 'It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is produced'.[292] This is the basic outline of reception history. In the context of the *Zohar* and kabbalistic literature, it is more important to appreciate the role of the work and its versions in the later history of Kabbalah – how the text was transformed and how others understood its meaning, rather than seeking 'the' meaning of the original text of the work, and how it (as a presumably static text!), fixed in a certain moment in time influenced later figures. In short, a more complex methodology that appreciates the fluidity of the textual source and the interface between its continued development across multiple trajectories and the reception of these textual variations amongst diverse communities of readers.

The most important technological change in the transmission of texts is the invention of printing. In our day, the text has become digitalized with internet access that offers the reader a virtual text which can in most cases be copied and altered. One such case of a new scholarly edition fixed in PDF format (to date, only volumes 1-3 have the Aramaic text on-line) and distributed electronically without being printed on paper by the publisher, is Matt's Aramaic edition of the zoharic text, found on the web site of Stanford University Press. Having come full circle, we can further ponder the role of the author, the book and also the editor in the eyes of the readers who hold fast to specific notions about the *Zohar*. Basing ourselves on Ricoeur's 'hermeneutics of

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[291] See especially the collection of studies in: *The Book as Artefact: Text and Border*, ed. A. Hansen, R. Ldeke, et al, (Variants 4), Amsterdam and New York 2005.

[292] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', *Illuminations*, p. 221; third version, p. 254.

suspicion', we can query the cultural function of a collection of texts and refrain from casting the later role upon the past and the conditions of its production.

Michel Foucault's essay, 'What is an Author?', maps out the various historical, literary and cultural stages in the development of the construct of the 'author'.[293] Foucault analyzed the role of the author as the individual who is held responsible for the effect or influence of the ideas forwarded in his work. In contrast with the modern author, anonymous works from antiquity, including similar anonymous works were for the most part accepted by medieval readers as authoritative. The shift in assumptions is noticeable in the eighteenth century, if not earlier, with the rise of the Enlightenment's concept of the individual.

> Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection, in more or less psychologizing terms, of the operations that we force texts to undergo, the connection that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, or the exclusions that we practice. All these operations vary according to periods and types of discourse. We do not construct a 'philosophical author' as we do a 'poet', just as, in the eighteenth century, one did not construct a novelist as we do today.[294]

This is not to say, of course, that the history of Jewish texts does not include recognizable books and authors from the earliest periods, including works contained in the Hebrew Bible, as well as texts that were not defined as works, which contained anonymous materials and false attributions, including compilations of texts that were constructed *as* books.[295] Literary form and the identity of the author within the assumptions of medieval Jewish cultural was prompted to no small extent by conventions that originated in Greece and the

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[293] Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, 63, 3, juillet-septembre 1969, p. 73-104, repris dans *Dits et écrits 1954-1988. I. 1954-1969*, édition établie sous la direction de Daniel Defert et François Ewald avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange, Paris 1994, pp. 789-821; English: 'What is an Author?', *Textual Strategies, Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. Harari, London 1979, pp. 141-160; Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image/Music/Text*, edited and translated by Stephen Heath, New York 1968 (reprinted 1977), pp. 142-148.

[294] Foucault, 'What is an Author ?', p. 150; idem 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', p. 801.

[295] Philip R. Davies, 'Spurious attribution in the Hebrew Bible', *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, ed. James R. Lewis, Olav Hammer, Cambridge 2007, pp. 258-276.

materials that were translated into Arabic and later into Hebrew for wider Jewish consumption.[296] For the most part though, texts and works were written anonymously and in the Middle Ages most of the texts of Jewish mysticism were penned without any attributions, especially the shorter texts.

Nonetheless, what concerns us here are the (modern) categories that informed the methods and assumptions of scholars in conceiving and editing materials from the ancient and medieval past. Studies on the *Zohar*, from Scholem to the present, display a strong reliance on the anachronistic construct of the author. As we have seen above, Scholem framed his discussion as an investigation into the 'Book and its Author'. Foucault showed that these are in fact modern expectations that assume the existence of the subject. Instead of inquiring after the book and its author, Foucault seeks the conditions that formed the subject and delineated the borders and roles of the subject's action within a particular discourse.

> It would seem that one could also, beginning with analyses of this type, re-examine the privileges of the subject. I realize that in undertaking the internal and architectonic analysis of a work (be it a literary text, philosophical system, or scientific work), in setting aside biographical and psychological references, one has already called back into question the absolute character and founding role of the subject. Still, perhaps one must return to this question, not in order to re-establish the theme of an originating subject, but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies. Doing so means overturning the traditional problem, no longer raising the questions 'How can a free subject penetrate the substance of things and give it meaning? How can it activate the rules of a language from within and thus give rise to the designs which are properly its own?' Instead these questions will be raised: 'How, under what conditions and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of

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[296] James Bowley and John c. Reeves, 'Rethinking the Concept of "Bible": Some Theses and Proposals', *Henoch* 25 (2003), pp. 3-18; Jed Wyrick, *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions*, Cambridge, Mass. 2004; Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, Cambridge Mass. and London, England 2009. For later senses, mainly in Christian literary communities, of the author see Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, London 1984. I note the strong difference in the questions and conclusions I reach in my discussion of kabbalists and kabbalistic literature and that discussed in these two volumes.

> discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?' In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.[297]

Foucault's method as expressed here may be successfully applied to the question of the *Zohar's* composition. The composer or composers of the *Zohar* were not authors in the modern sense of the term. The *Zohar* was written pseudepigraphically in order not to participate in these conventions of an author and his work. I would further suggest that the choice of genre, Tannaitic midrash from antiquity, knowingly afforded the creators of the *Zohar* the opportunity to place themselves outside of the normative conventions of writing in the Middle Ages, particularly works of Jewish philosophy written under the influence of literary forms of Ancient Greece, including their translation and medieval commentaries. Tannaitic midrash might therefore have become the genre of choice, in that it immediately presents itself as an authoritative source.

The author is in this appreciation of Foucault's insight a symptom or cultural signpost of the spirit of the times, firmly placed within the horizon of expectations of the ideas and literary forms that emerged amongst kabbalists in Castile at the end of the thirteenth century. The rationale of these literary forms, necessarily leaving aside the author as a subject and responsible agent of change upon a culture and readership, is that these thirteenth-century kabbalists were thus able to navigate themselves around the problem of innovation, particularly in their conflict with philosophy, which they appreciated as a late contribution to the tradition, and thereby their works gained legitimacy as historically authentic.[298] And even though it was R. Isaac of Acre or at least Abraham Zacuto in *Sefer Yuḥasin* who transformed the name and historical personality of R. Moses de León into the subject who filled the criteria of Foucault's 'author-function', individually responsible for the *Zohar's*

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[297] Foucault, 'What is an Author', English, p. 158; French, pp. 810-811.

[298] Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah and Elites in Thirteenth-Century Spain', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9 (1994), pp. 5-19; Matt, 'New-Ancient Words'; idem, '*Matnita Dilan*'; Mopsik, 'Introduction', to *R. Moses de León's Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 7; Elliot Wolfson, 'Hai Gaon's Letter and Commentary on *'Aleynu*: Further Evidence of Moses de Leon's Pseudepigraphic Activity', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 81 (1991), pp. 365-410; Moshe Idel, 'The Land of Secrets: A Response to Yehuda Liebes', *Zion and Zionism among Sephardi and Oriental Jews. Proceedings of Misgav Yerushalayim's Fifth International Congress*, ed. W. Z. Harvey, et al, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 45-49 [Hebrew].

effect on Jewish society, it is perhaps more accurate to inscribe Scholem as the modern author of this idea.[299]

Setting aside any doubts for the moment about the historical authenticity and accuracy of the statement made in such a meeting between R. Moses de León and R. Isaac of Acre, much of the reception history of this text dismissed de León as author in favor of the traditional attribution to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. That is to say, that when the historical and cultural record over the last few centuries is viewed as a whole, no one figure or body of writing has promoted the individual personality of R. Moses de León as author more than Gershom Scholem. Prior to modern scholarship, the discussion of R. Moses de León's involvement, copying or composition of the *Zohar*, was utilized as part of an attack on the authenticity of the *Zohar* as a Tannaitic document stemming from R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his circle. While it can be said that Scholem framed the scholarly question around the personality of De León and the pseudepigraphic character of the *Zohar* as a book in order to establish, and even to boast, the utility of philology, history and the academic methods he was using to ground the field, he was nevertheless inscribing himself within the earlier debate about the origins of the Kabbalah. What is unique, nonetheless, is the comparison championed earlier by Jellinek between De León's Hebrew works and the *Zohar*, so as to focus on the greater literary program of an individual instead of the more narrow question of the dating of the *Zohar*. *Scholem is thus the author of de León's authorship.*

I would add that these kabbalists were very much aware that midrash as a genre is characterized by anthologies of traditions, collections of traditions, which have no single author, even in the medieval sense of the term. Once again, the early distribution of the *Zohar* in booklets (quires, *quntresim* in R. Isaac of Acre's phrasing), created the impression that the literature amounts to fragments that survived from antiquity, the incomplete form lending it greater legitimacy.[300] Multiple versions of literary units that defy a single overriding structure or presumed editorial principle thereby conform to the strictures of this type of pseudepigraphy. I would add that to the extent that zoharic literary creativity and production was a polemic and counterforce to the conservative

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[299] See Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction*, Cambridge 2002, esp. p. 45.

[300] One could this understand the problem differently, that de León copied a limited amount of text each time in order to maximize the money he could earn, and for this reason did not complete a full copy of the *Zohar*.

character of preservation and transmission of esotericism in Catalonia and Barcelona, variegated zoharic literary production served as an anti-Spanish mode of writing from within Spain (to what was more typical of Jewish Spanish works), commensurate by comparison with the free editorial hand of Ashkenazi authors.

It would be difficult to argue that the author(s) of the *Zohar* were fully aware of all the functions of these techniques and consciously chose them with forethought. Indeed, there is no one common denominator to all the literary units of zoharic literature and it is apparent that some units were written without knowledge of the others. Nevertheless, scholarship has begun to take account of the internal references within the *Zohar* as proof of a larger literary project of a zoharic corpus. Doubt must be cast here as a full account of these references needs to be undertaken, and such research might show nothing more than a literary device used to suggest an integrated work that never existed. On this point, methodologies developed since the work of Gershom Scholem have questioned the assumption that the early kabbalists worked in consort with one another along a liner progression from one historical center to another. Scholarship has thus broken down Ashkenazi esotericism prior to the emergence of Kabbalah into various circles, who did not always know of one another.[301] Additionally, the first known kabbalists in Provence, R. Abraham ben David and R. Isaac the Blind, were not acquainted with the *Book Bahir*, or stronger, if they did, they chose never to cite it as an authoritative source.[302] The kabbalists in Gerona in the following generation did not comprise a single circle, and Nahmanides is now understood to possess an independent tradition or method. Here it is more fruitful to highlight the differences between the Geronese kabbalists, R. Ezra and R. Azriel, rather than their similarities.[303] Finally, the Cohen Brothers, termed the 'Gnostic Circle' by Scholem, are now appreciated according to their very distinct traditions, with only R. Isaac (and

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[301] Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings'.

[302] Joseph Dan asks this question in the context of reviewing Scholem's historiography of early Kabbalah and comments that Scholem never dicussed it because he was so dependent on the 'linearity of the development of Kabbalah'. See his 'Nachtwort' to Gershom Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala*, Berlin-New York 2001, pp. 450-452.

[303] Isaiah Tishby, 'The Kabbalists R. Ezra and Azriel and their Place in the Gerona School', *Zion* 9 (1944), pp. 178-185 reprinted in idem, *Studies in Kabbalah and its Branches: Researches and Sources*, Jerusalem 1982, vol. 1, pp. 3-10 [Hebrew].

some texts of R. Moses of Burgos) boasting a strong tradition about evil Above.

Kabbalah apparently developed in multiple social and literary circles, figures who were not acquainted with one another, some living in different generations. Intertextual interpretation between the various circles came about incidentally in response to the transmission of oral traditions and disparate writing which traversed their original when a kabbalist happened to travel. Weight must be further given to the psychological and hermeneutic causes for an affinity toward a particular tradition complex or mode of thinking, at the expense of the others. A clear example of this phenomenon is the group of writings composed by what Joseph Dan has called the 'Unique Cherub Circle'. Dan has shown that these works, once though to be part of the Qalonimide circle of Pietism, share a common theme that sets them apart from other contemporary esotericists. The members of this 'circle' did not know each other and were active in lands ranging from England to France (despite the Ashkenazi appearance of some texts) across a few generations, applying the image of the cherub in diverse ways. It is here that we must reconsider the designation of a 'circle' or at least redefine its meaning, especially in such cases of anonymous texts.

It seems more appropriate therefore to include these figures in a textual community, a term first suggested by Brian Stock in a study on the interface between the written and the oral, and following his research was applied by Elliot Wolfson in the study of kabbalistic literature (and later by Boaz Huss in describing the activity of the Safedian kabbalists regarding their use of the *Zohar*, distinguished here from the suggestion of how the *Zohar* was produced).[304] Wolfson highlighted the central role of textuality in the lives and

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[304] Elliot Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Medieval Jewish Mysticism', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman, I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 166-224, esp. p. 193: 'The circles of kabbalists in Catalonia and Castile are, in Brian Stock's terminology, "textual communities", for they demonstrate a "parallel uses of texts, both to structure the internal behavior of the groups' members and to provide solidarity against the outside world. (Stock, p. 90)'. Brian Stock, *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Princeton 1983, pp. 15-16. On later zoharic textual communities see Boaz Huss, 'Zoharic Textual Communities of Safed', *Shefa Tal: Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture Presented to Bracha Sack*, Beer Sheva 2004, pp. 149-169 [Hebrew].

scholastic culture of the kabbalists.[305] He further showed how writing interprets and extends the process of what is learned by oral transmission. Similarly, discursive thought and speech interpret and respond to written texts, placing them on a continuum of 'text'. In the following, I would like to further apply the idea of the textual community, as the various usages of a certain idea, or complex of ideas and style of writing by a number of figures, without knowingly collaborating on a collective project. The *Zohar* may thus be cited as an example of such a phenomenon.

Zoharic literature contains a wide variety of texts in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Some of these texts focus on the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, while others revolve around alternative figures such as the old man (*Sabba*) and the young boy (*Yanuqa*). Yet other texts offer running commentary to defined literary units of the Torah, while others are marked by a thematic interest throughout, without any formal reliance on the framework of scripture. Some well known kabbalists, such as R. Joseph of Hamadan composed works that bear a striking similarity to some zoharic texts. I suggest that instead of viewing the affinity of these writings to the *Zohar* as proof that such a figure composed part of the *Zohar* or certain literary units as a member of the 'zoharic circle', scholarship should redefine [the] '*Zohar*' to include texts that participate in the style, forming a genre of texts, especially those composed in Aramaic. The resistance to destabilize the literary boundaries of the *Zohar* points to the resilience of a conviction that there must be a book, and for which the circle of its possible contributors is reconsidered and expanded. My suggestion is therefore stronger than expanding the boundaries of the *Zohar* from a defined book to an open book, but rather to appreciate the family of zoharic texts and those participating in these literary styles as the phenomenon of *Zohar*. Foucault termed such texts which established a new direction or genre *transdiscursive,* a category that does not demand an identification of its 'author'.

The question of identifying the texts to be included under the heading *Zohar* or the zoharic corpus is parallel to inquiries in personal identity, a topic investigated by L. Wittgenstein according to the principle of certainty.[306]

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[305] One study which stands out on this subject is: Elliot Wolfson, 'Iconicity of the Text: Reification and the Idolatrous Impulse of Zoharic Kabbalah', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 215-242.

[306] Boaz Huss previously referred to family resemblance 'in the Wittgensteinian sense'. See Huss, 'The Appearance of the *Book of the Zohar*', p. 508.

Wittgenstein referred to family resemblance in order to note the complexity of similarity between two objects:

> §67. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.— And I shall say: 'games' form a family.
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> And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way. Why do we call something a 'number'? Well, perhaps because it has a—direct—relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name. And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.
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> But if someone wished to say: 'There is something common to all these constructions—namely the disjunction of all their common properties' — I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: 'Something runs through the whole thread — namely the continuous overlapping of those fibres'.[307]

Family resemblance allows for an alternative to explaining the production of zoharic literature as the linear development of texts, across styles, chronology and geography. In my work on the *Book Bahir*, I claimed that the text should not be considered a single, harmonious work, at least not when evaluating the textual units that comprise the work, transmitted in the manuscript witnesses as the *Book Bahir*. The 'book' in this case is a loosely defined literary framework for traditions that could be rewritten by numerous figures in the stages of its transmission and redaction, spanning many years. One need not jump to the conclusion that it is necessarily impossible to identify and restore an earlier, or the 'original', version, or that all versions cannot be presented in a critical edition. Rather, from a methodological standpoint, the claim of the existence of such an edition is not desirable. As argued above, zoharic literature should be

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[307] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford 1958, third edition 1986, §67; idem, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, volume one, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Wright, trans. G.E.M Ansombe, Chicago 1980, I, §322; see further, Aharon Ben-Ze'ev, *Straight from the Heart: Emotions in Daily Life*, Tel Aviv 1998 pp. 22-24 [Hebrew]. My thanks to Yoav Ashkenazi for his assistance in locating these passages in the works of Wittgenstein.

appreciated in its literary contexts so that the genres and the corpus of texts known as (the) *Zohar* is appreciated as interlinking texts that are not lined up in any linear progression, and whose disparate points of contact amount to a family of resemblance. A number of characteristics of each text recur in various texts, but nevertheless the *Zohar* does not develop across a contiguous progression of text/writing, or is it delimited by the development of identifiable features.[308] Once these texts were arranged in book form and collected as a corpus, they invited intertextual interpretation between these texts, a process that reached it peak in *Zohar* scholarship of the past few decades. My suggestion and charge to scholarship is therefore to abandon this view and instead to gradually build up assumptions of the field. Once scholarship is able to prove any connections and influences between the literary units of the zoharic corpus intertextual hermeneutics will be possible. It other words, scholars cannot continue with what seems to have developed as the tacit presumption of the field, namely, that the author or circle produced the 'book' as a whole and all units are necessarily related to each other, at least until proven otherwise.

Zoharic literature as a corpus has been established de facto by the printers in the sixteenth century, (*Tiqqunei Zohar*, the *Zohar to the Torah*, and *Zohar Ḥadash*) and again by the early scholarship of the twentieth century, prior to the reconsideration of the question of authorship and the theorization of zoharic textuality attempted in the early versions of the present research effort. With the expansion of the members of the group of authors of the '*Zohar*' – for those who cling to the claim of multiple authorship – and with the extension of zoharic writing, re-writing, literary imitation, or the identification of similar literary products amongst contemporary figures in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Castile, we must reconsider the object of study. That is, even as I have rather exhaustively documented the history of attempts to define the author of the 'Book of the *Zohar*' and argued for the invention of the book, both of these categories fail to serve many of the needs of future research. Scholarship has already been working with a wider range of texts than the zoharic corpus, even as it wrestles with competing views of the nature of the work and its author(s). Alternative categories may thus be considered to frame the newer efforts and the plan for future research.

I begin with a critique of intertextuality that has been so freely employed in

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[308] Eli Hisrch, *The Concept of Identity*, Oxford 1982.

past scholarship. Intertextual reading states more than the family resemblances mentioned earlier. In the performance of such interpretation, the reader or editor, confirms certain assumptions about the text(s)' identity as a work, indeed as a book, even if we refer to it as its 'intertextual identity'.[309] Treating the zoharic literature as an intertextual whole has afforded the field great freedom in determining meaning that can be shaped at will in contrast to other bodies of literature. From the early studies in the field, it seems that the *Zohar* as a book was placed on a timeline of the development of Jewish mysticism and identified, and so distinguished, as a major trend in the *history* of Jewish mysticism. The distance from which the zoharic literature was viewed offered certain advantages, but also certain limitations, which have affected the means and result of its interpretation. Expanding the body of texts, indeed, fixing the widest set of boundaries for the book and the corpus (in tacit complicity with the culturally established canon), permitted scholars ample room to navigate between possibilities and identify recurring themes and patterns. The frequency of these occurrences needed to meet lower standards and with less precision than a similar inquiry into an particular literary unit which was transmitted separately in manuscript form or which should have been isolated as literarily independent to a significant degree based on stylistic concerns. With little (expressed) awareness of these issues, such associative tours through the images of the full collection of texts that comprise the zoharic corpus have been justified as mythopoesis. This move is, however, rather structuralist in that it identifies the way the language and ideas of the corpus behave within its boundaries, albeit within a rather generous mapping of text(s). In retrospect of the assumptions in currency today, this move is post-structuralist in that meaning becomes unstable, negotiated *across* various texts, and in the case of the *Zohar* and recent theories of its composition, it would include the works of

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[309] Owen Miller, 'Intertextual Identity', *Identity of the Literary Text*, ed. Mario J. Valdes and Owen Miller, Toronto 1985, pp. 19-40. For a clear presentation of the history of hermeneutic strategies see Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, London and New York 2000. In another discourse, see further 'The Limits of Intertextuality Barthes, Burroughs, Gysin, Culler', *Critical Vices: The Myths of Postmodern Theory: Essays by Nicholas Zurbrugg, Commentary by Warren Burt*, Australia 2000, pp. 17-39. On the use of Zoharic Kabbalah as a means of writing about the ideas of the corpus, see Elliot Wolfson, 'Structure, Innovation, and Diremptive Temporality: The Use of Models to Study Continuity and Discontinuity in Kabbalistic Tradition', *Essays in Honor of Moshe Idel*, ed. S. Frunză, M. Frunză, Cluj-Napoca 2008, pp. 159-184.

Moses de León and ancillary figures from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Castile, who have been included within the wider circle that demarcates the boundaries of its authorship and literary product. Intertextuality as a hermeneutic practice of zoharic scholarship, it must be said, has been inextricably bound up with particular assumptions regarding the question of authorship, in that the romantic conception of 'the self', as the individual whose unique personality is implemented through writing in expressing a particular intention. The necessary structure of the literary work is thus maintained and the gaps and tensions between possible meanings are collapsed within this framework.

The breakdown of this model in zoharic scholarship moves from multiple authorship of a single book to the dissolution of the literary boundaries and identity of the *Zohar* as a work in order to afford the independence of textual traditions and passages that (can) work independently of the (historically identifiable) authors. The zoharic author may thus be seen as dead in the Barthesian sense of the term, since the text emerges in the most recent scholarly constructs without a particular point of origin, even if, ironically, the turn of Castilian kabbalists from composing works in their own names and from anonymous writing to pseudepigraphic attribution to known figures from Antiquity is a tension that simultaneously ascribes and effaces authorship. And in Foucauldian terms, the author function of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai or de León has served the kabbalists and scholarship respectively as the 'paradoxical singularity' of the one responsible for the authorship, weighing in as the (Lacanian) *name* of the author, whether or not the life and character of the historical personality is known in any detail.

In the studies of Scholem and others, the boundaries of the '*Book of the Zohar*' and the identity of the author did not limit the definition of 'zoharic literature'. Scholem and Tishby included *Tiqqunei Zohar* within zoharic literature even though these works were certainly written by another figure. These two texts were included due to the close affinity of their style and content to the other literary units of what they considered the '*Book of the Zohar*'. Today, we can revisit the question of genre and the definition of the corpus by embracing and extending the methodological inconsistency to include the similar works of Castilian kabbalists. Liebes views their literary productivity (in Aramaic) as independent works outside of the enterprise of creating '*Zohar*', which therefore demonstrate their undocumented participation in a zoharic circle. I am suggesting that the closely related phenomena be considered as another part of a larger rubric of literary activity so as to extend the boundaries

of zoharic literature, or better, the textual phenomena of *Zohar*, through the full range of its literary ideas and literary ideas and styles. The works of known kabbalists at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries would thus not be considered as distinct activity that calls for their inclusion in a theory that explains the separate process of pseudepigraphic authorship, but reconsiders the literary map of the period.[310]

Setting aside for the moment the complex character of zoharic literature, itself an unstable category, we can ask what prompted the medieval kabbalists and modern scholars alike, to expect, and to desire, a clear definition of a uniform book with a single identifiable author or editor. It seems to me that Jewish culture, or more precisely, rabbinic hermeneutics from antiquity through the present, locate textual meaning, within a larger theory of theological consistency in Jewish thought and belief, namely questions of authority, canon and (social) hegemony.[311] I sense the desire or inclination today – especially in Israel – to be suspicious and resist the conclusions offered here because they appear as the application of a post-modern criticism that will lead to the deconstruction of the canon of Jewish books, sacred literature and the accepted course of study. Of note is the fact that Agnon, Bialik, Tishby and many others, belonged to the *kinnus* project,[312] which sought to re-present

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[310] Charles Mopsik, 'Un manuscrit inconnu du *Sefer Tashak* de R. Joseph de Hamadan suivi d'un fragment inédit', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 169-205. One should not limit the discussion to examples from the period of the *Zohar*'s composition and the following generation. One should consider also zoharic phenomena (or the full range of the zoharic corpus), such as that of R. Moses Ḥayyim Luzzato, even though he is distant from the Castilian activity both in time and geography. See Joseph Avivi, *Zohar Ramḥal*, Jerusalem 1997; Mopsik, 'Le corpus Zoharique', p.103. See also Yehuda Liebes, 'A Compositon in Zoharic Language of R. Wolf ben Johnathan Eybscheutz on his Circle and on the Secret of Redemption', *On Sabbateanism and its Kabbalah: Collected Essays*, corrected second edition, Jerusalem 2007, pp. 77-102 [Hebrew].

[311] See Jon Douglas Levenson, 'The Eighth Principle of Judaism and the Literary Simultaneity of Scripture', *Journal of Religion* 68 (1988), pp. 205-225, reprinted in: *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*, Louisville 1993.

[312] Adam Rubin, 'From Torah to *Tarbut*: Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik and the nationalization of Judaism', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2000. Israel Bartal, 'The *Kinnus* Project: Wissenschaft des Judentums and the Fashioning of a "National Culture" in Palestine', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 310-323; idem, 'The Ingathering of Traditions: Zionism's

classical Hebrew sources for the modern (Israeli) reader, and did so by breaking down their literary form and recognizing these sources in accessible anthologies. Tishby's two-volume edition of *Mishnat ha-Zohar* contains passages from the full range of zoharic literature, including *Tiqqunei Zohar*, grouped together thematically in chapters and introduced by critical surveys of these topics. The import of this organization is that the literary structure of the (printed) source is thereby eclipsed from the reader in this presentation, who must consult the detailed introduction and who is referred to the full text and original language found only in the traditional editions.[313] This may be contrasted to the adoption of what has become recognized as the traditional, and therefore decidedly not academic, format of blocking off the verse in the corner of the page in a large font to demarcate the inner structure of a commentary to a biblical text, according to the verses of the chapter or book. In fact, this feature, which is shared with traditional editions, was not intended, and presumably not received by the readership, as a traditional form, but rather further served the aims of providing an accessible text for the reader.[314] What is curious in these cases – such as the editions of the commentaries to Ezekiel's chariot by R. Eleazar of Worms, R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, Joseph Gikatilla, and R. Moses de León, edited by myself and Asi-Farber-Ginat, as well as Daniel Matt's translation to the *Zohar* – is that the manuscripts themselves lack the separate presentation of the biblical verses as the internal structure of the commentaries.[315] Admittedly, I cannot demonstrate these dynamics of the

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Anthology Projects', *The Anthology in Jewish Literature*, ed. D. Stern, pp. 244-258.

[313] See Isaiah Tishby, *Pirqei Zohar: A Selection of Passages from the Zohar Translated into Hebrew, with Notes and Introductions*, Jerusalem 1969, two volumes [Hebrew]. This two volume paperback edition is an abridged version of *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, with significant textual changes. As noted on the verso of the title page, only some of the zoharic passages in the *first* volume were translated by Lachover. Indeed, in the introduction to the volume Tishby notes that in this volume he used the Munkacs 1711 edition of *Zohar Ḥadash*, and Margolioth's Jerusalem 1948 edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. The later at least, was unavailable to him at the early date in which he published the first volume of *Mishnat ha-Zohar*. In the introduction to these abbreviated volumes Tishby claims to have remained faithful to capturing 'the literary character of the *Book of the Zohar*'.

[314] A differentiating marker of academic editions is often the typeface, which feeds psychological expectations and impressions since it has no practical effect on meaning. See G. Thomas Tanselle, *Bibliographical Analysis: A Historical Introduction*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 69-73.

[315] Abrams and Farber-Ginat, *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar*

'politics of the page' from any printed reflections about the cultural expectations and reception of the various formats. Indeed, in both of the cases cited above, I was instrumental in pushing the editors to adopt these conventions.

Here, we may once again return to Foucault's question 'who needs to identify the author?', and ask 'who needs for the *Zohar* to be identified as a book and appear as such on the shelf'? Historians of literature and culture are well aware that the texts of rabbinic literature were not initially used or configured according to their present form, and all the more so in the case of the *Zohar*, printed in a newly *invented* arrangement nearly three centuries after its composition. Similarly, its influence prior to the printed editions was tremendous, without any reliance on its later history.

A related phenomenon, which today continues a much older practice, is the printing and promotion of a work by virtue of the recognition and popularity of other works of the author, such that it obfuscates the personality and identity of the figure. For example, *Ginat Egoz* and *Sod ha-Niqqud* were published recently in impressive editions, and according to the notice on the title page (and in advertisements in *Me'ah She'arim* and other traditional communities), these book were published as additional works by 'the author of *Sha'arei Orah*'. This comment points to a lack of historical consciousness in some traditional circles according to their construct of 'the author'. This view is typical of the pre-modern periods and the later, academic interests in the intellectual portrait of an author, and where various books help build a complex or synthetic appraisal of his spiritual world as a unique individual. This amounts to a closed circle in which a figure, such as R. Moses de León, lacks self-awareness and is not recognized for his individuality by his contemporaries as an author in the modern sense of the term. Moreover, academic research of the last century, which is self-aware of the artificial constructs it applies in characterizing the personality of the author, does not seek the role and identity of the author. Apparently, communities of Jewish readers were more interested in the literary products of books than in the authors, as personalities and individuals.[316] The

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of Worms; Asi Farber-Ginat, *R. Joseph Gikatilla's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot; idem, Moses de León's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, by Asi Farber-Ginat, edited for publication by Daniel Abrams, Los Angeles 1998 [Hebrew].

[316] Robert Bonfil, 'Reading in the Jewish Communities of Western Europe in the Middle Ages', *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. G. Cavallo and R. Cartier, tr. Lydia G. Cochrane, Amherst 1997, pp. 149-178. See further Zeev Gries, *The Book as an Agent of*

tendency to construct the zoharic texts into edited works, printed editions (and we might also include constructing the idea of a book in consciousness), best served the hermeneutic needs of these communities.

9. *Suggestions for Future Research of Zoharic Texts*

In order to advance research of zoharic literature, it is necessary to first publish, for the benefit of all scholars, a detailed account of all the manuscript witnesses. Lists and tables that map out the borders of the materials, in their constellations, as transmitted over the generations, will afford a fresh appraisal of how the printers edited the early and important manuscripts. It is further the aim of the next stage of scholarship to track the early production of editings of the *Zohar* and their dissemination prior to the sixteenth century along with the canonization of the printed format in future reprintings, especially the expanded form of the Mantua edition in Amsterdam 1715, which sought to append all additional materials found exclusively in the Cremona edition.[317]

There are therefore three aims: a) to assess the given manuscript evidence prior to the printed edition and appreciate the earliest constellations as well as the early attempts to assemble the texts, b) to destabilize the text of the printed edition and contextualize the particular language and arrangement of the zoharic materials within the greater history of the manuscript transmission, and c) to track the development of the printed editions after the sixteenth century in relation to each other and the later manuscripts that may have influenced such changes.

In all, no research has been published that attempts to uncover the earliest forms of the zoharic texts and when and where disparate units were transmitted together, prior to the editings of Cordovero and the Italian printers. The decisions made by these sixteenth-century figures, no doubt, should be studied by scholars, but not necessarily as evidence of the textual arrangements that emerged from Castile. Scholarship must be vigilant to separate the study of the production, transmission, and reception of these texts, even when a complex interface exists between them. These concerns have not been adequately addressed.

Cultural Change in the Years 1700-1900, Tel Aviv 2002, pp. 65-72 [Hebrew].

[317] I would like to commend the National Library for adding a scan, upon my request, of the Amsterdam edition in their website of digital images for public use: http://aleph500.huji.ac.il/nnl/dig/books/bk001906375.html.

I am thus suggesting here a paradigm shift with respect to the many published studies that glance backwards on the early textual witnesses through the lens of the literary convention established in the late printings. To illustrate the severity of the scholarly situation, I note that, remarkably, even the scholarly community has erroneously privileged the text and edition of Reuven Margolioth, which is replete with corruptions, late glosses and interpolations from all periods. In other words, even though Margolioth's marginalia *Niṣṣoṣei ha-Zohar* is an important tool for noting parallels to rabbinic literature,[318] the text of his edition adds nothing to the study of the *Zohar* in its early historical context of late thirteenth-century Castile, whereas a reliance on it prevents the academic reader from appreciating the earlier and more 'natural' (as opposed to original) forms of its production and transmission.

I believe that given the present state of research, the issuing of a facsimile series of manuscripts and first editions is needed. No other type of publication, including the publication of specific studies, no matter how significant, will better propel the state of the field into the next generation of thinking about the *Zohar*. As intimated above, *zoharic scholarship has suffered from its reliance on late editions and the methodological implications of equating significance with popularity, production with consumption*. The field has additionally suffered from too few scholars reading only select materials and drawing globalizing conclusions about 'the *Zohar*', or worse, synthetic appraisals that begin with voiced methodological aspirations about contextualized treatments of the literary units, but which functionally piece together a composite character of the corpus from a sampling of citations from various texts.

In order to correct this tendency it is necessary in my view to go back to the basics, preparing and publishing the tools that *all scholars* can use for various projects and apply when they different methodologies. This shift in aims also means a relaxing of the expectations, in this lifetime, of *solving the great riddle of 'who wrote the* Zohar' and all the mysteries that accompany it. It is simply too early to formulate the question so simply or precisely (even in another formulation). Questions of this type get in the way of real advances that can be made in the coming years. Some examples of the tools I am describing include the publication of facsimiles which would democratize knowledge by disseminating the data with which scholars work. As learned from the late publication of Hekhalot texts at the end of the twentieth century, scholarly

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318 See Scholem's remarks in *Major Trends*, p. 390 n. 74.

editions of particular recensions of texts whose literary forms are unstable, lends itself to misimpressions, especially when the manuscripts are not reproduced for easy public viewing. Finally, facsimile editions would offer the variegated data to scholars who would use the material for a wide range of projects, using competing methodologies and seeking very different goals. In short, the present situation which seems to be waiting for its redemption by partial editions is under the illusion that it is breaking from older models and obstacles.

Such facsimiles should include the first two editions of Cremona and Mantua,[319] followed by facsimile editions of the most important manuscripts that contain significant groupings of zoharic texts in edited form such as the Toronto manuscript and the Oxford manuscript described by Qaddari. Moreover, the free access to digitalized (typed text) versions of the important textual versions of the first 'editions' of the *Zohar* as a book would serve as important tools. For example, computer access to the zoharic text constructed by Cordovero in his commentary, *Or Yaqar* (and without the supplemental material appropriated by the modern editors of that edition from the later printed editions), would allow for careful comparisons of both the literary structure of Cordovero's construction of the zoharic corpus and the particular text he had and which he established.[320] To be sure, I am arguing for both the facsimile reproductions of past printing efforts to create editions of zoharic literature as well as digitalized access to these same sources. Each serves a different function, and it is not as simple as the question of convenience or the learning habits of reading from a physical medium or a text on screen. The digitalized text allows for its manipulation in various projects. Moreover, the digitization of texts, images or hypertext can be disseminated freely, in both senses of the term, to open up research to the widest possible audience.

To state the ethos most clearly, the basic tools first must be made available,

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[319] The digital presentation of early printed editions of kabbalistic books marks important development in how scholars access and think about sources. Se for example the inclusion of the Mantua and Cremona editions of the *Zohar*, in DJVU format, at the 'Digitized Book Repository' at the website of the National Library of Israel. Amongst the other kabbalistic titles are *Zohar Ḥadash* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*: http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/books/html/bk_subj_kab.htm.

[320] Initial efforts of a comparison were printed in volume 2 of *Or Yaqar*, demonstrating differences between the zoharic text of *Or Yaqar* with the Vilna printing (*Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem 1963, vol. 2, three unnumbered pages following p. 236).

such as the cataloging of all the raw data and access to the primary sources. This will happen no doubt, and it is only a question of time before this will become the norm, as in the case of the zoharic manuscripts in the Bayerische Staatsbibliotek in Munich (Ms. 217),[321] a manuscript from Firenze (Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana, Plut. II.48)[322] and The David Simonsen Manuscripts collection in Copenhagen (Cod. Sim. Heb. 95).[323] More such projects are underway and it is my hope that even if provided through a series of links, a site could be established that would imitate the project of Talmud manuscripts on line.[324] These are the basic tools that would define the textual community of zoharic scholars and afford the beginning of more serious research.

Similarly, a basic register of all citations of the *Zohar* from the period prior to its printing, along the methodological lines of the edition I prepared for the *Book Bahir*,[325] would offer yet another important building block for future scholarship. Someday, the *Zohar* will be recognized by Jewish studies, its institutions, library collections and the donors that provide the material support for making tools available to scholars, as a canonical source of Jewish literature, such that an electronic database of the many manuscripts will be available on-line like those of the Talmud.[326] Even along the lines of traditional publishing efforts of amending and expanding existing printed editions, a major contribution for tracking the development of the literary frame of received, or at least published, zoharic texts would be a continuation of the

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[321] http://mdz10.bib-bvb.de/~db/0002/bsb00026306/images/index.html. Thus far Ms. Munich heb. 217 is available for viewing and full pdf download. This manuscript is one of three copied in 1536 covering a certain organization of much of the zoharic literature. Ms. 217 covers the book of Genesis and mss. 218-219 contain other sections of the other five books of the Pentateuch. A full comparison with the first printings and other manuscripts would be extremely productive. See also Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 126 n. 184.

[322] The first 68 folios contain a variety of zoharic texts including *Idra Rabba* http://teca.bmlonline.it/TecaViewer/index.jsp?RisIdr=TECA0000606278&keyworks=Plut.02.48.

[323] http://www.kb.dk/manus/judsam/2009/sep/dsh/en/object26220/. See also the Esslingen manuscript with marginal notes from R. Nehemia ben Shlomo http://www.jtslibrarytreasures.org/machzor/machzor.html.

[324] http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro_eng.htm.

[325] A small but important step in this direction was undertaken by Zvia Rubin in her cataloging of all of Recanati's citations of the *Zohar* in his *Commentary to the Torah*.

[326] See http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/intro_eng.htm.

integrated edition of Amsterdam 1715 discussed earlier and the copious comments and passages mustered together in *Ḥibbur 'Ammudei Sheva*. Other works discussed above, including *Derekh 'Emet* and *'Imrei Binah*, further sought to *correct* the printed zoharic text and bring its textual decisions and editorial renderings into dialogue with the learning and works from other centers of kabbalistic activity. Bringing all such volumes and texts together, in effect continuing the project envisioned by the various printers and kabbalists, but historically and textually layering these sources through signifying marks offered by different fonts or other siglia that distinguish the sources, one from another, would offer a holistic picture of how the zoharic texts were constructed in the later period and provide a window for looking back onto its earliest forms.[327]

In outlining historically specific groups of text, my aim is not to reify the linear progression of the text through its printing histories. On the contrary, my methodology seeks to enable scholars to ask different questions about the texts by modularizing the sources as independent phenomena. Composition, redaction, citation, anthologization, as well as all other forms of reception, each demand different lenses. The form and means of accessing the sources, moreover, predisposes the reader to ask certain questions. It would be a mistake to utilize every source as a partial witness that aids primarily or exclusively in reconstructing the lost '*"Book" of the Zohar*'. Manuscripts are of course cultural artifacts and should be considered in their own context(s). It is therefore necessary at the present stage of *Zohar* research, not to privilege any one editing at the expense of another, and further, it would be beneficial to transcribe as many sources as possible in order that all forms of comparison could be undertaken by future scholarship. In other words, it is not possible, nor desirable, to edit a critical edition of the *Zohar* in the aim of standardizing the academic text of '*the*' *Book of the Zohar*, at least not until more is understood about the structure of the existing materials in all of its forms and histories.

I am well aware that my methodological restraint may be confused with an overly zealous contextualization, approaching extreme relativism. Indeed, a data bank of transcriptions of all the important and early manuscripts, accompanied by a program that could sort and display presentations of a virtual

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[327] Indeed, this can be compared to the publication of the relatively late manuscript editings and copyings of the Hekhalot material, which in Schäfer's Synopsis is presented in repeated presentations to show how each editor repositioned various paragraphs.

text or edition according to the historical or cultural parameters decided upon by the user, would free scholarship from many of the assumptions that have plagued past scholarship. Such programs exist today and are in use by scholars of rabbinic literature and the *Hekhalot* literature. If one were to argue against such a suggestion, as has been done publicly in response to my oral presentation of this study at a conference a number of years ago, that such a venture is impractical given the limitations of time, money or interest, my response would be, as it was that day, that it is better to produce part of a methodologically sound project, even with limited advances in the short run, than to proceed along the lines of past assumptions and produce definitive editions that synthesize the given evidence based on an idealist, textualist view.

The most recent work of the text of the *Zohar* from manuscripts has been undertaken by Daniel Matt and Ronit Meroz. Matt's eclectic text is produced from synthesizing readings from various manuscripts in order to remove contaminations and create a 'clean' text which best serves the translation project. His synthetic Aramaic text is published on-line and the English translation of which is provided with notes in print. Meroz and her team of research assistants are working on the publication of two editions of *parashat shemot*, an on-line publication of transcriptions of the various manuscripts, presented in synoptic form, and a diplomatic edition to appear in print. The danger of both methods in preparing a single or central version is that, despite the academic context of the projects, the methods approximate those of medieval scribes in that they share the idealist assumption of a single or privileged version that originated in a specific moment and that can be restored by the modern editor and so have the authority over against the other manuscript versions.

Daniel Matt for over a decade has been working with multiple manuscript witnesses to the various sections of the zoharic text of '*guf ha-zohar*'. He pointed out to me in discussion of his project nearly a decade ago that the manuscript tradition was unstable and some manuscripts 'polished' the text relative to others, apparently indicating his assumption of the vector of intervention. I did not understand then, as I do now, that the matter included or was essentially one of Hebrew and Aramaic, a phenomenon not apparent from his published textual work, I presume due to his reliance on Margolioth's text. In the introduction to the first volume of his translation, published in 2004, he wrote:

> Over the centuries, *Sefer ha-Zohar* has been revised by countless scribes and editors who tried to smooth away the rough edges of the text by adding an

> explanatory phrase, correcting an apparent syntactical mistake, or taming a wild neologism by substituting a more familiar, bland term. Often, relying on the variants, I decide to remove these accumulated layers of revision, thereby restoring a more original text. I seek to recover the *Zohar's* primal texture and cryptic flavor.
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> If the early manuscripts preserve unusual, striking wording that is revised or 'corrected' by several later manuscripts and the printed editions, I tend to go with the older reading. Often, according to the more reliable manuscripts, a zoharic rabbi creatively paraphrases a Talmudic saying. Some of the later manuscripts and the printed editions may then restore this saying to its exact Talmudic form. In such cases I emend the printed text in favor of the *Zohar's* original formulation – original in both senses: older and creative. In the commentary I cite the Talmudic saying on which the paraphrase is based, so that readers can see the transition and trace the imaginative process.
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> I do not claim to be fully restoring '*the* original text of the *Zohar*'. There may never have been any such thing, since the text probably emerged over many years, written and distributed piecemeal. However, through painstaking analysis of the variants, I am able to scrape away some seven hundred years of accretion and corruption, and at least approach that elusive, hypothetical original. This revised Aramaic text of the *Zohar*, the basis of my translation, will be made available via the Internet and may be downloaded for study and scholarly examination.[328]

I trust that the reader will be able to anticipate my reaction at this point in my argument, namely, that 'the' *Zohar* cannot be uncovered, as its lack of literary form extends to the quality of the text itself, even in shorter units like the 'body of the *Zohar*'. While Matt is cautious in using the term original, denying the ability to reconstruct the original, he nevertheless moves linearly in his progress toward that end, claiming to have restored 'a more original text'. There certainly is much methodological merit in identifying the glosses and interpolations that complicate, to say the least, the later manuscripts and printings, which display layers of accretions of the interventions of readers, copyists and printers. However, to assume that the linear, organic growth of the 'layers' of such corruption is misconceived, as it leads, amongst other assumptions, to the impression that the original resides underneath or behind the text of the printed edition, even if it cannot be fully identified. Conceptually, I would push the point further, and state that *'the Zohar' is not the text hidden*

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[328] Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, volume one, p. xviii.

within the transmission history that contains the dynamic quality of the text, but should be conceived as the textual process itself that began with the earliest textual formulations and continues on as a living phenomenon and text (or more precisely, multiple phenomena and texts). Matt's new text is thus the most recent link in this chain, which precisely speaking, did not exist until today.

Despite any criticism I may have, Matt's discovery of the layers of change in the zoharic text is of tremendous importance.[329] In a public lecture, delivered as part of an evening celebrating the publication of Huss' book, *Zohar: Like the Radiance of the Sky*, Ronit Meroz presented her initial findings about the Aramization of the *Zohar*, which she identified as the product of R. Judah Nissim in sixteenth-century Italy. She presented on a screen three columns of text from the pericope of *shemot*, two from manuscripts and the third from Margolioth's edition. She showed how some early manuscripts contain nearly all Hebrew text which were emended by sixteenth-century editors to embellish the role of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his circle, translating most all locutions into Aramaic. Meroz is to be congratulated for a discovery that will prove to be a major device for sorting through the transmission history of the zoharic texts and their transformations. Various editions will be needed to explore the fluidity of the text through and including its printing.

While the scholarly community patiently awaits Meroz's edition, numerous methodological questions arise at this stage, among them the types of tools and methods of editorial practice that will be necessary for zoharic research from

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[329] See Liebes, 'Hebrew and Aramaic as Languages of the *Zohar*', p. 44 where he notes passages where 'Hebrew appears to be the original version which was later translated into Aramaic'. In the accompanying note he sates that 'this is also the opinion of Ronit Meroz who has devoted a detailed study, as yet unpublished to this question'. See also the comment by Yehuda Liebes in his *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira*, p. 312 n. 39 [Hebrew], where he writes about the combined language, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, in *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, and the stronger presence of Hebrew in *Parshat Shemot* in the Cremona printing relative to the other editions. He further adds, 'It seems that someone reformulated the Hebrew sections in Aramaic for the sake of consistency. The slippage between the two languages is known from the works of others in the *periphery of the Zohar*, as for example with R. Joseph of Hamadan, R. David ben Judah he-Ḥasid and R. Joseph Angelet. The Hebrew of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* is not any more natural (as we might expect), and is not similar to the Hebrew works of R. Moses de León which is difficult, unique and most interesting'.

this point forward. Foremost, we must question if there is an original *Zohar* in Hebrew, namely, do the manuscripts consist of snapshots in the gradual progression of rewriting of the textual body known as the *Zohar* or the zoharic corpus of texts. A general assumption of modern scholarship has been the gradual progression from allegory to mythic symbolism, namely, from the Hebrew of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the '*Body of the Zohar*', and culminating in the *Idrot*. This conclusion and all ancillary issues need to be reopened. Furthermore, the Hebrew translation of David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid comes into new light and is of tremendous importance to the question of the early appearance of zoharic texts.[330] A major contribution would be a mapping of R. David's zoharic text to establish the literary boundaries of what he translated and presumably considered to be the zoharic text (or book?!).[331] Such an edition which would present the zoharic texts in his possession, his translations (and his paraphrases and commentaries) alongside other zoharic manuscripts would illuminate a major chapter in the development of the zoharic text and separately, the divergence of this Castilian kabbalist from zoharic texts that he (in all likelihood) did not write, but appropriate and to which he reacted in his own writings.

In light of such works, and the interplay between zoharic Aramaic and Hebrew, the use of Aramaic and the forms of pseudepigraphy employed by R. Moses de León must also be viewed with new lenses. Indeed, the linchpin of Liebes' hypothesis regarding membership of various Castilian kabbalists in the so-called 'Circle of the Zohar' depended largely on their participation in conventions of Aramaic writing similar to the Aramaic text of the printed editions! Here it might be advisable to study the Aramaic of the various zoharic texts from a deconstructed perspective, appreciating the range of its terminology as distinguishing characteristics of the literary independence of the author(s) and/or literary units. Even the grammar of the zoharic corpus should

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330 A future edition of the translation will make possible a more precise study of the quality and character of the source(s) which served his translation. See Moshe Idel, 'David ben Yehuda He-Ḥasid's Translation to the *Zohar* and his Commentary to the Aleph-Bet', *Alei Sefer* 8 (1980), pp. 60-73 [Hebrew].

331 While the full text of R. David's translation will someday be compared to the printed editions and other manuscripts of the Aramaic text, a graphic presentation of how much of the zoharic text he had relative to that found elsewhere would be a major fist step forward. The method I used in my edition of R. Asher ben David, in the graphic display of the textual boundaries, would suffice.

be similarly deconstructed, revising the work by Qaddari through this new paradigm.[332]

In preparing tools for zoharic study and in utilizing the zoharic texts for the study of Kabbalah and its language, new demands must be made of scholarship. In Scholem's celebrated letter to Bialik, he called for the preparation of a lexicon of zoharic terms.[333] In light of the fluidity of the zoharic text, layered glossaries could be prepared displaying the earlier Hebrew terms, the Aramaic of the Italian editors and the instances (and presumably there are many), where a particular Hebrew term was given a number of Aramaic renderings dependent upon its context. Most interesting, are cases, as I have noted to myself from study in class with students of manuscripts in Hebrew, of the '*Body of the Zohar*',[334] where the Hebrew text plays upon the language of the biblical verse cited, but which is all but lost in its Aramaic garb.

On the relationship between Hebrew and Aramaic, continuing the groundbreaking work of Adolph Jellinek in lining up texts in parallel columns showing the affinity and disagreement between the language of de León and the zoharic texts. This of course is dependent upon good editions or a selection of good manuscripts for this purpose, both of de León's corpus and the zoharic texts. A lexicon which compares terms, phrases and syntax between the Hebrew of de León, the Hebrew contained in specific zoharic manuscripts and the

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[332] See the comments of Abraham Tal, 'In Search of Late Samaritan', *Aramaic Studies* 7.2 (2009), pp. 187-188.

[333] See also S[imon]. A. Neuhausen, 'Toward the Terminology of the *Zohar* and its History', *ha-Ṣofe le-Ḥokhmat Yisrael* 11 (1927), pp. 213-219 [Hebrew].

[334] 'Readings in Zohar', Bar Ilan University, 2007-2008, '*Ḥayyei Sara*', where we utilized a number of manuscripts I randomly selected. Ms. Vatican 207 (fols. 126b-127a, *Zohar* 1:124b) proved to have a significantly different text with extended sections in Hebrew, only to revert, at times a paragraph or two later, to an Aramaic that approximated the print. Clearly, no attempt was made in this manuscript to translate the text in either direction. Rather the complexity or lack of uniformity displays a stage in the history of the text's life, a snapshot of its development, with the added caution of distancing our perspective from a teleological presumption of what the full or essential *Zohar* should be or become. Surprising is that these Hebrew passages appear word for word in R. David ben Yehuda's translation (Ms. Vatican 186, fol. 26a). Furthermore, a comparison of the 'original' Hebrew of the manuscript that of R. David with the new Hebrew translation of Rabbi Edri in his two-column edition revealed many differences worthy of a study.

Aramaic of zoharic manuscripts, is undoubtedly a *desideratum* of the field.[335] In all, little progress that will endure the test of time can be made on the relationship between de León and the *Zohar* until good editions of his many works are issued (and the same should be said of the other Castilian kabbalists particularly R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid, R. Joseph Angelet and R. Joseph of Hamadan). Moreover, I can imagine a compendium of the texts of all the citations of zoharic passages through fourteenth century (or more ambitiously prior to the printing in the middle of the sixteenth century), arranged by author or according to the printed editions, so that detailed comparisons of texts can be undertaken showing who had what and highlighting to the reader the differences in arrangement and locution. (Future projects could expand a zoharic lexicon to kabbalistic language more generally, or layering the later influence of zoharic terms to show the appropriation of these terms for other aims in Lurianic and Hasidic texts).[336] Particularly helpful would be a study or volume that collects all the known textual data of the relationship the works of de León and the zoharic corpus. That is, in two columns this project would present every apparent borrowing, paraphrase, or close parallel between the two bodies of texts, when in the past, scholarship sufficed with references and annotations in the few editions that have been prepared of de León's works or studies about the phenomenon.

Another important database that could be developed is one that culls from zoharic corpus all readings of the plene and deficient spellings of biblical words

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335 See Ronit Meroz, 'Der Aufbau des Buches Sohar', *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdischen Studien* V.II (2005), pp. 16-36.

336 Scholem began such a project with index cards in the two top left drawers of his desk, still preserved in the Gershom Scholem Library, and see further file 68a in the Gershom Scholem Archives, Arc. 1599. Related here is an expanded project of collections of kabbalistic phrases and idioms. See Moshe Hallamish, 'A Collection of Expressions', *Sinai* 80 (1977), pp. 276-283; 85 (1979), pp. 263-270 [Hebrew]. The impact of kabbalistic literature on the Hebrew language is immense, and an expanded project which accounts for the uniquely kabbalistic expressions and sayings that have influenced Jewish literature as a whole, from the middle ages and on through modern times, is a major desideratum. For such a cataloging of zoharic expressions see Ḥayyim Shimon Neuhausen, *Zoharei Zohar*, Saint Louis 1929. Neḥemiah Leibovitz, *Peninei Ha-Zohar: Ha-Meshalim ve-ha-Pitgamim*, new revised edition, Jerusalem 1931. For an early effort to offer an accounting of such from general Hebrew literature, see Israel Hayyim Tawiow, *A Treasury of Parables and Sayings*, Odessa 1919 [Hebrew].

that serve unique interpretations.[337] From this array of sources, one could integratively reconstruct the biblical text that served the zoharic authorship. Such a project is parallel to that of Israel Ta-Shma's work on the liturgical and ritual underpinnings of the *Zohar*, including foremost the text of the prayer book that served the *Zohar*.[338] While the project that I am suggesting would require a breakdown of the biblical text according to the literary unit of the zoharic corpus, the spans of texts could be extended to include other Castilian kabbalistic texts which would further confirm the level of participation of various kabbalists within the (collective) project of its composition.

This suggestion is not new. The biblical text behind the *Zohar* was the focus of a halakhic debate in the responsa literature of R. David ibn Zimra. He was asked about the discrepancies between the Massoretic text of the Hebrew Bible and that found within the explanations of the *Zohar*, understood to have been authored by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in antiquity. In the question, Ibn Zimra writes about a scribe who corrected biblical manuscripts according to the *Zohar*! The practice did not place the *Zohar* above the Hebrew Bible in its status or sanctity, but rather privileged the authenticity of an interpretation from Tannaitic times that testified to the spelling of words in Bible manuscripts recorded at that time. The later Bible manuscripts were thus seen to be defective, regardless of how many witnesses could be compared in their day.

Ibn Zimra rejects this practice and warns against creating 'two Torahs' in Israel, thereby preserving the cultural and, formally, the legal authority of the process of comparing Torah manuscripts with each other so that a uniform text is transmitted within that tradition of Torah manuscripts.[339] The move is not

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337 See the volume, M. David Rubin, *Sefer Kol 'ha-Miqraot she-be-Midrash Rabbah ve-ha-Zohar ha-Qadosh*, Brooklyn 2008, which presents all the full verses in their order in Scripture without noting their location in the zoharic corpus. Such a chart is presented for the first half of the volume relating to the midrashic corpus. A bizarre but important foundation for future research.

338 Israel Ta-Shma, *The Revealed within the Concealed: The Halachic Residue in the Zohar; A Contribution to the Study of the Zohar*, Tel Aviv 1995; second revised edition, Tel Aviv 2001 [Hebrew]. See the reviews by Yehuda Liebes, 'The *Zohar* as a Halakhic Book', *Tarbiz* 64 (2005), pp. 581-605 [Hebrew]; Moshe Hallamish 'What was Hidden from Whom?', *Da'at* 38 (1997), pp. 9-15 [Hebrew].

339 See R. David Ibn Zimra, *Responsa*, Part 4, 101, §1172 who cites the famous responsum of Rashba §232 on this matter (following the correct version and not the later corruption of Rashba's text which became the printed text). On the history of these

surprising, as a change in the scribal practice of proofing Torah manuscripts would be subversive at best. Further, we should not think of this case as the conflict between the mutually exclusive disciplines of rabbinic tradition and Kabbalah. In Ibn Zimra's thought, the oral tradition includes the esoteric, even if he recognizes a tension in the books he uses. Thus he states quite abstractly elsewhere in his *Responsa*: 'And in every place that you find that kabbalistic books disagree [*ḥolqim*] about a legal decision or a *gemara*, you should follow the *gemara* and the legal rulings. And in every place that they do not disagree, that it was not mentioned in the *gemara* and also [not] in the legal [works], I found it fitting to base [my opinion] on the words of Kabbalah'.[340] Ibn Zimra's

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version, see Jordan Penkower, 'Maimonides and the Aleppo Codex', *Textus* 9 [1981], pp. 39-128; idem, 'The Text of the Bible Used by Rashi as Reflected in his Biblical Commentaries', *Rashi, The Man and His Work*, ed. A. Grossman, S. Japhet, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 99-122, esp. pp. 100-101 [Hebrew], where he discusses the response of Rashba and Ibn Zimra, and a related discussion by the author of *Raya Meheimna*. See further David Weiss-Halivni, *Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses*, Boulder and Oxford 1997, p. 72; Edward Greenstein, 'Misquotation of Scripture in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* I, ed. Barry Walfish, Haifa 1993, pp. 71-83. On the misquotation of verses in the *Zohar* see Tishby's discussion, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 55-56. For a fascinating attempt to treat the question of biblical criticism through the lenses of kabbalistic sources see the early work of Joseph Avivi, *On Holy Styles [of Writing in] the Torah*, Jerusalem 1977 [Hebrew]. The kabbalistic theory of textuality that I am forwarding in this volume, or more precisely the theory about editorial practice that I am prescribing as a description of what emerges from a study of the way the kabbalists used and revised versions of texts accords well with a certain view of the multiple texts that are contained within the Hebrew Bible as a sacred and canonical corpus. See the comment of Franz Rosenzweig concerning the claim of separate human authors to Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, 'Even in that case, however, it would remain true that what we need to know from the account of creation is not to be learned from either chapter alone buy only from the juxtaposition and reconciliation of the two. Indeed, it is to be learned only from the reconciliation of the apparent contradictions from which the critical distinction begins' (Rosenzweig, 'The Unity of the Bible: A Position Paper vis à vis Orthodoxy and Liberalism', Scripture and Translation / Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, trans. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1994, p. 23).

[340] *Responsa* 4, §36, cited by Melila Hellner, 'Transmigration, Sabbatical Years and the Calculations of the End of Days: Selected Chapters in the Kabbalah of R. David Ibn Zimra', M.A. thesis, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987, p. 11 [Hebrew]. See further, idem, 'The Transmigration of Souls in the Kabbalistic Writings of R. David Ibn

meticulous attention to the Hebrew letters of the Torah, such as in his commentary to the letters, *Sefer Magen David*, gave him pause to consider the historical changes in the transmission of text, from Ancient Semitic script to the square script of the rabbinic tradition. In the introduction to this work, he cites two views, supporting the idea that the Torah was given at Sinai in 'Assyrian script' and so sanctifies the later form so that, again, 'Two torahs' would not be created. It is on this basis that he interprets the shape of the Hebrew letters.[341]

Much like the later criticism of Jacob Emden, Samuel Luzzato and Elyaqim Milzahagi,[342] these examples show how the burden of conflicting textual data that presented itself from within the complex layers of the editorial practice compelled these figures to compare textual histories one against the other. While their methods and answers show that they lack a good deal of the historical consciousness that characterizes some early modern efforts to grapple with similar situations.[343]

All this is to say, that zoharic scholarship is still in its infancy and no matter what gains are made in the coming years, it will take *generations* of scholars to clarify the most basic issues. Even while appreciating the differences and unique character of the *Zohar*, a cursory comparison of the state of research to that of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud should be sufficient to make any Kabbalah scholar humble regarding his or her place within the long line of scholarship that will be accomplished over the next few centuries. Beginning with Scholem, the field has suffered from a well-intentioned eagerness to identify the author and explain how the book was written. This orientation is misplaced and in my view speaks to the ideological and historicist interests of the scholars, more than it provides for an understanding of the text. Put differently, even as the methodology and questions asked by scholarship

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Zimra', *Pe'amim* 43 (1990), pp. 16-50 [Hebrew].

[341] *Sefer Magen David*, Amsterdam 1713, 'Introduction', fol. 2a.

[342] For a rich history of related issues see Jordan Penkower, 'New Considerations on *Sefer Massoreth ha-Massoret di Elia Levita*', *Italia* 8 (1989), pp. 7-74 [Hebrew], esp. p. 53 n. 129; idem, 'S.D. Luzzatto, Vowels and Accents and the Date of the *Zohar*', *Samuel David Luzzatto: The Bi-Centennial of His Birth*, ed. R. Bonfil, I. Gottlieb and H. Kasher, Jerusalem 2004 [=*Italia*, Conference Supplement Series 2], pp. 79-130.

[343] Compare to the comments of R. Isaac Levi of Berdichev in his *Qedushat Levi*, Slavuta 1798, fols. 9d-10a, who offered a historical justification of the change to Assyrian script in the time of Ezra in relation to the laws of nature and miracles. I offer my thanks to Moshe Idel for this reference.

change, an expectation prevails that the next chapter in the study of the *Zohar* will yield definitive answers (no doubt, a form of academic messianism) about what exactly transpired in the production of the *Zohar*, and whether the *Zohar* is a book, written by its authors. In the worst case scenario, the methods and projects are formulated in light of these expectations, seriously limiting the outcome, even if the stated methodology states the reverse relationship between its methodology and goals. May aim, of course, is not to undermine the great erudition that underlies past scholarship, but to question the aim and methods of the discussion regarding this literature today.

In order to continue and test the various theories about the editing of the *Zohar* by a circle of Castilian kabbalists it would be necessary to present an analysis of a literary section, similar to that of the Talmud, and identify the connective tissue between the literary product of de León and the contributions adopted from other kabbalists. And note: not one page of zoharic corpus has been offered in scholarship to show where certain passages were clearly composed by de León and where and how the text was edited to include passages of another member of the zoharic circle that he headed! As long as scholarship cannot provide clear literary examples that show signs of editing, the theory remains a mere hypothesis, amounting to impressionistic comments regarding the affinity between particular zoharic passages and the known writings of noted kabbalists such as R. Moses de León.

Here zoharic research would greatly benefit not only from the literary tools in use, and hotly debated, amongst scholars of rabbinic literature, but also from a comparison of the two corpora to highlight the differences which would clarify the needs and appropriateness of applying certain methods. Research in the Talmud is complex and my typology is not meant to define or summarize nuanced approaches which differ from scholar to scholar. Following such a disclaimer, I would add that Jacob Neusner and David Weiss-Halivni represent the opposite ends of a mapping of such methods, with Neusner emphasizing time and again the need to appreciate the Talmud first as a *document* whose framers shaped its surviving form leaving no witnesses to its prior states,[344]

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[344] For an overview of scholarship see Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, Leiden 1970 (reprinted Eugene, Oregon 2003). On redactional issues and the status of works as documents see: Jacob Neusner, 'Rabbinic Judaism in Nihilistic Perspective: The Goldberg-Schäfer School and the Theory of the Empty Text', *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Neusner and A. Avery-Peck, Part three, volume two, Leiden-Boston-Koln 1999, pp. 75-114; idem, *On Midrash as Literature: The Primacy of*

whereas Weiss-Halivni focuses on the meaning of smaller textual units often independent of their current placement, suggesting the pre-history of the text's redaction and the metamorphoses of their meaning through the stages of the text's formation.[345]

Documentary Discourse, Lanham 1987; idem, *Rabbinic Judaism. The Documentary History of the Formative Age*, Bethesda 1994; idem, *Where the Talmud Comes From: A Talmudic Phenomenology – Identifying the Free-Standing Building Blocks of Talmudic Discourse*, Atlanta 1995; idem, *The Documentary Foundation of Rabbinic Culture: Mopping Up After Debates with Gerald L. Bruns, S. J. D. Cohen, Arnold Maria Goldberg, Susan Handelman, Christine Hayes, James Kugel, Peter Schaefer, Eliezer Segal, E. P. Sanders, and Lawrence H. Schiffman*, Atlanta 1995; idem, 'Three Generations of Post-War Study of Judaism in Germany: Goldberg, Schaefer, Houtman and Becker and the Demolition of Historical Judaism', *Religion* 34 (2004), pp. 315-330. On Schäfer's contribution to reseach on the redaction of the Talmud and redaction for editorial practice, see further below and the comments offered by Alberdina Houtman, *Mishna and Tosefta: A Synoptic Comparison of the Tractates Berakhot and Shebiit*, Tübingen 1996, p. 18. Neusner's criticism of Schäfer is quite strong, accusing him of transforming the documents into a 'vacant text' and further, of 'antitextualism'. I appreciate sensitivity to the issues expressed in Neusner's critique, even if I do not approach them from a question of 'history. I concur nonetheless that if not balanced with other methodologies, the overemphasis placed on the role of editorial changes, redaction and the creation of new recensions will lead to the reduction of a text that expresses a particular religious culture meaning and experience to the mechanics of how it became transformed. The fullest expression of this methodology may be found in Boustan's, *From Martyr to Mystic*, in which he peels back the layers of editing to devalue the mystical character of the resulting documents. At issue here is not the validity of his argument with respect to these specific documents, but an orientation toward the phenomenology of texts and the primary methodologies that scholars today employ to understand their meanings, for those who created them and for readers today in the academy. For the clearest expression of what his approach entails and excludes see pages 16-23 of his book.

[345] David Weiss-Halivni's research published in the book series *Sources and Traditions* (numerous volumes, 1968 through 2008), can serve as an important example of a comparative study of edited texts. For more on the Talmudic *sugya* see David Kraemer, 'The Origins of the "*Sugya*" as a Literary Unit', *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9,C (1986), pp. 163-175; Shulamit Valer, 'The Talmudic "*sugya*" as a Literary Mosaic', *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* V, Atlanta 1993, pp. 107-118. Shamma Freidman, 'Some Structural Patterns of Talmudic Sugyot', *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* III (1977), pp. 384-402 [Hebrew]. See further the very

Before applying any such methods to zoharic scholarship, it should be noted that the *Zohar* is a very different case. The earliest surviving evidence of both documents as full copyings (and later printings) of its parts presented as a whole took place in the Middle Ages. In the case of the Talmud, fragments exist in the Cairo Geniza, that do not detract from the editing program that was established for the medieval witnesses either of independent tractates or of the text and arrangements of tractates copied together as the Babylonian Talmud as found for example in Ms. Munich 95 (completed in 1369). That is, there is consensus that the Talmud was never written by an author, but is the product of a very long process, beginning with the transcription of oral traditions and continuing on through commentaries of further generations who recorded more materials, edited existing materials and reworked oral and written sources until the Talmud as a document was relatively stable prior to the Geonic period. The fact that the earliest manuscripts and printing do not emerge until the Middle Ages does not change, for all scholars, the fact that an editing of a work (or more appropriately, an anthology) that was not produced by a single author or single group of authors but by many, does not alter the status of the document we have today. Early textual evidence does not question the status of the editing that took place later. Instead, Talmud scholars debate the relative importance and character of those methods that decode, track and evaluate the meanings behind the redactional layers *without being able to consult manuscripts that reflect the texts in their states prior to the known redaction.*

In the case of the *Zohar*, by contrast, the raw state of the manuscripts prior to their organization into the larger frame that was fashioned by the sixteenth-century kabbalists and printers does exist in numerous manuscripts. Both the text and the edited form are unstable, even if loosely speaking the literary units that comprise the zoharic corpus are identifiable in these manuscripts. It would be a mistake, in my opinion, to compare the textual state and histories of the literary units of the *Zohar* to the tractates of the Talmud. The order of the

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important collection of studies in the volume: *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. J. Rubenstein, Tübingen 2005. Noam Zohar, *Secrets of the Rabbinic Workshop: Redaction as a Key to Meaning*, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 141-151 [Hebrew]; Moulie Vidas, 'Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud', Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2009; Catherine Hezser, 'Form-Criticism of Rabbinic Literature', *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. R. Bieringer, F. G. Martínez, D. Pollefeyt and P. Tomson, Ledien-Boston 2010, pp. 97-110.

Mishnah and the editing and redaction of the Talmud predate the copyings of medieval Europe. In the case of the *Zohar*, scholarship has not proven that the author(s) of any one unit knew of the existence of (all) the others. What is desperately needed in zoharic scholarship is a careful mapping of the various units which would show their independence and any interdependence while being weary of placing the more than twenty texts along a linear path of development to the construction of the book that was in the minds of the printers. To state the matter plainly, scholarship should assume a lack of mutual influence until each connection can be proven.

More far-ranging questions include the thematic organization of zoharic texts that interpret the literary frame of the Torah, such as described in Elliot Wolfson's study on the existence of evil in the layout of the printed *Zohar*, where he described a sustained myth that was explored in the zoharic discussion of the Exodus through the giving of the Torah at Sinai.[346] Charles Mopsik appropriated a presentation of the pericopes of *vayeshev* and *miqeṣ* in *sugyot* in the third volume of his annotated translation of the printed *Zohar* into French, dividing the text into smaller units and offering comments in endnotes to each section. Although not based on any historical claim of its composition or reception, his breaking down of the text into literary units is an insightful tool for appreciating its possible construction into a greater literary arrangement.[347] Finally, in presenting the so-called body of the *Zohar*, Daniel Matt structured the flow of the zoharic text as a commentary to the *Zohar* by framing the relevant verse of the sub-sections he created with the relevant biblical verse of the pericope framed in a text box. Once again, many assumptions could be suggested as the basis for this structuring. An opinion is thus offered about the literary form and structure of the text as it appears in the

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[346] Elliot Wolfson, 'Left Contained in the Right; A Study in Zoharic Hermeneutics', *AJS Review* 11 (1986), pp. 27-52. Eliezer Segal, 'The Exegetical Craft of the Zohar: An Appreciation', *AJS Review* 17 (1992), pp. 31-49; Naomi Tene, 'The Mystic Narrative in the Zohar', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1992 [Hebrew]. On newer methodologies which appreciate zoharic narrative as fiction see Eitan Fishbane. 'The Scent of the Rose: Drama, Fiction, and Narrative Form in the Zohar', *Prooftexts* 29 (2009), pp. 324-361.

[347] *Le Zohar: Tome III, Genese: Vayechev Miqets*, traduction, annotation et présentation par Charles Mopsik, Lagrasse 1991. This method is not followed in the previous volume nor in the remaining volume (4), which completes, on the volume on Genesis.

manuscripts and printed editions, and guides the reader to thinking of the text as a commentary to the Torah, whereas the degree to which this was the intention of the author(s) or editors remains an open question.

In light of these efforts and the present state of the field, both in the advances of the literary state of the text and in the more detailed attempts to translate and annotate the text, the best way to forward the study of the *Zohar* is to offer detailed treatments of zoharic sections, even if this is accomplished in a Hebrew translation, so that the meaning of the text can be forwarded for discussion.[348] Important questions arise here in terms of the hermeneutic grid or fingerprint of the zoharic corpus, and the separate character of each of its texts. Maybe here it is best to ask what is a classic or traditional interpretation of the *Zohar*?[349] Many in the past have relied too heavily on the distinction between pre-Lurianic and Lurianic interpretations of the *Zohar*, offering the most significant commentaries of the earlier period – Cordovero's *Or Yaqar*, Azulai's *Or ha-Ḥamah* and Ibn Lavi's *Ketem Paz* – as examples of contextualized interpretations to the *Zohar*. Certainly this has been reified with the sampling of such commentaries in Daniel Frisch's *Matoq mi-Devash*.[350]

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[348] See for example the studies of Mordechai Pachter, 'Between Night and Morning: *Zohar* II: 36b-38b', *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 311-347 [Hebrew], and Michal Oron, 'Artistic Elements in the Homiletics of the Zohar', *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 299-310 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Exile of the Angel of Death: A Study of a Zoharic Story (*Zohar* 1:217a-218b)', *DAPPIM: Research in Literature* 16-17 (2009), pp. 90-100 [Hebrew].

[349] Daniel Matt's translation and commentary could thus be compared to other attempts at characterizing the meaning of the text in a Castilian or at least pre-Lurianic context. See also Jacob Neusner, 'Review Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar*', *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 7 (2004), pp. 310-311.

[350] *Matoq Midvash* now includes volumes covering *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash* and has been reissued with a vocalized text of the *Zohar*. Of great importance is a comparison of the full edition of *Matoq Midvash* with the earlier *Nigelot ha-Zohar*, issued in 7 volumes, Jerusalem 1995-1998. As indicated in the title page, the edition is a shortened version of the zoharic text, which presents only the exoteric passages, defined as 'aggadot and midrashim scattered throughout the *Zohar* ... arranged according to the pericopes of the Torah like that found in *Ein Ya'aqov*'. On the question of the valorization or demotion of aggada by editing such a selection see Marjorie Lehman, 'A Talmudic Anthology of Aggada: Examining the Ein Yaakov', Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1993; idem, 'The "*Ein Ya'aqov*": A Collection of Aggadah in Transition',

Scholarship thus needs to take a stand collectively or develop a healthy debate on what types the way zoharic texts can and should be read.

This issue overlaps only at times with the literary questions of the *Zohar*'s literary construction. The basic question remains if there is a book or number of books that lie waiting to be redeemed as such within the larger body of zoharic literature? Should the body of the *Zohar* be published independently, and is it appropriate for scholars to continue to refer to it as such, privileging it over the other literary units? New publications are needed, of course, to actualize the shift in thinking about the identity and literary nature of the zoharic texts. While fraught with new problems, if the individual units were to be issued separately, each bound as a small pamphlet or larger volume and amassed as the parts of a set of 'the zoharic writings', it would contribute much to a new type of thinking, releasing many from the earlier assumptions that the form the sixteenth-century printers gave the texts is original, authoritative or ideal.[351] Even if not so intended, steps toward this end have been achieved with individual studies devoted to individual units of the zoharic corpus. Nevertheless, nothing makes a statement about the desired methodology as separately bound volumes that display either the earliest editings or compilations of zoharic materials as well as independent publication of these units as chiseled out by the scholarship's decisions based on style and content. All this speaks to the importance printed volumes have on the mindset of medieval and modern minds alike, within and without of the academy. The immediate goal of separate volumes is to free scholarship from the constructions of literary form that were imposed from the sixteenth century and on.

Separately, it would helpful to appreciate and trace the trajectory of the late constructions of the zoharic texts in their edited forms. To this end, I envision the reprinting of Cordovero's *Zohar* from his massive project *Or Yaqar* without the intervention, rearrangement and supplemental zoharic texts offered by its modern editors. Ideally, a synoptic edition similar in format and purpose to the

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Prooftexts 19 (1999), pp. 21-40.

[351] Such volumes were produced by R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, for example *Sefer Hekhalot ha-Zohar*, Konigsberg 1857 and *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*, Vilna 1820, which, although crafted and printed according to his editorial effort and accompanying commentary, have gone through many editions. See further, below, for editorial efforts in the twentieth century to issue separate volumes of the literary units of zoharic literature, such as those of Moshe Weinstock.

Hekhalot *Synopsis* of the first editions of Cremona and Mantua, Cordovero's text, as well as a few of the earliest editings of the *Zohar*, such as the celebrated Toronto manuscript, would offer scholarship a major tool of the *Zohar*'s later history, which could be used with caution to inquire backwards into its early history and even its production.

Throughout this study, I have tried to express my theoretical discomfort, indeed a perceived dissonance, concerning published methodologies for evaluating the literary quality and forms of the texts known by name '*Zohar*'. Admittedly, I do not offer an alternative thesis that could *resolve* the question of the *Zohar*'s composition. That is, I cannot demonstrate the absence of an edited *Zohar* similar to the literary form invented by the editors of the first editions in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the existing manuscript evidence strongly lends itself to the conclusion that the texts we now possess were not excised from a single literary document that is now lost. Rather, the *Book of the Zohar* was invented at a later date by enthusiastic editors who continued the pseudepigraphic spirit of an ancient rabbinic work to 'restore' the complete literary form of these texts.

Liebes' suggestion that R. Moses de León along with other kabbalists created the various texts of the zoharic corpus, must be investigated further, amended and, I believe, challenged in various ways. I take issue with the assumptions that there is a necessary connection between the myth of the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and the bonds (and self-consciousness) of the medieval kabbalists in intentionally composing such a 'book'. This claim has failed to muster any proof that there was even an attempt to edit (even parts of) the disparate texts in the end of the thirteenth century. In any event, it does seem that a number of figures are responsible for the literary products distributed in booklets prior to their late redaction and reception that resulted in the invention of the *Zohar* as a (printed) book. It is thus crucial to distinguish between the question of the composition of zoharic texts, the history of the reception of this literature, the invention of the book and its canonization in various communities.

It is time therefore to consider how scholarly conclusions would differ if we were to separate the mythic and epic from a form-critical approach. The myth of the composition of the *Zohar* by Shimon bar Yoḥai and his circle seems so *seductive* that Luria and his students moved to the Galilee to imitate the mystical and scholastic society of their ideological and pneumatic ancestors. The pattern seems to have come full circle when Liebes cast this simulation back onto the self-imaging of a circle of Castilian kabbalists who composed the

zoharic texts. Taking this one step further, it seems that scholarship today identifies with the mythic circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai to the extent that it has become the necessary template for explaining the *Zohar's* composition, appearance and diffusion, despite any differences in theory.[352] Instead, I suggest that we pause for a moment and explore the possibilities without this template. First, let us discard the integrity of the *Zohar* as a corpus of a consistent style or organizing myth of authorship, and then marginalize the role of the circle in the minds of those that first appreciated the texts as a book connected to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. At most it seems that a decade or two after the texts were first composed, the role of R. Shimon served a greater internal cultural and political need to oppose the canonization of the works and teachings of Nahmanides.[353] Finally, while acknowledging the identification of Luria's circle with the mystical imaging of the Tannaitic figures, we point to the composition of Lurianic works after Luria's death as the ongoing attempt to fashion and refashion the doctrines in the image of the students. Here, I depart from Meroz's assumption that differences between the students reflect different stages in the thinking of Luria, once again based on the assumption of the circle as a template and presumption of an Urtext, even if these (textual) traditions are oral reconstructed later by scholarship. While I, for one, cannot claim to be immune from all forms of ideological or theological identification with the sacred sources of the Jewish mystical tradition, it nevertheless seems to me that for different reasons, many of the scholars of the field share some measure of this identification that colors their methodology.

10. Form and Meaning: The Limits and Legitimacy of Interpretation

The presumption of a 'Circle of the *Zohar*' extends beyond the question of the

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[352] See most recently Daphne Freedman, 'Pseudepigraphy in the "*Zohar*"', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59 (2008), pp. 309-316. Following the theories set out by Liebes, Freedman compares the *Zohar* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and speaks more to the issue of esotericism than pseudepigraphy. Her argument (p. 312 n.24) presumes the existence of the 'book' of a *Zohar*, identified by the term *Zohar* in the famous passage (I: 15b-16a in the printed edition) and in sharp disagreement with Wolfson's reading of *Zohar* as the phallic emission of divine emanation. The *Zohar* was seen as a book that culminates, again following Liebes' argument, in the literary sections of the *Idrot* and its expressed tension about revealing and concealing, which Freedman argues is intended to promote the 'publication' of the *Zohar* and its messianic aim.

[353] Huss, *Like the Radiance*, pp. 11-42.

Zohar's authorship to affect the nature of scholarship on thematic inquires of zoharic literature. The literary nature of the *Zohar* is crucial for constructing a methodology of the history of ideas in kabbalistic literature as whole, as well as for delimiting an inquiry into the zoharic corpus and Castilian Kabbalah. In this section, I will review the implications of methodologies that depart from the conclusions raised here in studies published subsequent to the publication of the Hebrew version of this study.[354]

In Melila Hellner-Eshed's monograph on language and mystical experience, *Zohar: A River Issues Forth from Eden*,[355] the *Zohar* as a midrashic commentary is analyzed, according to its definition as a midrash to the Torah following the text of the printed edition.[356] Even though the identification of this text (but functionally treated as a *work* in her book) is acknowledged as a possibly late construction and the product of its reception,[357] the study follows the literary assumptions emphasized by Liebes, namely the role of the 'narrative frame' of *Zohar*, that is, the interrelationship between the parables and esoteric explanation of secrets to the verses of the Hebrew Bible as discussed between the members of the fraternity of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai (termed here respectively, scriptural exegesis and the zoharic epic). Even though she refers to 'versions of an early recension'[358] as compared to the

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[354] Early thematic studies of the zoharic corpus were completed at New York University. The include Joel Hecker's dissertation, which evolved into the published volume: *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval Kabbalah*, Detroit 2005 (See the review by Philip Wexler, 'Kabbalists and Sociologists', *Kabbalah* 15 (2006) 155-161); David Greenstein, 'Aimless Pilgrimage: The Quotidian Utopia of the Zohar', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University 2003; Hartley Lachter, 'Paradox and Mystical Union in the Zohar', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2004.

[355] Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Issues Forth from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Tel Aviv 2005 [Hebrew]; English translation, Nathan Wolski, Stanford 2009.

[356] Ibid., pp. 19-20 [English edition, pp. 11-12].

[357] See the accompanying note, Ibid., pp. 19-20 n. 10 [English edition, pp. 383-384 n. 10].

[358] Ibid., p. 21 [English edition, pp. 11-12], my translation from Hebrew edition, as the point is removed in the translation: '[It is] especially worthy to note the fact that in the printed *Zohar*, and possible also in the versions of its early recension, the story of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's death, are included and incorporated into the homilies on the pericope of *Ha-'Azinu* and the story of the death of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy'.

printed edition, she departs from Liebes' thesis of a circle, claiming that the internal consistency of the epic layer suggest that it is the product of a 'single author'.[359] Nevertheless, the literary assumptions which ground her methodology reify Liebes' appreciation of the interplay between the mythic air of the text, its own narrative of how the rabbinic figures, as authors of the mythopoetic exploration of the erotic secrets of the Hebrew Bible, produced the *Zohar* and instilled that content in the resulting literary product which aims at a similar response in affecting or reconstructing the reader's experience of the *Zohar* and Scripture.[360]

> The uniqueness of the *Zohar* is [found within] these methods or constructs [of uncovering the divine through the study of the text] that do not exist independently but are inseparably interconnected. This blending, and not the constructs themselves, creates the *Zohar* within the *Zohar*. In this blended structure there is a rejuvenation or renaissance of the poetic activity of the Tannaitic [Rabbi Shimon] ben Azzai, who would weave together verses from the Prophets with those of the Writings, which would bring the words of Torah to 'rejoice like the time when they were given', causing the divine fire to descend from heaven.[361] And so when the 'Circle of the *Zohar*' concentrates on learning every night, especially the special learning of the *Tiqqun Shavu'ot*, which is the *Tiqqun* [preparation] of the bride prior to the marriage ceremony as the day when the Torah was given, the comrades [of the zoharic circle] adorn the bride with adornments that they created from the weaving together of words of the Torah, the Prophets, Scriptures, and wisdom and secrets.[362] These interwoven adornments illuminate [*tiqqunim ha-zoharim*] the bride, the Congregation of Israel, the Circle [of the *Zohar*], and the creation of the *Zohar* in its entirety. The narrative stories abut the circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai in the *Zohar* and the homilies delivered are intertwined, they compose the woven fabric of the zoharic story. On the one hand, the verses which the comrades interpret become part of the chronicle which shape it, and the other hand, the accounts of the circle and their adventures find their expression associatively and creatively in the homilies of the comrades. Differing images of the *Zohar* are cast one upon the other, and a bounty of hints and internal quotations (cross

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[359] Ibid., pp. 26-27 [English edition, pp. 18-19].

[360] Ibid., pp. 17-18 [English edition, pp. 7-10].

[361] Paraphrasing *Leviticus Rabbah* 16:4 and parallels. See Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, p. 129.

[362] An allusion and remythologizing of *Zohar* I, 8a; III, 97a-98b.

> references), connect the stories and the innovations of Torah which are scattered in different places within the work.[363]

As is made clear from this passage, the pseudepigraphic myth of the fraternity of rabbinic authors has been carried over from zoharic passages through Liebes' thesis about the zoharic circle of Castilian kabbalists and onto the literary demands of the modern reader by the text itself. Thus, Liebes' theory about the circle has had a profound effect on the methodology of others, that is, on the hermeneutic expectations and conditions for approaching the text in scholarship.[364] Put differently, the mythic demands of the narrative frame of certain zoharic sections has been essentialized, even reified in this analysis, to personify the *Zohar* as the literary product of the exegetical and mystical events that occurred in the Castilian fraternity and which were cast back through the pseudepigraphic technique onto early rabbinic figures. The main calling of this book, however, is to identify and describe the mystical calling of the text upon the reader that folds back upon the mystical experience of its authors that eventuated in its composition, namely mystical experience as arousal, including of course, the convergence of meanings found in the term *hit'orerut*. Accordingly, Hellner-Eshed follows Liebes in turning away from prior scholarship's attempts to capture and present the doctrines of the work and the historical and form-critical patterns that produced the work. Her book is thus openly presented as an invitation to share in the mystical awakening that can be achieved from participating in the awakening that is manifest 'in the language of mystical experience of the *Zohar*'. Thus, we find that in this monograph the phenomenal aim draws the methodology away from the methodological limitations of an inquiry into the so-called '*Body of the Zohar*'[365] to include many passages from other literary units: *Ra'aya Meheimna*, *Idra Rabba*, *Idra Zuṭa*, and others. These assumptions regarding mystical experience and the

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[363] Hellner, *A River*, pp. 23-24. The recently published English edition offers a different nuance in its translation (pp. 15-16) to that which I have rendered here from the Hebrew. For the purposes of my argument here I have presented my translation.

[364] As Liebes himself writes in his reviews of her book in *Dimui* 25 (2005), pp. 65-69 [Hebrew], and in *Haaretz Literary Supplement*, 29 July 2005, section 5, pp. 1, 4 [Hebrew]. For similar comments highlighting the experiential focus see the review of Boaz Huss, 'A New Age of Research of Jewish Mysticism', *Theory and Criticism* 27 (2005), pp. 246-253 [Hebrew].

[365] See the discussion, pp. 25-27 [English edition, pp. 17-19]. For an overview of the sources interpreted throughout the book see the source index pp. 455-457.

composition of the *Zohar* by the circle of the *Zohar* therefore re-shape the academic reader and interpreter, limiting and determining the methods and conclusions that are deemed appropriate of this work.[366]

Further examples can be cited of recent academic studies (since 2005) which continue to interpret the *Zohar* as a whole, reading one passage though another or build a composite of the *Zohar* from all the literary strata.[367] Take for example the recent studies completed at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the direction of Yehuda Liebes. The first of note, is Shiloh Pachter's study of 'wasted seed', which traces the history of the idea from biblical literature through the halakhic literature of the twentieth century.[368] The chapter on the Early Kabbalah begins with a discussion of traditions in the *Bahir* and promptly focuses on the works from Castilian kabbalists included by Liebes within the 'Circle of the *Zohar*': R. Joseph Gikatilla and *The Treatise on Holiness*, possibly composed by him, R. Joseph of Hamadan, R. Moses de León and the *Zohar*. The choice of these authors stems more from the conclusion of

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[366] I would add that Heller-Eshed's book was intentionally written, even constructed, with a wide audience in mind. Her study has opened up the pages of the *Zohar* to many. Her unique writing style and play with language in a modern Hebrew invested with the word play from the lexicon of the *Zohar*, and her explanation of the subject of the *Zohar's* mystical language makes this book a very strong contribution culturally. And so, Hallamish's corrections offered in his review of the book are correct, but nonetheless miss the point at the same time as her language was intentionally colloquial intended to reach a wide audience amongst the Hebrew readership. See Moshe Hallamish, 'Review of Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Issues Forth from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Tel Aviv 2005', *Da'at* 60 (2006), 153-155 [Hebrew]. See further, Boaz Huss, *Like the Radiance*, pp. 391-392, who describes the religious or cultural enthusiasm [*hitpa'alut*] behind Hellner-Eshed's involvement with the *Zohar*, as compared also to the translation of Daniel Matt. Of note is the self-awareness and presentation of Hellner-Eshed as a secular author writing about a religious text and working through the tension and dichotomy that she attributes to these characterizations. Nevertheless, note as well the dedication of the study in the Hebrew version to the soul of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai.

[367] Included in this list are: Monique Biber, '*Raza De-'Eina*: A Study of the Secrets of the Eye in the Zohar', M.A. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2006 [Hebrew]; Mira Regev, 'The Character of R. Ḥiyya in the Zohar', M.A. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007 [Hebrew].

[368] Shilo Pachter, '*Shmirat ha-Brit*: The History of the Prohibition of Wasting Seed', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 2006 [Hebrew].

Liebes' study regarding the existence of the circle than the presence of a critical mass of discussions on the theme in the works of these authors. For example, Pachter notes that Gikatilla never discusses this topic at any length.[369] By contrast, the detailed discussion of the relevant passages in the works of Moses de León and the *Zohar* yields a clear determination of their affinity, but as the author concludes, major differences arise in conceptualization, scope of interpretation to the Torah, terminology, and the possibility of repentance for this sin. This study seeks to address the placement of de León's so-called Hebrew works within the continuum of his movement to the authorship of the *Zohar* and explain the shifts in his thinking, forcing this author to state that 'it is very difficult to assume that one author composed both'.[370] Following Liebes' model of the circle, Pachter notes that no other member of the circle is interested in this subject more than de León and so posits the existence of an as-yet-unknown member of the circle. Moreover, since Pachter assumes that de León would not have been so heavily influenced by this colleague, he concludes that this anonymous figure must be the author of these passages.[371] Having broken from the earlier model, Pachter then brings the new information back to the old paradigm and suggests that de León and the anonymous author worked together within this circle to put to rest any questions about de León's authorship.

> If we imagine that this fraternity in which the organized and programmatic de León and his novel and fiery anonymous kabbalist is collectively responsible for writing the homilies we have discussed in the *Zohar*, and in which the anonymous kabbalist has a more central role, then most of the problems which arise from the assumption that de León is the sole author are put to rest. The affinity between de León's works and the *Zohar* follows from the participation of de León and the anonymous author of the homilies in this fraternity. It is reasonable to assume that a large part of the concepts, ideas and homilies were conceived by de León, and the material which appears in his writings emerged in tandem with the development of the *Zohar*. The matter was written up in the *Zohar* out of the unique spirit of the of the writer's creative character, and this is the explanation to the gap between the atmosphere that pervades both sources. One can assume without any difficulty that the Hebrew writings of de León were written contemporaneously with the creation of the *Zohar*, for

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[369] Ibid., p. 124.

[370] Ibid., p. 160.

[371] Ibid., p. 161.

> indeed the tremendous creative tension did affect him. He, without a doubt, played a central role in the writing process, its reworking and editing, even if the creative inspiration did not fall upon his shoulders. Thus, it is not necessary to date the *Zohar* to a time before or after the composition of de León's Hebrew works. Of course, the contradictions and misunderstandings between the works of de León and the *Zohar* are thus explained. The example of wasted seed is a classic example of such a contradiction, and if we assume that instead of a contradiction this is a clear polemic between the two comrades, then this problem disappears. On this subject, de León's view concerning the possibility of repentance should be seen as part of the gradual development of the *Zohar* and it is logical that the matter points to an act of persuasion of a compromise between them, or an additional editing by de León prior to the dissemination of the pamphlet.[372]

Another recently completed thesis comprising a thematic study on the *Zohar* is Judith Weiss' study of descriptions of Hell in the *Zohar*.[373] Her study begins with an appreciation of 'zoharic literature' [*sifrut ha-Zohar*], a term which she claims was first coined by Yehuda Liebes(!),[374] only to return to the term *Sefer ha-Zohar*. The methodology of her study is based on first 'collecting all the zoharic texts which deal with Hell', then dividing them into five categories of concrete descriptions and myths, allegorical-biblical descriptions, theosophic-symbolic descriptions, descriptions found in the zoharic sections of the *Hekhalot* and 'descriptions which appear in the clearly late strata of the book of the *Zohar*, that is, *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*'.[375] An equivalence is therefore drawn between zoharic literature and the *Book of the Zohar*, whereby the terms are apparently used interchangeably as synonyms.

In a recent doctoral dissertation, Shifra Asulin wrote about 'The Mystical Commentary of the Song of Songs in the *Zohar* and its Background'.[376] Her inquiry investigates the *Zohar* as a corpus, yet excludes *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*. As explained in the thesis, she pays special attention to the *Zohar* on the Song of Songs (termed by her '*Zohar Ḥadash Shir ha-Shirim*') as

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372 Ibid., p. 162.

373 Judith Weiss, '"All Who Descend to *Dumah*": Descriptions of Hell as a Place of Punishment for Sinners in the *Book of the Zohar*', M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006 (revised version, February 2007) [Hebrew].

374 Ibid., p. 1 n.2.

375 Ibid., p. 2.

376 Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006 [Hebrew].

well as the section from the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the Song of Songs, a section from the 'Body of the Zohar', *Parshat Terumah*, the so-called 'Introduction', and a number of other zoharic passages and related works from Castile as background to the period. In accordance with an inquiry of literary questions about the *Zohar* and its implications for methodology in Kabbalah research, I will quote a passage from the opening section of her work, directed as well by Yehuda Liebes:

> The choice[s] of textual units indeed emerged from a focus on the subject, and is based upon the commonly accepted idea of the *Zohar* as a literature, an anthology that includes within it a literary process that spans a few generations of the circle of kabbalists in Castile, [termed by Liebes], 'The Circle of the *Zohar*'. Our choice seeks to provide a platform for different textual strata [*ḥaṭivot*] which comprise the zoharic anthology: *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, the main stratum called the body of the *Zohar*, or the 'epic stratum', the *Idra* literature whose uniqueness stands out, and the later independent sections, such as *Zohar Ḥadash Shir ha-Shirim*. Creating such a textual cross-section allows us a comparative and developmental [perspective] of the different concepts concerning the Song of Songs in the zoharic literature. Due to the wide range and clear uniqueness of the stratum of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*, this late literary layer [roved] of the zoharic literature was not included in the present study, and we hope to deal with it in the future.
>
> Our concept of the *Zohar*, directed our method to close textual analysis which treats each unit as a text which stands on its own, with its own internal keys, concepts and form of expression, which are at times common and at times different from those of parallel texts in the *Book of the Zohar*, and this necessitates a basic attentiveness and lack of preconceptions when looking at its contents.
>
> The present work therefore moves between textual analysis of different literary units which comprise it [the *Zohar*], and a panoramic view [*re'iya kolelet*] and conceptual approach that evaluates the place of the Song of Songs in the *Zohar*. This view draws from a comparative and complex perspective of the *Zohar* as a literature.[377]

This methodology is indeed problematic, for while it claims to engage the literary units outside of their restructured and reordered form as the book organized by the sixteenth-century printers, it nevertheless treats these texts as a book despite disclaimers to the contrary. As faithfully captured by its title, the

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377 Ibid., p. 26.

thesis seeks to appreciate the character and use of the text and language of Song of Songs in the *Zohar* and its background, namely thirteenth-century kabbalistic literature.[378] I would venture to say that behind this choice of subject is a desire to investigate the erotic language of zoharic literature (a substitute for gender studies proper, and cast as the alternative to the discourse advanced by other studies in the field), based on the presumption that its fullest expression of such will be found in textual commentaries to its verses. If indeed this is an attempt to test a presumption of zoharic hermeneutics, essentialized as the sexualized reading of what transpires Above,[379] (or in Liebes' take, the eros of mythopoesis, the true meaning of the term and concept of '*Zohar*'),[380] then the choice of the Song of Songs seems misplaced.

Zoharic literature as a whole is highly euphemistic, or to the initiated reader, boldly graphic in its depictions of the arousal and coupling within the sexualized theosophy and in relation to the mystic below. All biblical and rabbinic terms are subject to such recontextualizations within the *Zohar*, and the Song of Songs is not privileged relative to other books of the Hebrew Bible.[381] Moreover, the modern critical tools of gender, as already applied in *Zohar* research outside of the methods utilized here, would have offered a very different investigation and results. Nevertheless, the question of literary form proves the point here as the Song of Songs is all but marginalized in the quantity, character and arrangement of the zoharic literature that was produced and transmitted.[382] The same or even stronger conclusions on these questions

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[378] Green, 'The Song of Songs'; Zeev Gries, 'Early Kabbalistic Commentaries to the Song of Songs', *Mareh* 1 (2006), pp. 18-24 [Hebrew]. Cast more widely and conceptually beyond formal commentaries to the Song of Songs see Georges Vajda, *L'amour de Dieu dan la théologie juive du moyen age*, Paris 1957, pp. 191-232.

[379] So throughout the thesis, despite claims to the contrary. See p. 364, that 'eros is a concept much broader than the sexual issue itself and that coupling is only one of its aspects'.

[380] Liebes, '*Zohar* and Eros', *Alpayyim* 9 (1994), pp. 67-115 [Hebrew].

[381] Interesting in this context is the editorial effort of Judah Yudel Rosenberg to edit as a literary form the *Zohar's* commentary to the Song of Songs, which he included in the seventh volume of his edition of zoharic literature with a Hebrew translation, Bilgoraj 1930. Unlike *Zohar Ḥadash*, a title of a volume and not a work, this volume collects the commentaries to the three biblical works attributed to King Solomon, the Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

[382] Compare to the formulation of Arthur Green, '*Shekhinah*, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in its Historical Context', *AJS*

could be reached by a study on the role of the opening verses of Genesis, or any other biblical book. The selection of texts based upon the exegesis of a book of the Bible betrays the literary form of the *Zohar* in its transmitted and printed forms, while at the same time treating the disparate texts as a unified corpus, de facto as a book.

To be sure, Asulin devotes separate chapters to her analysis of each literary passage. Nevertheless, with the acknowledged methodological dependence upon Liebes, she writes about the *Idrot* as the culmination of the zoharic process, specifically voicing the mythic force of the Song of Songs as essentially zoharic, namely that an 'ethos of love' is necessary for engaging in the secrets of Torah.[383] Following Liebes, the 'narrative frame' was developed at a late stage, organizing the multiple interpretations and versions of texts that culminate in ecstatic death in the final meeting of the comrades in *Idra Rabba*. The narrative frame, nevertheless, creates the identity of the text and for Liebes and Asulin establishes the boundaries for identifying the author of both of the *Idrot* and evaluating the common use of the Song of Songs within them.[384] Asulin dates *Zohar Ḥadash Shir ha-Shirim* (namely, *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim* and not *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* which is also printed in the volume the printers called *Zohar Ḥadash*) to some time between the 'Body of the *Zohar*' and the *Tiqqunim*.[385]

Positive advances in the methodology of *Zohar* scholarship on the question of the literary boundaries of the discrete units that comprise the zoharic corpus include studies devoted to particular units. Foremost, Michal Oron has published a series of studies on the independent literary units, discussing the

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Review 26 (2002), p. 35: 'This font of erotic mythos dominates in the writings of the Castilian Kabbalah, and especially the *Zohar*, the great compendium of medieval Spanish Kabbalah. After the Torah text and the Psalter, the Song of Songs is probably the most widely quoted Biblical source in the *Zohar* literature. There is hardly a page in the *Zohar* that is not replete with the lush imagery of the Canticle's gardens, streams, fountains, and lovers' embrace'. [and in the accompanying note]: 'The section of the Zohar specifically devoted to the Song of Songs, Zohar Hadash 60b 75a, is but a small portion of the Zohar's treatment of the Canticle, covering only the first ten verses of Chapter One. Another extended discussion of the Song is found in Zohar 2:143a-145b. A collection of the many *Zohar* passages that interpret the Song of Songs is found in Isaac Crispin's *Zehorei Ḥamah* (Salonkia, 1738). Something similar (with Hebrew translation) is contained in the seventh volume of Yudel Rosenberg's *Zohar Torah* (Bilgoray, 1930)'.

383 Asulin, 'The Mystical Commentary of the Song of Songs', p. 136.

384 Ibid., p. 148.

385 Ibid., p. 337.

relationship between the literary form and the thematics of the unit.[386] This was followed by Oded Yisraeli's monograph on *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*, and other studies devoted to discrete literary units, investigating their themes.[387] It is important to point out here the conflation of the literary identity of texts (and units or works) as found in the manuscript tradition and print with the interpretive effort of scholars who use literary methods. This should be contrasted with the literary judgments not presented editorially in the manuscripts, as noted above in the work of Mopsik and Matt.

A literary analysis of zoharic literature requires both an appreciation of its literary status based on its editorial history and the adoption of literary tools as the primary methodology. I therefore take issue with those who confuse the study of myth and mythopoesis with literary analysis. While there is a relationship between the two, they are distinct in their interests, interpretive methods and objectives. Put differently, to read a zoharic myth as myth is not the same as a literary reading of the *Zohar* as literature. The gamut of scholarship on the intersection of the study of myth in Kabbalah and myths in the *Zohar* range from the early work of Scholem through the more recent studies by Liebes, Meroz and Michael Fishbane. There are of course many other scholars who have made important contributions on myth, but this grouping highlights some of the salient methodological moves that bear directly on the

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[386] See for example, Michal Oron, 'The Motif of the *Yanuqa* in the Zohar', *New Developments in Zohar Studies*, ed. R. Meroz, [=*Te'uda* 21-22], Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 129-164 [Hebrew]. idem, '"Place Me As a Seal Upon Your Heart": Reflections on the Poetics of the Author of the *Zohar* in the Section *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*', *Massu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 1-24 [Hebrew]. See also her study: Michal Oron, 'Artistic Elements in the Homiletics of the *Zohar*', *The Age of the Zohar*, ed. J. Dan = *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 399-310 [Hebrew].

[387] Oded Yisraeli, *The Interpretation of Secrets and the Secret of Interpretation: Midrashic and Hermeneutic Strategies in Sabba de-Mishpaṭim of the Zohar*, Los Angeles 2005 [Hebrew]. A privately circulated English translation and commentary of *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim* was published by Shabtai Teicher, *Zohar: Sabba D'Mishpatim: The Old Man in the Sea (Part One: Reincarnation, Resurrection, Redemption)*, Jerusalem 2004; see also: Avishar Harshefi, 'The Early Kings: The Myth of the Edomite Kings in the Literature of the Idrot', M.A. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2007 [Hebrew]; Yonatan ben Ha-Rosh, 'The Secret of the *Yenuqa* and the Light of the *Sabba*: Poetic and Mytho-Poetic Aspects of the Character of the *Yenuqa* in the '*Yenuqa de-Balaq*' Section of the Zohar', M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007 [Hebrew].

study of the *Zohar* in this context. Scholem's work focused on myth as the character of the text, its hermeneutical engagement with traditions that explored the divine drama in an esoteric fashion.

In numerous studies, Liebes' explored particular kabbalistic myths as the engine which drove certain literary movements, and in the *Zohar* he identified particular myths. More important in his studies, however, is the intersection of myths and Kabbalah, as we have seen, which spilled over in a different sense of myth to be identified with the construction of the circle of authors who are mirrored in the mythic fraternity of the R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his students, and which in turn lent itself to the pseudepigraphic 'literary frame' that resulted in an esoteric commentary to the Torah, known as the *Zohar*.[388] Meroz has taken this relationship in a different direction, identifying smaller textual units that grew into the larger literary form based on the centrality of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. In his extensive monograph, Fishbane further isolated myths within smaller literary units or traditions, from rabbinic literature through the *Zohar*. While not showing a continuous thread in each case from the Hebrew Bible through midrash and the *Zohar*, medieval mystical literature is shown to seize the opportunity to develop and enhance the precedents and suggestions of earlier textual moments.[389]

Much has been written in this vein, including the early work of Eliane Amado Levy-Valensi,[390] and Aryeh Wineman[391] to the more recent studies (and elegant translations) by Nathan Wolski.[392] We have here a spectrum of projects

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[388] See the collection of select studies on myth, primarily on the relationship between Rabbinic literature and the first few centuries of Kabbalistic activity: Liebes, *God's Story*.

[389] See Elliot Wolfson, 'Mythopoeic Imagination and the Hermeneutic Bridging of Temporal Spacing: On Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006), pp. 233-238 [Hebrew].

[390] Eliane Amado Levy-Valensi, *La poetique du Zohar*, Nimes 1996.

[391] Aryeh Wineman, *Mystic Tales from the Zohar*, Princeton 1988; idem, 'The *Zohar* on Jonah: Radical Retelling or Tradition?', *Hebrew Studies* 31 (1990) 57-69; Margarete Schlüter, 'The Eulogy *Ḥakham ha-Razim ve-'Adon ha-Setarim* in Hekhalot Literature', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6:1-2 (1987), pp. 95-115.

[392] Nathan Wolski, 'Those who Know Have Wings: Celestial Journeys with the Masters of the Academy', *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 83-114; idem, 'Mystical Poetics: Narrative, Time and Exegesis in the Zohar', *Prooftexts* 28 (2008), pp. 101-128; idem, *A Journey into the Zohar: An Introduction to the Book of Radiance*, Albany 2010. On the literary status of the zohar as a corpus see especially pp. 169-170.

that engage the smallest units of texts through larger structures leading up to attempts to tackle the *Zohar* as a work or corpus, with some of them assuming a whole or ignoring the structure in search of a theme across every zoharic text regardless of their literary context. The last is methodologically problematic even if much freedom should be afforded to such enterprises given their different aims.[393]

My claim is not that intertextual work about the *Zohar* is no longer viable for thematic studies and the history of ideas. Certainly, phenomenological research that compares the overarching concepts of bodies of literature can be quite productive.[394] My concern is that the expectations and assumptions that have been formulated out of the Middle Ages, from the period of the *Zohar*'s formation as a book by the kabbalists and printers in the sixteenth century have been silently reaffirmed amongst academics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, albeit for different ideological reasons. The influence of the literary forms invented hundreds of years after the zoharic composition is so great that they in/form the hermeneutic lenses through which the view the object of study. Methodologies learned from editorial practice can offer a much-needed corrective, reversing the reference point and perspective from print to manuscript and onto a self-awareness of how and why scholars produce editions of texts.

11. More Zoharic than [the] Zohar: The Hyper-Animation of Narrative Figures

I began this study comparing the assumptions and expectations of modern scholarship to those of kabbalists who appreciated the literary status of the *Zohar* as a collections of texts or fragments. This inquiry revealed that modern scholars have often displayed a stronger degree of enthusiasm, for a variety of idealistic reasons, than the kabbalists in presuming that behind the manuscripts and printed editions there was a book that could be uncovered or analyzed. Seen from within the broader reception history of the *Zohar*, from the

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393 Meroz's recent work should once again be recalled as structuring the move made by the author(s) from smaller units to a larger literary frame. See also the thematic study of Eitan Fishbane, 'Tears of Disclosure: The Role of Weeping in Zoharic Narrative', *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 11 (2002), pp. 25-47.

394 Ronen Pinkas, 'An Inquiry into the Relationship between the Body and the Soul in the Early Kabbalah: Further Consideration of the Differences between Theosophic and Ecstatic Kabbalah', M.A. Thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2005 [Hebrew].

beginning of the fourteenth century and on through present-day scholarship, the *Zohar's* perception, literary form, and place in the minds of those who 'lived' the *Zohar* was enhanced in ways that exceeded the constructions and traditions found in the earliest surviving documents.

This activity is unparalleled in the history of Jewish mysticism, even when considering other pseudepigraphic works and those attributed to ancient figures, such as the *Book Bahir* and *Sefer Yeṣira*. The psychological function of the *Zohar* as a motivating force can be measured by the degree to which it prompted kabbalists to travel in pursuit of more information about it, to seek mystical experiences in order to better understand the text, and to form new social bonds in imitation of how they perceived or imagined the lives of the literary personalities active in its pages. More specifically, these kabbalists were not simply reacting to the text by assigning meaning as readers who interpreted its words, chapters in the reader-response history of the text's interpretation. In the centuries following the dissemination of the text, the *Zohar* was overread as a guide for mystical life, where the characters became hyper-animated, living characters who were more than alive in the pages, living in the mystical lives of its readers.[395] Certainly countless other religious texts have had a profound effect on their audiences in various periods and cultures. What is unique here is that a significant number of mystics amongst its readership sought communication with the narrative characters of the drama depicted in its pages, who were according to the pseudepigraphic attribution also its authors.

New techniques were developed in order to gain access to additional or

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[395] Similar to the hyper-animation of zoharic characters is the relationship to the living memory of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai as the animation of his narrative character from the *Zohar*. See the poem 'Bar Yoḥai' and the statement of gratitude to the 'spirit [*ruḥo*] of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai who resides in the world', in Liebes ('The Messiah', pp. 235-236) and Hellner-Eshed, ('Preface', *A River*), respectively. Traditional publishing efforts based on a hyper-animated belief and which seek to integrate all texts about R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, rabbnic and zoharic, include: Moshe Quniṣ, *Sefer Ben Yoḥai*, Wien 1815; Asher Zelig Margolioth, *Sefer Koḥo de-Rashbi*, Jerusalem 1979; Joseph Diṣ, *Sefer R. Shimon bar Yoḥai*, Jerusalem 1989 and many others. See further Armand (Aron) Qaminka, 'The Secret Ideas of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai', *Sefer Klausner*, ed. H. Torczyner et. al., Tel Aviv 1936, pp. 171-180 [Hebrew]. These works are certainly motivated in part by the attempt to establish the antiquity of the *Zohar* and show the compatibility of rabbinic sources with the zoharic corpus. Nevertheless, they do not strictly speaking belong to the hagiographic genre and do seek to awaken and animate the narrative and historical character of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai.

deeper meaning of the now sanctified and canonical text. That is, these enthused readers, from sixteenth-century Safed and on through eighteenth-century Eastern-European Hasidism, had exhausted the meaning and forms of access to the secrets of the text and wanted direct access to its authors, a stage beyond a 'strong reading' or even pneumatic exegesis.[396] This was achieved by visiting the sites of their burial,[397] in effect visiting the remnants of their personhood, and inducing a conversation with them about their authorship via the texts they composed. The opening up of channels to the spirits of these mystical authors from Rabbinic times was achieved also by the repetition of non-zoharic texts such as the Mishna, which would subdue the practitioner's body such that the voice that would automatically emerge from the mouth would be that of the deceased saint. In these two examples, the text serves or produces a talismanic effect of creating a receptacle or instrument of communication which is fixed at the site of the body of the author or in the body of the reader or reciter of the ancient text.

More generally, the *Zohar* compelled many kabbalists, most prominently R. Isaac Luria and his school, to move their place of residence to the Galilee where the drama of the mystical study of the Tannaitic fraternity took place. The *Zohar* thus served as a geographic and mystical-scholastic roadmap for the lives of the kabbalists. We might consider the compulsion of mobility in pursuit of the *Zohar*, its authenticity and deeper meaning, to have begun with R. Isaac of Acre's wanderings in pursuit of R. Moses de León and the original copy he is quoted as having claimed to be in his possession. Indeed, this is a most curious parallel, seeing how, according to the version of R. Isaac of Acre's narrative, as recorded by R. Abraham Zacuto, R. Isaac was not looking for just any copy of the work to read and scrutinize according to internal textual criteria, but

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[396] Huss, 'Zoharic Textual Communities of Safed'; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 83; idem, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*, New Haven and London 2002, pp. 107, 187.

[397] Moshe Hallamish, 'Prostration at the Graves of Saints in the Months of Elul and Tishrei', *Being Close: Collected Studies for the High Holidays in Memory of Yihiel Shai Pinafter*, ed. A. Ganzel, A. Beck, Or Etzion 2000, pp. 80-88 [Hebrew]; Boaz Huss, 'Rites at the Graves of the Righteous in Safedian Kabbalah', *Maḥanayim* 14 (2003), pp. 123-134 [Hebrew]; Jonathan Garb, 'The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008), pp. 203-229; Yechezkel Shraga Lichtenstein, *Consecrating the Profane: Rituals Performed and Prayers Recited At Cemeteries and Burial Sites Of The Pious*, Tel Aviv 2007 [Hebrew].

wanted to view the (complete) autograph from Palestine. This is without a doubt an exceptional, and unparalleled, request and methodological criterion for a medieval figure who wished to evaluate an ancient text. Only in this context, of appreciating the mystical magnetism that the readers of the *Zohar* experienced does such a phenomenon begin to make sense, as in the Middle Ages works were normally evaluated based on their textual quality, not paleographic authenticity.

The indirect testimonies that revealed that R. Moses de León wrote out the zoharic text straight from his head was not it is context a dismissal of the work as an illegitimate forgery, as later rationalist historians such as Graetz would have it, but the disappointment of not having uncovered the work of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai himself. As we shall see below, the pursuit of the material artifact might have been the original aim, while the disclosure of R. Moses de León's 'authorship' as the unfortunate disappointment considering the expectations. That is to say, while the episode has always been interpreted along the binary of a historically authentic work from Tannaitic times or the medieval forgery of a Castilian kabbalist, such thinking may not have existed in R. Isaac's mind. Rather, R. Isaac might have accepted pseudepigraphy and this medieval sense of authorship in the same illuminative spirit with which it was intended, but held out hope that he could dispense with this tension, of the old words made new in the Castilian authorship (to borrow the *Zohar's* self-reflexive locution), and adopt a more literal understanding of the emergence of secrets from the Palestinian circle of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. To be sure, if we were to follow the inner logic of the text attributed to R. Isaac of Acre concerning de León, he is not said to have made money from his authorship. He is quoted as having retorted back to his wife, who apparently prodded him to accept and enjoy the responsibility and credit of his own authorship. De León responded to her that she would then have to forfeit the financial benefits of that his copying efforts afford them. Leaving aside for the moment de León's apparent disdain for what he saw as his wife's attachment to material wealth, the text never claims that de León was interested in making money from his authorship of the *Zohar* (a late conception after the advent of the printing press), but rather that his wife felt that he was missing out on the recognition due to him for being its author and instead was seen as the mere scribe who copied out an ancient work he uniquely possessed. De León's claim of having an original from which he re/produced copies speaks directly to the anxiety that was relieved in the era of printing where a set text, and emerging canonical format stabilized the work in that identical copies existed in multiple locations, providing public access to

many readers.[398] The single, authoritative original, in the sole possession of de León achieved a similar aim, even if the nature of zoharic authorship, of an undefined literature that emerged and continued after his death, emerged as a result.

Along similar lines, it is not a coincidence that R. Moses Cordovero and the Safedian kabbalists first organized the *Zohar* as a book and under their influence the Italian kabbalists and printers prepared two very similar editions in 1558. The constitution of the book emerged from the *expectation* of a program set out in the book for how to constitute mystical life in the present, which mirrored the mystical life of the figures in the book. The *Zohar*'s accounts of the lives of the mystical fraternity quickly became a guidebook for mystical life, a self-fashioning textbook that made geographic, social and esoteric demands of its followers. We can thus speak of the interface between their expectations, and their projection of these expectations as a program where the prescriptions outstripped authorial intent and transformed the text into a self-fashioning guide. More telling of the imaginative attachment of the sixteenth-century kabbalists to the pseudepigraphic reality of the lives of Tannaitic figures in Palestine is the Cremona printing of the *Zohar*. The printers of this edition included numerous passages of another pseudepigraphic book, *The Book Bahir* (and some passages from *Midrash ha-Ne'elam to Ruth*) alongside similar discussions of biblical verses in the zoharic texts which was already arranged as a commentary to the Torah. In so doing, they weaved together, on the same page a composite of early rabbinic interpretive activity, bringing it to life for the reader. One could even argue that to a traditional editor in modern times, the literary frame of the commentary to Torah does not sufficiently convey the Rabbinic mentality, at least not for its (proper) study, and so, in addition to re-editing his own edition of the volumes of the zoharic corpus with his marginal notes of rabbinic parallels, Margolioth supplemented this set with *Sha'arei Zohar*,[399] which reorganized the zoharic discussions around the frame of the Talmud.

The *Zohar* as we have seen throughout this study is best appreciated as a series of textual phenomena, a literary process, instead of a specific act of single or multiple authorship in Castile. What appears from the later perspective as

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398 See Susan Miller, *Trust in Texts: A Different History of Rhetoric*, Carbondale 2008, p. 104.

399 Reuven Margolioth, *Sha'arei Zohar*, Jerusalem 1956 and numerous facsimile reprints.

the normalization of the text in Aramaic, was a process that began with *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and continued on through the sixteenth century, at the very least. We see that enthusiastic readers found a *surplus of meaning* in the act of reading and extended the textual phenomena, that bears the name *Zohar*, according to particular perceptions of its essence or true character onto other activities and works. *Tiqqunei Zohar* might be the strongest example of such an extension and its author might have been the first to mis/identify the *Zohar* as a work in order to begin his own recreation. But the point here is to break down the dichotomy between a delineated work and later reverberations and appreciate the modes of writing of this amorphous literary body of zoharic texts (according to their family resemblance) in Castile as the beginning of a series of textual phenomena textual that continue on for centuries. This is not entirely *reductio ad absurdum*, even if this line of thinking, no doubt, strips away the uniqueness of the Castilian corpus. Positively, it evaluates the zoharic style of the Castilian corpus of zoharic writings within a larger framework of pseudepigraphic and Aramaic styles within the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the styles that reified such features due to the success of the *Zohar* as a book. Examples of zoharic writing can be found in R. Moses Ḥayyim Luzzato's zoharic composition in Aramaic,[400] Isaac Satanov's *Zohar Tanyana*,[401] Michael Rodkinson's satire on his contemporaries which he writes in zoharic style,[402] the parodies of zoharic writing by Mendel Lefin and Tuvia Feder such as *Zohar Ḥadash le-Purim*,[403] Hillel Zeitlin's diary which he calls *Zohar Ḥadash* and he occasionally writes in zoharic Aramaic,[404] and newly invented texts in zoharic Aramaic by Yudl Rosenberg.[405] These are but the most prominent examples and are diffuse in character from imitations, nostalgic returns to presumed antiquity of the *Zohar* according to its linguistic style and polemical plays on its style through satire and parody.

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[400] Joseph Avivi, *Zohar Ramḥal*, Jerusalem 1997 [Hebrew].

[401] Berlin 1783.

[402] Jonatan Meir, 'Mikhael Levi Rodkinson – Between Hasidism and Haskalah', *Kabbalah* 18 (2008), pp. 229-286, esp. p. 241 [Hebrew].

[403] Ṭuvia Feder, *Zohar Ḥadash le-Purim*, Cracow 1890. See the discussion of satires (and parody) in zoharic Aramaic in Huss, *Like the Radiance*, pp. 335-336, 352-353.

[404] Meir, 'Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*'; idem, '"The Book of Visions": The Mystical Diary of Hillel Zeitlin and the Attempts to Publish it in Light of Unpublished Correspondence', *'Alei Sefer* 21 (2010), pp. 149-171 [Hebrew].

[405] See Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 321. n. 163.

The reification of the *Zohar*'s style and form was a gradual process that displays various degrees of intensity, from the fourteenth century and on through present times. I suggest that the impetus for this process can be located in a messianic impulse to return to antiquity and recover authentic secrets of the ancient past. Indeed, the Kabbalah began with such a pseudepigraphic effort, namely the *Book Bahir*, which was intentionally cast as a fragments of an midrash whose main characters lived in Mishnaic times, some known and others invented. That the *Bahir* first circulated in manuscript without a title is very telling, as its mystical name was cleverly crafted from the first verse cited and at some early date in its transmission referred to as the *Midrash of R. Neḥunia ben Haqanah*, also due to the appearance of his name in the opening passage.[406] The *Zohar* in no small part may be viewed as a fulfillment of the pseudepigraphic exploration of ancient lore found in the *Book Bahir*, cast in a more dramatic form as the ambulatory and oral lessons of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. While here too, characters who were never mentioned in Rabbinic literature are inserted into the drama, the zoharic texts that take advantage of these personalities seek to give life to the traditions as spoken by actual sages from antiquity. The *Idrot* texts fulfill the implicit wish of the author(s) of the earlier zoharic texts, bringing these figures together in a gathering of the fraternity.

Later commentaries to *Zohar* cataloged or systematized the fraternity with lists of the figures, R. Abraham Azulai's introduction to his *Or ha-Ḥamah*, being a case in point. The desire for authenticity and experiencing the spoken words of the animated narrative figures became a linchpin for modern scholarship in demonstrating the narrative fiction of pseudepigraphy. Accordingly, Isaiah Tishby uses such holistic appreciations of the zoharic corpus and the listings of the Tannaitic figures to compare them to the historical record of the actual persons mentioned in Rabbinic literature and show that figures of different generations could not have met and exchanged traditions as appear in the *Zohar*.[407] Here we have the same process, albeit inverted, which accesses the desire to animate the members of the fraternity. Azulai's comments are a fine example of hyper-animation of the characters, filling in the lacunae of their social interaction beyond the interpretative

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[406] Further research will place the 'opening' passage of the *Zohar* which comments on the light (*Zohar*) mentioned in Daniel 12:3 in relation to the literary units and structure that followed. This opening migh have been an early moment of Zoharic writing or a later moment that framed existing and future writings around such a tradition.

[407] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 58-63.

demands the text places on the reader. After providing a long list of the rabbis who appear in the *Zohar*, he comments that:

> The fraternity, however, numbered ten originally and they are: R. Shimon, R. Eleazar, R. Abba, R. Ḥiyya, R. Yehuda, R. Yossi, R. Yiṣḥaq, and the three who died in the *Idra* which are R. Yossi bar Ya'aqov, R. Ya'aqov bar Idi, and R. Ḥizqiya. And without a doubt the work *Ra'aya Meheimna* was composed after the events of the *Idra* because only seven of them survived, about whom Rashbi said that it is a Sabbath to the Lord and they are the six days. And therefore only the seven were mentioned in *Ra'aya Meheimna* in *Parashat Pinḥas*, fol. 223a. However, it is surprising that *Ra'aya Meheimna*, R. Ila'ai and R. Yodai were added, and removed R. Yiṣḥaq and R. Ḥiyya. One cannot say that when the work, *Ra'aya Meheimna*, [was composed] they had already died, unlike that which is stated in *parashat bereshit*, that R. Ḥiyya fasted a number of times until he was able to see Rashbi after his death. R. Yiṣḥaq also died with Rashbi as is mentioned in *parashat va-yeḥi*. With respect to R. Ḥiyya, it refers to the two R. Ḥiyyas that lived. [The first was] R. Ḥiyya the elder, who died prior the composition of the work *Ra'aya Meheimna*. The second R. Ḥiyya lived after Rashbi as was mentioned and he is the R. Ḥiyya who lived during the time of the Rabbi and was not yet included amongst the fraternity and it is he who was mentioned in *parashat shemot*, in the account of R. Ḥiyya who became paralyzed when he was outside of the wall of fire as mentioned there. And if it were that the *Zohar* was without a doubt [composed] prior to the composition of *Ra'aya Meheimna*, even so, after the death of Rashbi, they added a number of things after [his] death as can be proven from a number of places. However, regarding R. Iṣḥaq who was not mentioned in *Ra'aya Meheimna*, unless he was troubled and needed to leave for work or something of the sort in the days during the composition of *Ra'aya Meheimna*, and in order to complete the number seven of the comrades which corresponds to the seven *sefirot*, R. Yodai and R. Ila'ai were counted among them. And due to their distinction in Torah, piety and the hidden wisdom, they became a chariot to the emanation.[408]

The need to order the events in the lives of the various figures corresponds, in this case, to the need to order the literary units chronologically and find inner consistency to the work of the *Zohar* as a comprehensive *book* that records actual events. As in this example, literary form extends beyond the aesthetic demands of printing in the sixteenth century and is bound up with the

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[408] Abraham Azulai, *Or ha-Ḥamah*, Jerusalem 1876, verso of last unnumbered page of introduction prior to fol. 1a.

validation and legitimization of the text. The narrative myth placed in antiquity precipitated the literary frame of the discussions amongst the members of the fraternity to the verses of the Pentateuch, in its order, so that this literary frame could be formally realized in a literary structure that follows both the text and the lives of these figures. In this sense the figures are thus animated, where the biblical interpretations serve the needs of the scholastic and mystical interactions amongst real figures.

Azulai's remarks take the printer's expectations to a higher level of a hyper-animation of the characters. Hyper-animation occurs when the reader's responses to the text presume or invent activity of the character not found in the text. Here, the text is compared to the reified image of the personality and life of the character which is found in the mind of the reader. Take for example Pushkin's surprise at Tatyana's rejection of Onegin in the work he himself composed.[409] The character has a life beyond the text that comes into a dynamic relief, even for its author. By comparison, in Azulai's comments the events in the text are not just arranged but additional data is presumed, indeed invented, in order to complete this picture. Azulai is in dialogue with the *Zohar* as a book where the characters' 'lives' need to be accounted for in both senses of the term.

Numerous editing and publishing efforts sought to continue the dialogue with the *Zohar* and the figures described in its pages, its presumed authors. In effect, this move builds upon zoharic pseudepigraphy which itself extends the narrative life of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his comrades into the Castilian community of esoteric authorship. Numerous attempts have been made to weave the zoharic statements of the fraternity back into the antique texts of rabbinic literature, which can also be viewed as a synchronic revision of all textual layerings in order to present an edited narrative image of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and the internal consistency of the Oral Torah in both its exoteric and esoteric components. This idea is manifest in editorial practice, in the volumes that repackage the known textual traditions in anthologies of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai's sayings, beginning with *Middot Rashbi*[410] and *Ma'amrei Rebbi Eleazar*

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[409] Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, See Olga Hasty, *Pushkin's Tatyan*, Madison 1999. My thanks to Michael Schneider for this learned observation. See further Amit Marcus, 'Self-Deception of Narrating Characters: from the Subject in Analytical Philosophy to the Homodiegetic Narrator, and Back', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2005 [Hebrew].

[410] Jerusalem 1939, printed in two parts with facsimile editions in one volume.

be-Rashbi[411] by Isaiah Asher Zelig Margolioth and most recently with *Sefer Mamarei ha-Tannaim: Ha-Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai*.[412]

These collections are mirrored by hagiographic collections that serve ritual and pedagogic interests, including children's books, and even overlap with other projects such as the anthologies constructed from Cordovero's works.[413] These efforts extend also to the modern relevancy of liturgy and Jewish life, such as the edition of the prayer book according to the Sephardic rite with zoharic parallels presented at the foot of the page.[414] The obvious anachronistic gaps are telling of the ideological and cultural effort of the editorial project, despite the intent expressed in the editor's introduction that the prayers may now be better intended according to what R. Shimon bar Yoḥai has taught us. On the *Zohar* itself, as noted, Margolioth's commentary *Niṣṣoṣei ha-Zohar* offered rabbinic parallels to the text and the compendium volume *Sha'arei Zohar* organized zoharic discussions around the frame of the Talmud. Neḥemiah Leibovitz edited *Midrashei Ha-Zohar*, which rearranged select zoharic passages according to the frame of all the books of the Hebrew Bible[415] (and another volume, *Sifra de-Aggadeta*, of passages arranged thematically). Similarly, the often-reprinted collection by Shmuel Falk Qipnis, *Midrashei ha-Zohar*, organized zoharic sayings around the frame of the Torah and the Scrolls.[416] Independent of the literary form are the collections of zoharic proverbs by Shumel Neuhausen and Neḥemiah Leibovitz.[417] Similarly, Joseph Baṣri organized 'exoteric' passages from zoharic literature around the frame of the Torah and the Scrolls in his *Ma'asiyot ha-Zohar*,[418] translations which were

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411 Jerusalem 1949.

412 [Jerusalem] Israel 2005. This volume was published in two nearly identical editions, with only the numerous dedication pages to the donors being different, one titled 'The Friedman Edition' and the other, 'The Gutneq Edition'.

413 Shmuel Yudaiqon, *Sefer Shivḥei Rashbi*, Bnei Beraq 2002.

414 *Siddur 'im Perush ha-Zohar*, ed. Abraham Meshi Zahav, Bnei Beraq 1997; *Siddur Matoq Midvash 'im Shiluv Havvayot ve-'Adnut*, Jerusalem 2010.

415 Neḥemiah Leibovitz, *Midrashei ha-Zohar*, 1933-1934, two volumes.

416 Jerusalem 1957-1960 and expanded reprints.

417 Simon A. [Hayyim Shimon] Neuhausen, *Nirdefei Zohar*, Baltimore 1923; idem, *Zoharei Zohar*, Saint Louis 1929; Neḥemiah Leibovitz, *Peninei Ha-Zohar: Ha-Meshalim ve-ha-Pitgamim*, new revised edition, Jerusalem 1931. The later, a 155 page volume, was earlier issued as an offprint of 41 pages from the fourteenth volume of *ha-Ṣofe le-Ḥokhmat Yisrael*, in Budapest 1930.

418 *Ma'asiyot ha-Zohar* [*Tales from the Zohar*], Jerusalem 1981-1989, three

reprinted for wide consumption in the *'am ha-sefer* book series of *Yediot Aḥronot*.[419]

We have here an inherent tension between conservation and innovation, canonization and commentary of books that exist and the creation of derivative literary products and tools to further disseminate the works as texts. While in the early twentieth century, the *kinnus* project attempted to spread knowledge of classic sources, in traditional communities, a noted conflict emerged between conservation and appropriation of literary forms such as the translations of the *Zohar* as a book by Hillel Zeitlin and Judah Yudel Rosenberg's anthology and translation.[420] Zeitlin intended to produce a full edition but only his

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volumes on the Pentateuch, reprinted in five volumes 1987-1992 and in a four volume set of three volumes on the Torah and the fifth volume on the scrolls, Jerusalem, 1993.

[419] In her introduction to this volume, Melila Hellner-Eshed describes the literary nature of the *Zohar* according to scholarly views and then presents a select review of scholarship from the twentieth century which includes Scholem, Tishby, Liebes and Idel. While as stated there (p. 19) that 'there are many other important scholars' and 'we could not mention them all here', the selection is unfortunate, particular since the review is almost word-for-word what appeared in the three-page review in the English entry to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Melila Hellner-Eshed, 'The Zohar: Introduction', *Ha-Zohar*, Tel Aviv 2008, pp. 9-21 [Hebrew]; Idem, 'Zohar: Later Research', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, Detroit 2007, volume 21, pp. 661-663).

[420] See Jonatan Meir, 'Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*', p. 145 n. 104 [Hebrew]. I. Robinson, 'Kabbalist and Communal Leader: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg and The Canadian Jewish Community', *Canadian Jewish Studies* 1 (1993), pp. 41-58. A new edition presents Rosenberg's translation interlinearly in a type face slightly smaller than the Aramaic text (Jerusalem 2009, volume 1, from the 'Introduction' through *parshat va-yeḥi*). See also the edition of *Zohar – Sabba de-Mishpaṭim 'im Perush Matoq la-Nefesh*, by Yehudah Petaya, Jerusalem 1939.Other editions of note in this context include the commentaries to zoharic units by Moshe Weinstock: a three volume set of text and commentary to *Idra Rabba, Idra Zuṭa*, and *Idra de-vei Mashkena*, Jerusalem 1974. More interesting is his two-volume edition of *Ra'aya Meheimna*, Jerusalem 1983, which is culled from various places in the printed edition and presented *for the first time* as a free standing literary unit in a separate volume. The importance of this cannot be underestimated as it shows an example, outside of university criticism of the deconstruction of the literary form imposed by the printers and a return to a more natural or early form of its composition or transmission, even if here his selection and presentation is based on internal, stylistic criteria instead of any compelling evidence regarding its transmission history. Jonatan Meir, 'Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*', pp. 141-148. On page 146 Meir cites a passage of Zeitlin's direct criticism of Rosenberg's edition. See further Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 377.

'Introduction to the *Zohar*' was published. Rosenberg published a seven-volume edition, with a new arrangement of various zoharic texts around the frame of the Torah (volumes 1-5), a volume on Psalms and a volume containing zoharic texts on the Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.[421] His edition is modeled according to *Yalqut Shim'oni*, as he writes in his introduction, or as I understand his comment, as an anthology of an anthology following the principle of presenting the textual material as a commentary to the Torah even if it were not composed as one.[422] Indeed, he frames his work as the completion of the project begun by R. Issakhar Baer of Karmenitz in his *Sefer Meqor Ḥokhmah*,[423] and it would thus be difficult to claim that he thought he was restoring the original literary frame of the *Zohar* as a commentary to the Torah. Rosenberg's translation is his attempt to fight assimilation (which he refers to by the rabbinic term *apiqrosut*). He does this by animating the author's in a new literary form. Rosenberg maintains the titles of the distinct literary units, freely edits down the text with omissions, noted by a vertical line in the text, | , and constructs new books, in editing the *Zohar* to volumes of the Scriptures composed by King David and King Solomon (and notable omits a presentation of Ruth and Lamentations for which there is ample material). In the introduction to the sixth volume on Psalms, he writes that he hopes to endow merit to R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and King David, while in the seventh volume he presents R. Shimon's praise of Solomon's biblical works that reveal the secrets of the fourth through sixth sefirot.[424] I thus understand Rosenberg to be

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[421] Judah Yudel Rosenberg, *Zohar Torah*, Montreal and New York 1924-1927, five volumes and reprints. The 1927 printing lists the copyright years as 1926 for all volumes except for volume one which is dated 1925. Previously published in seven volumes as *Sefer ha-Zohar Ha-Qadosh* with commentaries to the scrolls. The first volume on Genesis was published as *Sha'arei Zohar Torah* in Warsaw 1905. Volume 6 was issued in Bilgoraj 1929 on the Psalms and volume 7, in Biłgoraj 1930 on the Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Interestingly, a volume on Psalms was issued a few years earlier, Moshe Gillernetter, *Sefer Tehilim 'im Perush ha-Zohar ha-Shalem ve-'im Perush Rashi z"l*, Warsaw 1926.

[422] *Zohar Torah*, New York 1927, Volume 1, p. 9. There he misunderstands Ḥayyim Vitals' comment about the 'small *Zohar*', a reference to the octavo printing of the Mantua edition, believing it to be a Hebrew collection from the larger(!) frame of the Aramaic original.

[423] Rosenberg cites *Sefer Meqor Ḥokhmah* by R. Issakhar Baer of Karmenitz, Salonica 1605. See Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 187.

[424] Volume 7, p. 4.

weaving together, synchronically, biblical, rabbinic and contemporary discussions of secrets, that to him these figures are very much alive and not just as historical or narrative figures, but are animated as contemporary authors through his editorial work. The coincidence of the appearance of zoharic anthologies, translations, collections of phrases and other compendia from the zoharic corpus in traditional communities in the early part of the twentieth century,[425] alongside similar pedagogic works and publishing projects in the academic and modern settings and aimed at the popularization of Jewish classics cannot be ignored. While common to all these volumes is the effort to make available the figure, sayings or literature as a cultural and religious object of value, modified to meet the needs of a new readership, the impetus and goal seems to be the life of the text amongst its readers and the narrative characters as (still) alive in a cultural and imaginative sense.

12. The Zohar as a Family of Literary Phenomena

This chapter has offered a programmatic attempt to provide a much needed corrective to the methodological assumptions of *Zohar* research. To restate the main conclusion that I have argued in print for over a decade, no satisfactory evidence has yet been offered in the relevant scholarship proving that the zoharic writings were intentionally composed, edited or copied as a book. Not only can *'the' Book of the Zohar* not be restored to its full form, but there was no single, originary moment that is recoverable amidst the disparate writings and unstable text(s). Throughout this study we have seen that the assumptions and expectations of the kabbalists and scholars have projected their imaginings of how the literary process first began onto the end product of editorial efforts. That is to say, that the methodological warning here is foremost to sharply distinguish between *production* and *consumption* of the literary forms and to construct hermeneutic tools out of the criticism of what existed, as against the idealist forms of the work and the corpus that were created in the religious and ideological imaginations of kabbalists and scholars. To be sure, it is possible that my claim *that the Zohar is not a book* may well be disproven in the coming years. Nevertheless, much evidence has been provided here to show what has survived from each period and the particular character of the assumptions and expectations of kabbalists and scholars that have formed the motivations behind their specific literary judgments. Having offered this disclaimer, I add

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425 Azriel Frank, *Aggadot ha-Zohar*, Warsaw 1923-1924, two volumes.

that much to the chagrin of those who eagerly embrace encompassing theories as the intellectual currency of the day, my recalcitrance did not lead to a substitute theory on my part. I am able to say today, though, that the *Zohar* may well be a literary symptom of a religious and cultural phenomenon that overtook some of the kabbalists in Castile, and not that an 'author', in the Foucauldian sense, interjected his (or their) new ideas to affect the library of sources available at the time in their community. Once again, to posit the zoharic corpus as a canon, and more so, as intended by its authors to become one, is to posit the anxiety of influence as operative within a clearly demarcated culture, which may be a projection back upon the texts which emerged.

The *Zohar* has been shown here to be a literary phenomenon (or better, a series of literary phenomena), which, depending on the definition, could include numerous authors or contributors to its literary creation, whether that be by means of the intentional production by one figure or the act of multiple authorship, writing, revising and editing over an undetermined period of time. The *Zohar* could also just as easily be considered a literary phenomenon whose chronological boundaries cannot be limited to the Castilian kabbalists, such that the instability of the text and the form-critical questions that offer its literary identity should compel scholars to consider all acts of revision and re-formation through the present-day attempts to create a new zoharic text, including the efforts of scholars whose self-perception exempts themselves from this very practice, to define the *Zohar* as a literary process that began in the thirteenth century and is alive and well today.

13. Is there a Zohar in This Class? The Interface between Textual Instability and Hermeneutic Indeterminacy

The *Zohar* has been shown to be unstable both in its form and in the quality of its text, which underwent various revisions. As in the Middle Ages, so too today, scholars fashion (or create) the text in their own image, making the text conform to their expectations. The working assumptions of many scholars begins with their presumptions about the text and a lack of training or effort in editorial practice. This phenomenon continues on through the various interpretive efforts to adduce meaning from its pages. One might go so far as to say that the interpretive agendas project back onto the textual methodologies, influencing the selection of the source and its status for hermeneutic interests. To paraphrase Stanley Fish, we might ask, 'Is there a *Zohar* in this Class?',

namely in the field of Jewish mysticism.[426] The problem, as formulated by Wolfgang Iser, is whether the linguistic codes within the text construct the meanings to be gleaned by the reader or whether the reader imposes pre-determined structures upon the text. My claim unfortunately is that the field has seen more of the latter than the former.[427]

If one peruses the secondary literature of *Zohar* scholarship one might readily agree with the indeterminacy of meaning, since functionally speaking, for the field, the text yields the possibility of an infinite plurality of meanings. But the situation is more telling than the valorization of a text, so rich that each approach renders new and different conclusions. Rather, the claim here is that after nearly a century of research, the identity of the text has never been agreed upon in the field. This is to say, that each scholar identifies a very different map of the interests of the *Zohar*, its worldview, language and the horizon of its discourse, or that each scholar demonstrates his or her modern interests as readers at the expense of the contextualized meanings that are embedded within the *Zohar*.

In defense of these efforts one might argue that the *Zohar* is a classic, not so much in the identification of the 'maturity' of the language and style of the text on its own, or as the culmination of Spanish kabbalistic thought and writing, as in T.S. Eliot's definition of a classic,[428] but in the sustained power it exhibited over a wide range or readers and interpreters throughout history to base the evolving and changing trends of Jewish mysticism, here following Coetzee's

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[426] Stanley Fish, 'Is there a Text in this Class', *Is there a Text in This Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980, pp. 303-321. See also M[eyer]. H. Abrams, *Doing Things with Texts*, New York 1989, p. 28.

[427] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, London and Henley 1978; idem, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. J. Tompkins, Baltimore 1980, pp. 50-69.

[428] Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *What Is a Classic?*, Raleigh 2006; T. S. Eliot, 'What Is a Classic?', *On Poetry and Poets*, London 1984, pp. 63-75. For a brief discussion of the *Zohar* as a 'mature' expression of Spanish Kabbalah see Moshe Idel, 'The Meaning of "*Ṭa'amei Ha-'Ofot Ha-Ṭeme'im*" of R. David ben Yehuda He-Ḥasid', *'Alei Shefer, Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed. M. Hallamish, Ramat Gan 1990, p. 11 [Hebrew]. Idel's comments there on the relationships between R. Joseph Ashkenazi, R. David ben Judah he-Ḥasid and R. Joseph Hamadan have yet to be explored.

understanding of a classic.[429] To be sure, everyone can find something meaningful in the *Zohar* and the text is without a doubt rich in its potential readings. This is not to say that the text is opaque or does not have a horizon that limits its interpretation. I believe it does, but Kabbalah scholars in the university setting have yet to establish a standard for what is a normative reading of the *Zohar* or even to argue for different readings that are intended to compete with one another for such a status. Moreover, the historical and the contemporary scholarly understanding of the intended meaning of the zoharic text has yet to be defined so that we cannot yet speak of a 'classic' interpretation of the *Zohar*.

What is clear is that Scholem's construction of the *Zohar*, as a book with an author, is breaking down and new possibilities are being explored, albeit often as variations of his thinking. In terms of the designation of the *Zohar* as classic literature, Scholem presented the literary biography of de León as progressing from linguistic-philosophic mysticism to theosophic myth. This was further understood within the zoharic writings as the move from *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the *Zohar* proper, namely from allegorical writing based largely in Hebrew to the thick symbolism found in Aramaic in such texts as 'the body of the *Zohar*'. In the earlier studies of Liebes, particularly his article, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', the zoharic writings are stratified in a continuum that progresses from the more primitive or less interesting attempts at composing *Zohar* in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the most graphic myths expressed in the *Idrot*. What was added in Liebes' assessment, beyond that which can be found in Scholem, is the overlay of the narrative frame on this progression, so that the death of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai serves as the crescendo of the *Zohar*, the fulfillment of the *Zohar* in terms of its style, message and mythic content. Reading Liebes' scholarship against itself, the *Idrot* sections are actually less mythic (according to Liebes' own definition)[430] when they reach their fulfillment, becoming more

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[429] Against Eliot (as cited above), here, I draw on a more historical appreciation of the staying power of a work within its reception history. See J.M. Coetzee, 'What is a Classic: A Lecture', *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays*, New York 2001, pp. 1-16. See also Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Kabbalah', *Seven Nights*, trans. Eliot Weinberger, New York 1984, pp. 76-84.

[430] See Yehuda Liebes, 'Myth and Judaism', *Dimui* 14 (1997), pp. 6-15 [Hebrew]; idem, '*Zohar* and Eros', *Alpayyim* 9 (1994), pp. 67-115 [Hebrew]; idem '"*De natura dei*": On the Development of the Jewish Myth', *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism*, Albany 1993, pp. 1-64, 151-169.

explicit, graphic, mechanistic and ultimately corporeal and sexual, which for him is the end of myth.[431] Returning to Coetzee's historical definition of a classic in *this* context, we might then consider some of the presumably 'interim' sections of the *Zohar*, such as the *Sabba de-Mishpaṭim*, as more classic *Zohar* (or the *Zohar* as a classic) than even the *Idrot*. In other words, when the *Zohar* is more zoharic than 'the *Zohar*', it ceases to represent (some appreciations of what is) 'the *Zohar*'.[432]

Once again, the constructs of the field have been destabilized, and have been done so in accordance with the indeterminate structure of the literary units that were constructed as 'The Book of the Zohar' at a later time. The question is, as Stanley Fish has argued, one of 'institutional nesting', namely that the field has to situate the text within the discourse that it creates, its classroom as it were. The academic readers of the *Zohar* form less of a classroom today, than was the case thirty or fifty years ago. While I, for one, see this as a positive turn, given the rather narrow spectrum through which it was viewed by the first two generations of scholars, recent moves have not consolidated the multiple views that have emerged. Instead, the field finds itself at the critical juncture of losing hold of a common discussion, each reader speaking to his or her own authorship or immediate circle of students who share similar hermeneutic assumptions and cultural agendas, when in fact each scholar is in effect imposing his or her set of assumptions about the circle of kabbalists and the identity of text itself upon the field, renegotiating the literary and conceptual boundaries of what is under discussion.

The publication of a full translation of the *Zohar*, indeed a new edition, with its break from the traditional layout on the page that has dominated editions since the completion of the Mantua printing in 1560, can be credited as a catalyst for change. Recently, the text has been opened up fully to the Hebrew reader and has compelled the actual classroom to abandon the guiding hand of such editions as Tishby's translation-anthology (with its introductions), as well as the Lurianically tainted translation and paraphrase by Yehuda Ashlag,

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431 See Liebes, 'Judaism and Myth'.

432 Relevant here is the question of whether certain aesthetic aspects of literature are closer to 'the work itself'. See Menachem Brinker, 'Two Phenomenologies of Reading: Ingarden and Iser on Textual Indeterminacy', *Poetics Today* 1 (1980) [= *Narratology II: The Fictional Text and the Reader*], pp. 203-212; idem, 'Roman Ingarden and the "Appropriate Aesthetic Attitude" to the Literary Work of Art', *Poetics Today* 5 (1984), pp. 129-148.

known as the *Sulam*, which supplemented Tishby's selection for those who had difficulty with the Aramaic original. Let it also be said that Rabbi Yehuda Edri's translation, printed under the title, *Zohar in the Holy Tongue*, liberated students, for better and worse, from using the source index of rabbinic parallels to zoharic literature provided by the remarkably erudite Reuven Margolioth in his widely available edition which was published by *Mossad ha-Rav Kook*. The zoharic text is now used in its own bare context of the printed version, reproduced in two columns of punctuated and vocalized Aramaic and Hebrew, with no commentaries as aids. This is not a conclusion of where zoharic reading has arrived, but an indicator of the potential for rich and variegated discourse in the coming generations.

Chapter 5

Theorizing Textual Scholarship in Kabbalah Research

> Knowing how printed material is read, I would add a word to the printed version of this letter – a word that, for the reader who wishes to learn from what is read what the writer means, is wholly unnecessary. But such a reader exists only in the presence of a manuscript; printer's ink has the magical power to transform such a reader, indeed all readers, so that they know even from the title – even, indeed, from the name of the writer – precisely what they will read, and will read nothing but what they already know. So this note is necessary after all.
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> – Franz Rosenzweig, Postscript to 'The Unity of the Bible', p. 25.

1. *Textual Theory in Editorial Practice of Kabbalah Scholarship*

At the heart of textual scholarship lies the tension between the complementary aims of preserving and transforming the nature of both the text and its reader. Scholarly editions seek to present and restore original, received and influential versions of recorded texts, but in so doing they also produce new, authoritative re/presentations that gain a new authority and legitimacy when they replace older documents. In a similar vein, the ever-developing sophistication of textual methodologies, raised to the level of textual theory, prepares the scholar, as a reader of complex sources, to distinguish between older and more original versions of a work from within a plethora of witnesses, and so the scholar is transformed into a more sensitive reader, now able to see what was once hidden from his or her purview.

In appreciating textual scholarship, we need not oppose theory to practice, or concern ourselves with defining theory and practice as mutually exclusive enterprises. Sufficient advances have been made in the published research about textual scholarship to assume the interdependence of theory and practice

and the tacit use of theory in all forms of text editing.[1] In this final chapter, I will consider the constructs that have driven textual scholarship and editorial practice in the field of Jewish mysticism in an attempt to map out the underlying assumptions that have guided research over the last century. The overriding theme for this discussion, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is the often unspoken theoretical goals that have fashioned scholarly methods to overdetermine the textual product and results of research, often reifying some of the faith-based presumptions of the kabbalists themselves. In their attempt to combat the ideological predispositions of their day, scholars have abandoned certain assumptions and unwittingly taken on alternative ideologies, believing them to be methods of objective research.

In the pursuit of scholarly goals, scholars have become more 'kabbalistic' than the kabbalists, envisioning the past through the prism of later constructs of what is though to be Kabbalah, and in many cases, restoring the 'original' text of the Jewish mystics when no one version ever existed. Thus, these scholars have created a library of canonical works with definite literary boundaries and a particular textual quality, when the boundaries of these works were always rather fluid. In the end, early texts are interpreted through the later lenses that presume that these works reflect a specific and shared belief in the makeup of the heavens. Most of all, much of scholarship has been beholden to a history of ideas that is constructed from an identification of authors and books, such that philological scrutiny seeks to uncover the relationship between the two, uncovering the personality of the man behind the work. To support these aims and methodologies, all too often, scholars have prepared editions that purport to be the reconstruction of the text produced by the author, even if no surviving manuscript resembles the text presented as the original. A necessary cost of this assumption is negating the range of readings and uses of a text, such that reception history is perceived as a chapter in postmodernism, and so devalued by ideologues as scholarly snapshots of how the text was steered away from its original formulations and uses.

We have seen in these previous chapters specific examples where modern scholarship has used manuscripts in order to go beyond them and thereby dispense with them. This has been achieved through the critical edition that

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[1] See the eloquent discussion of this relationship in: David Greetham, 'What is Textual Scholarship', *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. S. Eliot and J. Rose, Malden, Mass, Oxford and Carlton 2007, pp. 21-32 and idem, 'The Resistance to Philology', *The Margins of the Text*, ed. D. C. Greetham, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 9-24.

supplants the manuscripts and then re/presents those materials through a new construct. We have further seen how the imposition of literary form upon amorphous textual traditions and upon works whose transmission history has resisted set literary boundaries, and has silently afforded scholarship with the claim of legitimacy in reading intertextually across a corpus of otherwise disparate units of texts. Meaning has thus followed form instead of form emerging from meaning, and scholars have often chosen manuscripts or redefined them in accordance with beliefs that seem to have been formed prior to the examination of the manuscripts. Here it might be best to borrow Jonathan Z. Smith's apt phrase that 'map is not territory', as a corrective to the field, namely that conceptions of literature should be more beholden to manuscript texts that do exist and less to constructing textual forms out of cultural and scholarly expectations.[2]

In all, I believe that the editors of critical editions have wrestled with various manuscripts and countless hours have been spent on recording variants from manuscripts as a guise that masks scholarship's anxiety around textual instability. Cast historically, Kabbalah scholarship has been deeply invested in a history of ideas that has precluded an interest in the reception of texts as culturally valuable and meaningful to the aims of scholarship.[3] The chapters of this volume collectively seek to reorient scholarship toward multiple uses of textual instability, in order to gain a sense of how kabbalists used and transformed texts over time, producing editions based on intentionalist editing and ultimately gaining a sense of the period in which the text was first

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[2] Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Map is Not Territory', in idem, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, Leiden 1978, pp. 289-309.

[3] Daniel Abrams, 'The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar*'. Huss' study, *Like the Radiance*, is a major exception to the disinterest in cultural reception. For a recent collection of sayings about the *Zohar*, see *Or ha-Zohar*, Beit Shemesh 2000 [Hebrew]. On the history of reading in Jewish contexts see Zipora Baruchson, 'Distribution of Books – Holy Scriptures and Classical Literature in the Libraries of Italian Renaissance Jews', *Italia* 8 (1989), pp. 87-98. [Hebrew]; idem, *Books and Readers – The Reading Interests of Italian Jews at the Close of the Renaissance*, Ramat Gan 1993 [Hebrew]; Gershon David Hundert, 'The Library of the Study Hall in Volozhin, 1762: Some Notes on the Basis of a Newly Discovered Manuscript', *Jewish History* 14 (2000), pp. 225-244; David Stern, 'The First Jewish Books and the Early History of Jewish Reading', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008), pp. 163-202; Judah D. Galinsky, 'On Popular Halakhic Literature and the Jewish Reading Audience in Fourteenth-Century Spain', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008), pp. 305-327.

composed, and thus not limiting the perspective to the original or earliest version of the author.

The reorientation I am suggesting replaces the idealized work with the fuller history of the text, valorizing the vicissitudes of a work through time as the organic life of the textual structure and changing identity of a work. Text editions are thus no longer the final product of the efforts of a scholar who sifts through the corruptions accrued over time so as to present an authoritative conclusion to the reading audience. Rather, editions should be intended by the editors to be sources of study with multiple aims in mind. Moreover, I sense that modern scholarship views itself to be outside of the history of transmission of a work. Changes in text and form that occurred in the manuscripts are seen by modern editors as the raw data and objects of study that are used to produce a text that goes beyond the manuscripts, such that the critical edition is seen as wholly other from them. However, modern critical editions do in fact produce another layer of (the medieval and pre-modern) textual tradition and so become part of the transmission history of versions found in the manuscripts. The presumption of progress is largely dependent upon an unspoken belief in technology, the romantic sense of progress afforded to scholarship by the benefits of modern methodologies and computer technology. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, this is largely an illusion, as critical editions have all too often exempted their readership from engaging in manuscript culture and have removed much of the detail, context and meaning that manuscripts offer. This is not to say that technology, word processing and the spatial politics of the printed page, necessarily form an obstacle in reproducing the data and offering meaning that can be found in manuscripts.[4]

There is no question that the purpose of printing editions in the academy is to present the fruits of learning and comparisons between manuscripts to a reading audience. Such editions necessarily seek to exempt the readers from going through the manuscripts themselves in the ways undertaken by the editor. My point, however, is that while editions privilege certain readings over others and cast aside clear corruptions of the text that are not considered meaningful as responses to the text, they nevertheless should not efface the rich tradition of responses that in the past have been grouped together with random

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[4] John Dagenais, 'Decolonizing the Medieval Page', *The Future of the Page*, ed. Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor, Toronto 2004, pp. 37-70. George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*, New York 2001, pp. 5-31; D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, Cambridge 2004.

scribal corruptions, all perceived to be part of the historical moves away from the original creation.[5] In broader terms, this means that I am critical of the preparation and use of critical editions as schoolbook or study editions, texts that select a monolithic face of the text for scholarly consumption. Editions of texts that bear these signs should be complex and instead of delivering a textual answer they should invite the reader to grapple with difference(s) and textual instability.

In the study of Hebrew manuscripts and the textual quality of works transmitted in the medieval witnesses of these texts, scholars have often reduced the investigation to the debate about the search for, and naming of, a version as either an original version (Urtext), a variant, a recensional variation or a later redaction with a distinct identity. While heated argument has engaged various scholars on these questions, I understand them all to be partaking in a single side of a theoretical debate. In editing Jewish texts according to one of these presumptions and its relevant determination, each of these scholars participates in conventions that serve a well-defined group of readers, whether that group be traditional or academic, namely a textual community that collectively ascribes meaning and value to the publication of such editions by granting it scholarly, and cultural standing, a form of canonicity and authority. All the methods to be discussed below were developed as different ways of measuring the distance of a given text from the original, even if such an original was deemed lost or somehow recoverable only in a version that approximates this lost original. Even those scholars who seemingly acknowledge multiplicity, reify a select few versions by publishing the new authorized edition that will replace previous volumes. While this is a necessary function of all publishing, the question here concerns the unstated motivations and status of the resulting editions. Indeed, a necessary divide is presumed between those scholars who sift through late copies of an earlier work and those who document a work's reception history, as if these were two were mutually distinct disciplines. I believe there are more features and methods that are common to the two than those that distinguish them from each other.

In the early years of manuscript research in Jewish studies and Kabbalah

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[5] Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Interferences', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), pp. 33-52 [=*Theme Issue, Artefact and Text: the Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. Philip S. Alexander and Alexander Samely, pp. 33-52].

research, Steinschneider and Scholem, described, cataloged and published sample texts of manuscripts and printed books in order to bring the information to light. While these early generations of scholars were also aware of multiple versions in manuscripts and changes entered into the printed editions, they were also conscious that the names of the titles and figures had yet to be uncovered and organized as a history of Jewish literature. Despite the fact that much of this work still needs to be completed and countless texts await publication, there has been a growing sense that the appreciation of such titles as uniform works is an illusion. Two scholars, Israel Ta-Shma and Malachi Beit-Arié, stand out as having offered theoretical statements about the breakdown of scholarship's expectations in finding a clearly defined library of stable texts in medieval manuscripts. As we shall see, their insights are primarily directed, respectively, to the publication and copying of Hebrew manuscripts. Ta-Shma states the problem as follows:

> A long and intensive review of the medieval Hebrew book indicates that quite often books were not meant by their authors to serve as final statements, but rather as presentations of an interim state of knowledge or opinion, somewhat like our computerized databases, which are constantly updated and which give the user a summary of the data known at the time of the latest updating. In a similar way, the medieval book was sometimes conceived of as no more than a solid basis for possible future alterations by the author himself. There were many reasons – some philosophical and psychological, others purely technical – for this profound phenomenon, which can give rise to serious problems as to finality, authorship and authority of a given text of a work.[6]

Ta-Shma's comment, along with his very important essay, describe the fluidity of a book as a work in progress, by an author, which ends only upon his death. Ta-Shma's goal was to account for the textual diversity in manuscript witnesses as the by-product of the writing and copying practices in medieval times, seen against the background of their view and assumption of a text and a work. Ta-Shma's concern is the moment and meaning of the release of a document from an author's control still during the dynamic process of its production at his desk. Ta-Shma therefore seeks to destabilize the construct (and modern

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[6] Ta-Shma, 'The Open Book', p. 17 (reprinted edition, p. 194). See also the application of Ta-Shma's methodology in Lewis Barth, 'Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition? The Case of *Pirqé Rabbi Eliezer*', *Agenda for the Study of Midrash in the 21st Century*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael, Williamsburg 1999, pp. 43-62.

assumptions about what that meant prior to the age of print) of publication as dissemination of a text as a work, thereby showing the necessary overlap between production and reproduction.

Malachi Beit-Arié writes about a similar instability in the language of a text after an author's death, emphasizing the dynamics of intervention by scribes due to manual copying. Beit-Arié documented how copyists of Hebrew works updated early published versions based on additions made in the author's original or authorized version, whether these be textual or structural changes. Beit-Arié describes multi-linear manuscript reproduction, moving scholarship away from a simplistic view of copying as a process of manuscript duplication. In his analysis, authors and copyists were both actively on guard against corruption of the text from mechanical errors and were cognizant of the dynamic state of a work whose text needed to be amended, restored or updated in order to present its 'correct' state. These medieval figures thus worked with the concept of a work and a proper, authorized version, even if that definition would change.[7]

In a another study, Beit-Arié[8] describes the stages and dynamics behind the conscious efforts of authors, scribes, and authors as scribes, to standardize the texts they were transmitting as authorized works. He thus places the various stages of a work's production within the greater framework of changes and modifications made to copies after they left the author's (initial) *control*, regardless of whether those copies reflected the interim or final stages of the author's efforts to compose a work. While not emphasized to the same extent as did Ta-Shma, Beit-Arié appreciates the medieval composition as an open book, even if his typology of manuscript reproduction organizes all changes under the transformational efforts of manual production and reproduction. More so than Ta-Shma, however, Beit-Arié works with a concept of the authority of a

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[7] Beit-Arié, 'Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Interferences'. I would like to thank the author for providing me with the expanded Hebrew version of this chapter, to be published as chapter 13 of his forthcoming book, *Hebrew Codicology: Historical and Comparative Typology of Hebrew Medieval Codices based on the Documentation of the Extant Dated Manuscripts in Quantitative Approach*.

[8] Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Publication and Reproduction of Literary Texts in Medieval Jewish Civilization: Jewish Scribality and Its Impact on the Texts Transmitted' *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality & Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 225-247.

particular version, even if that version's identity and content change. Both these scholars appreciate that there can be more than one original of the author and that the identity of the author's intended text can be rather fluid. The transformational character of a manuscript work by the authorial and transmissional process thus lead to multiple versions, which transform the moment and authority of the 'correct version' into a dynamic process.[9]

Building on these studies, I argue that in the medieval culture of manuscript composition and reproduction, and especially in the esoteric circles of kabbalistic reading and writing, multiple forms of a text were engendered in a similar multi-linear process, but without necessarily inscribing these documents within a register of the final or authorized version. My claim, therefore, is that a continuum exists between a text's first formulation and the process of its rewriting, transmission and study, that transformed the text and work into its many forms as part of its collective identity, *independent* of the existence, identity or authority of the author. Thus, the shift in focus offered by my argument is one that recontextualizes these same phenomena outside of the categories which shape the historically orientated views of Ta-Shma and Beit-Arié and give way to the internal culture within which the medieval authors and scribes perceived these unfolding moments of esoteric textuality. Thus, I offer that alongside efforts to affirm changes as corrections, updates and authorially intended improvements to a work, the kabbalists, more than any other group, were relatively free from questions of authorship as authority, and produced texts that de facto served multiple purposes in various communities of readers who felt free to act as readers, copyists, and commentators to freely intervene in the language of the text without perceiving this act as intervention as we would today.

The categories which carry the weight of authority of the author and copyist are blurred into a single continuum of 'text' outside of the linear progression of time and the teleological evolution of a text as a work and a work in progress, which are no doubt modern constructs. Moreover, I see as limited a perspective that would capture the moment or major moments of a work's progression toward completion, even as an open book entails the stages of its composition,

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[9] In the spirit of Ta-Shma's and Beit-Arié's research, see the study of Judah Galinsky, '"A Straightforward Path for All": Jeruham the Exile and his Recensions of the "Guide to Justice (*Sefer Meisharim*)"', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008) pp. 251-268, as indication of the proliferation of such phenomena in various forms of rabbinic literature in the Middle Ages.

that would then be received by a community of readers, or mark the beginning of its reception. As we have seen, reception is not opposed to a work's production, as all these situations are parts of the organic whole of the life of the text. This approach lessens the gap between the differences mentioned above and mitigates the categorical significance of changes in meaning between variants, recensions and redactions. By exposing the hidden political and cultural agendas of certain celebrated methodologies and editorial practices, and by opening up textual scholarship to a new effort, the early and late forms of a work are integrated into a view of *the life of a work* through the full study of its textual array.

Jewish mysticism forms a unique case of textual production and transmission within rabbinic culture which justifies, indeed demands, the local hermeneutics and particular editorial practice described in the present study. While most texts emerging from antiquity, as well as those produced and copied in the Middle Ages, moved from states of stability to instability as they became popular and studied in various forums and subject to interlinear commentary, interpolations of marginal glosses and assorted revisions to differing degrees, kabbalistic texts are characterized in their later stages by the opposite dynamic. Jewish mystical literary production was often initiated from within a circle that was founded by traditional figures, who transmitted esoteric lore orally and refrained from composing their own works in that realm. Some scholars, as historians, have chosen to mark the beginnings of Kabbalah as a religious and cultural phenomenon with the appearance and dissemination of written documents, thereby discounting the exclusively oral transmission of esotericism in the first generations of what would become a prolific movement.

No one statement could describe, with any seriousness, all the *major trends* of Jewish mysticism, each one appearing in its own context and with unique features. Certain figures and texts do stand out from antiquity through the early modern period, and not just because they were confirmed within the later cultural and historiographic registries as central to the formation and spirit of what became important and preserved for later generations. I refer first to the classic and canonical texts of *Sefer Yeṣira*, the *Book Bahir*, and the zoharic literature, all pseudepigraphic or attributed at some point to ancient figures. A separate category, although equally relevant here are the founding leaders and teachers of esotericism, R. Judah the Pious, R. Abraham ben David (Rabad), Nahmanides, R. Isaac Luria and R. Israel Baal Shem Ṭov. Each refrained from writing much if anything in kabbalistic matters, but through oral transmission sparked a new movement of esoteric activity, which in the following

generations produced a library of texts that recorded the oral traditions, in all their resulting variations, and sought to explain and expound upon their meaning(s). We have here a progression of what Max Weber termed charismatic leadership and the subsequent institutionalization of a religious movement.[10] More radically, I would assert that alongside, or rather within, this very same process, the kabbalists asserted the privileged status and authority of oral traditions written transmission and the physical document. Yet, over against their own self-awareness they were moving forward in producing a textual culture and refashion their own schools and the character of their thinking and esoteric activity. (Indeed the same may be said of rabbinic culture, which fought against the written medium, displacing the living culture of an Oral Torah, even while this intent was gradually defeated from within).[11]

These three texts mentioned above, along with the founding works of Provençal and Catalonian Kabbalah, the Safedian circle of Lurianic Kabbalah,

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[10] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1978, (esp. 'The Routinization of Charisma', pp. 246-254); idem, *Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt, Chicago 1968; Martin Riesebrodt, 'Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion', *Religion* (1999) 29, pp. 1-14. In Kabbalah research see Morris Faierstein, 'Charisma and Anti-Charisma in Safed', *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry* 1.2 (2007), pp. 1-20; Pinchas Giller, 'Leadership and Charisma among Mizrahi Modern Kabbalists: In the Footsteps of Shar'abi-Contemporary Kabbalistic Prayer', Ibid., pp. 21-41; Moshe Idel, 'Leadership and Charisma: Maimonides, Nahmanides and Abraham Abulafia', Ibid., 2.1 (2008), pp. 2-34.

[11] See the comments of Shamma Freidman, 'The Transmission of the Talmud and the Computer Age', *Printing the Talmud; From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, ed. Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein, New York 2005, pp. 143-154, esp. pp. 135-135. The redactional process and the transference from an oral to a written medium is complex subject. Here I only wish to draw on the resistance that eventuated in the particular form of writing and change in the culture, and not as a function of the change in technologies. See further Elizabeth Alexander Shanks. *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition*, Cambridge 2006; Yaakov Elman, 'Orality and Redaction in the Babylonian Talmud', *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999), pp. 52-99; Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE-400 CE*, Oxford 2001. On the role of memory, its structures and and its relationship to literary frameworks, see Shlomo Naeh, 'The Art of Memory, Structures of Memory and Textual Constructs in Rabbinic Literature', *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal, Jerusalem 2005, vol. 2, pp. 543-590 [Hebrew].

and the Kabbalah of eighteenth-century Hasidism, all transitioned gradually from textual instability to relative stability over the first century of their literary appearance. These three classics will used as case studies below to further discuss scholarly presumptions about an Urtext and methodologies of textual idealism. For now it is important to emphasize that *Sefer Yeṣira* served many masters, philosophical, linguistic, mystical and kabbalistic and it is by no chance that its text was extremely unstable until it was formally adopted by the medieval kabbalists. Under their wing, as the source for countless commentaries, the text became rather uniform, with variation and textual creativity developing in the commentaries.[12] The *Book Bahir*, it must be recalled, was fashioned out of a long process of writing and re-writing, with surviving citations from its non-theosophic stage. Its text seems to have always been in flux but with decreasing severity over the ages, codified in two basic versions, with only small but meaningful changes entering into the text after the first century of kabbalistic literary activity.[13] Finally, the *Zohar* has been shown here to have been produced as a literary phenomenon, with multiple efforts or attempts to write about certain biblical sections that should not necessarily be characterized as competing or complementing one another. In retrospect only we can speak of their family resemblance and in the sixteenth century recognize an actual book that was invented on the physical site of manuscript codices, comprehensive commentaries and the first printed edition. In all three examples writing led to production of works that were canonized as books by later reading communities.

Although charismatic and mystical teachers form a different category, the initial process of textual production bears very similar characteristics. The earliest texts formally or implicitly attempted to collect, record and put in writing the teachings of the main figure. The earliest texts and works, and most often anthologies, spurned further revisions, compilations and genres based on the type of teaching. Such that anonymous students of R. Judah the Pious composed notebooks of his teachings, including collections of numerical

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[12] This dynamic was explored by Scholem as the relationship between a conservative and revolutionary approaches within (Jewish) mysticism. Gershom Scholem, 'Religious Authority and Mysticism', *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, translated by R. Manheim, New York 1960, pp. 5-31. See also James S. Preuss, 'Theological Legitimation for *Innovation in the Middle Ages*', *Viator* 3 (1972), pp. 1-26.

[13] The *Sod ha-Egoz* texts also emerged from Ashkenaz in a similar textual process. See my study of the texts and its history, Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism*.

traditions (*gemaṭriyot*), the commentary to the Torah of traditions assembled apparently by his son, R. Moshe Zaltman,[14] *Sodei Ḥomesh* and other collectanea on the scrolls by students of R. Judah,[15] and many works by R. Eleazar of Worms who received traditions from him and penned various versions of works in sustained attempt to build a library of texts that would survive the demise of the movement, or more accurately, the death of his teacher.[16] And if R. Isaac the Blind is to be believed that he observed the strictures of his forefathers who never revealed their secrets publically and refused to write down their lore even in uncirculating manuscripts, then the first kabbalistic document attributed to a known kabbalists, Isaac's *Commentary of Sefer Yeṣira*, may very well be a notebook created from his teachings. Another text that he apparently wrote, or whose composition he instigated, is a commentary to the Account of Creation, surviving in a couple of versions and imitated by his students in various forms.[17] His nephew, R. Asher,

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[14] *The Commentaries to the Torah of R. Judah the Pious*, ed. Isaac Lange, Jerusalem 1975 [Hebrew]. Note the reference to R. Eleazar of Worms on p. 125. This edition was recalled and reissued without deletions on the pages that presented the manuscript text that questioned the completeness of the textual revelation of the Torah to Moses. See pages 64, 184, 185, and 198. See further Gershon Brin, 'An Inquiry into the Commentaries to the Torah of R. Judah the Pious', *Sinai* 88 (180), pp. 1-18 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Studies in R. Judah the Pious' Exegesis to the Pentateuch', *Te'udah* 3 = *Studies in Talmudic Literature in Post-Biblical Hebrew and in Biblical Exegesis*, ed. M. Friedman, A. Tal and G. Brin, Tel Aviv 1983, pp. 215-226 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Linguistic Inquiries into Judah the Pious' *Commentary to the Torah*', *Leshonenu* 44.4 (1980), pp. 314-315 [Hebrew]; Israel Ta-Shma, 'Bible Criticism in Early Medieval Franco-Germany', *The Bible in Light of Its Interpreters – Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Yafet, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 453-459 [Hebrew]; Soloveitchik, Haym. 'Two Notes on the Commentary on the Torah of R. Yehuda he-Hasid', *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. M. Shmidman, New York 2008, vol. 2, pp. 241-251.

[15] Now edited by Jacob Stahl: *Sodei Ḥomesh ve-ShAR mi-Talmidei Rabbenu Yehuda he-Ḥasid, ba'al Sefer Ḥasidim*, Jerusalem 2009.

[16] Abrams, 'The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism'. Compare to the composition and recording of a living figure's teachings in Franco-Germany of the same period: Simḥa Emanuel, 'Sages, their Students and their Literary Works', *Rashi, The Man and His Work*, ed. A. Grossman, S. Japhet, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 99-122 [Hebrew].

[17] Abrams, *R. Asher ben David*, pp. 301-353.

produced texts which he or another revised and consolidated into what was (at least received as) the first known kabbalistic book authored as such by a known figure. This work survived in short, medium and long versions, and scholarship has yet to analyze the processes of redaction, character and thought of each text.[18] R. Ezra of Gerona's *Commentary to the Aggadot* similarly exists in multiple versions while R. Azriel reworked this text into his own (Neoplatonic) version. In all these works, oral traditions of their teachers, Rabad and R. Isaac the Blind are scattered throughout.

I would nonetheless like to offer a different reading of the earliest self-reflections on the production of the first kabbalistic books. I refer to R. Isaac the Blind's letter to Nahmanides in which he responds to complaints about violations of kabbalistic esotericism. Prior scholarship has interpreted R. Isaac as having denied that he wrote any works.[19] In my new interpretation of this same document, R. Isaac admits to composing kabbalistic works and proclaims that leaks and dissemination are the natural effects of writing and that he should not be held accountable. Accordingly, R. Isaac acknowledges that he and others have written kabbalistic books and letters, some of significant length, and tries to explain to Nahmanides that the dissemination of the physical documents at some point after their composition is inevitable, a natural result of their existence. He further offers his sentiment that it is unfortunate that these words are misunderstood, such that some profane the name of heaven, but again, in line with the tone of the entire letter, he is vindicated in that he always taught, spoke and wrote appropriately and correctly. Others are

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[18] In the meantime see Eitan Fishbane, 'The Speech of Being, the Voice of God: Phonetic Mysticism in the Kabbalah of Asher ben David and His Contemporaries', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 98 (2008), pp. 485-521.

[19] See for example, Idel, 'Nahmanides: Kabbalah, Halakhah and Spiritual Leadership', p. 32: 'Moreover, he stresses that he faithfully follows the line of his ancestors in not disclosing kabbalistic matters in writing'. Accordingly the existence of documents compels Idel to add that 'We can easily see that esotericism was not so unequivocal in the case of Sagi Nahor, from the very fact the he composed a Commentary on *Sefer Yezirah* and a commentary on parts of the prayer. In any cse, we know a lot more of his *Kabbalah* than of his father's, despite the face that Sagi Nahor assured his addressees that he did not depart from the latter's esoteric policy' (p. 33). See also Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical, Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman, Princeton 2007, pp. 71-74; Joel Goldberg, 'Spiritual Leadership and the Popularization of Kabbalah in Medieval Spain. *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* 2.2 (2008-2009), pp. 2-59

responsible for their actions (and on other geographic domains).

I thus do not see the letter as a defensive missive but as an attack, speaking from strength, attacking Nahmanides and the events and figures in Spain as the realm under his geographic patronage. Here we can read R. Isaac's condescending (and not necessarily his defensive) tone, despite the apparent words of praise to the 'greater wisdom' of his kabbalistic colleagues, when he *instructs* Nahmanides that a text's meaning is no longer under the author's control when the material form of its transmission detaches itself from oral instruction (this accords quite nicely with the reading suggested earlier, that his celebrated phrase *'the written text cannot be closed away'*[20] be amended to read 'the written words [otherwise delivered orally] have no master' who controls their interpretation). R. Isaac readily admits that this is the nature of writing and so be it. By contrast, he attacks those who offer oral instruction wholesale, in the streets and in the marketplace, as do some kabbalists in Burgos, namely in Spain.[21] We are thus able to recontextualize his defensive remarks about his alignment with his father about speech alone. It can be understood in this context that R. Isaac believed in the coupling of oral and written instruction and some interface between the two, and was only minimally concerned with the negative effects of misunderstanding by others who learned from written documents alone.[22] With self-consciousness, therefore, kabbalistic writing was well underway in the Provençal circle of kabbalists and grew in the following generations.

This review of the first generations of Jewish esotericists in medieval Europe serves as a template for the emergence of other circles in later generations. Even as Nahmanides attempted to hide his kabbalistic teachings

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[20] See chapter one, p. 90 n. 252.

[21] For a lengthy section of the document in English translation, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 394.

[22] This accords nicely with the statements adduced by Wolfson in which a kabbalistic author writes that he will complete a instruction of a matter orally *and* conversely, other statements where received (*qibbalti*) refers to learning from written documents. See Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word'. For further reflection on this dynamic in response to Wolfson's comments see Don Breslauer, 'Orality and Literacy in Hayyim Vital's Lurianic Kabbalah', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1999, pp. 31-41. See also Ibn Gaon's comment in *Keter Shem Ṭov*, Ms. Paris 774, fol. 93a: 'And you shall understand all this if you received [this tradition] orally'. ובזה תבין הכל אם קבלת מפה אל פה.

and refer to them in terse, coded phrases, his students produced a literature of texts interpreting his secret teachings. It would take volumes to account for the full array of literary activity surrounding the same phenomenon within the circle of students of R. Isaac Luria, although here little is related to what he penned or his direct statements.[23] The reversed proportions describe the first generations of Hasidic writing, where for example his sayings were collected at the end of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef* whose publication he supervised in 1780. And whereas Dov Baer, the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz, did not formally isolate his teacher's sayings, his works bear an even stronger imprint of the oral teachings of the Baal Shem Ṭov, being reworked anthologies of the lore he heard and taught.[24]

The main point for the present argument is that the production of the lore, even if transmitted orally and with no intention of codifying a single formulation, was not considered by these figures as the seeds of the literary expressions that would follow. These forms of Kabbalah were living traditions that flowed into the various textual forms, that were edited and re-edited as the elaborations that variously led to the need to authorize certain versions as authentic over against the others. Modern scholars can thus be seen as the most removed link in a historical chain, both conceptually and phenomenally, who bring the codifying process to an extreme conclusion in critical editions. Rabbinic authors composed texts as the fruits of their learning Torah, its laws, customs and secrets and rarely penned a completed text with such intention that it would not be open, both textually and in literary terms, to later emendations, corrections and revisions, whether that be by their own hand or that of their students and later readers. We have here a fundamental difference in the status of the text, and the book, as both codex and literary work, between medieval rabbinic culture and modern editorial practice. Some parallels do nevertheless exist in how each is framed as oral traditions that have been transformed into various written versions. Unsophisticated attempts in each

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[23] The charismatic image of R. Isaac Luria serves as the main argument in Lawrence Fine's monograph, *Physician of the Soul: Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford 2003. Note that the authentic writings of Luria play no significant role in his exposition.

[24] For certain aspects of the institutionalization of Hasidism after the decline of the charismatic leader, see Glenn Dynner, 'Merchant Princes and Tsadikim: The Patronage of Polish Hasidism', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 12 (2005), pp. 64-110.

field at analyzing this phenomenon have presumed a single (lost) Urtext or have simplistically argued that the common elements between the surviving versions must be the original intention of the first author or figure. More developed methodologies have sought to explore the interface between orality, textuality, reception and redaction. Much can thus be learned from applying the methods of one field to the other.[25]

When modern scholars capture a particular text in time or reconstruct the original version from a synthetic engagement with various manuscript witness, they most often betray the very character of the culture and textual continuum which is the phenomenology of the text itself. Scholarship has thus taken the construct of a work as a structure that overstates the original and changing forms of the text in its various states. In other words, while tracking the ways in which texts became works, scholarship would be better positioned were it to err in overreading these categories to consider works as texts and from this perspective arrive at an understanding of a work and its place on the continuum of its literary metamorphoses.[26]

2. *Textual Idealism: Editing 'The Text that Never Was' and The Invention of Kabbalistic Books*

It is no coincidence that three most important texts or books published in the first two hundred years of the printing of kabbalistic texts – *Sefer Yeṣira*, the *[Book of the] Zohar* and the *Book Bahir* – are all attributed to ancient figures, written or conceived as pseudepigraphic works preserved or recovered from the distant past. Although the printers were convinced that they were transferring the texts of these identifiable works from their manuscript form(s) to a printed medium, they were not necessarily aware of their role as fashioners of the form, inventors as it were, of the kabbalistic book. We have here a few highly significant cases of the invention of the book, with its realization as a book in the modern sense of the term, printed quires bound into volumes for sale and widespread distribution. Nevertheless, such a claim requires much qualification

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[25] See for example the fine study of Shamma Friedman, 'A Good Story Deserves Retelling – The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend', *Jewish Studies Internet Journal* 3 (2004) 55–93.

[26] Roland Barthes. 'From Work to Text', *Image/Music/Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath, New York 1977, pp. 155-164 (reprinted in *Textual Strategies, Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. Harari, London 1979, pp. 73-81).

as it is dependent on the later impact or reception history of these printings.[27]

Sefer Yeṣira was edited by Saadia Gaon and the work was preserved and transmitted in three basic recensions of different lengths.[28] Nevertheless, in manuscript form the text was extremely fluid, amounting to a literary frame in which the short text could be reordered, rewritten and modified in countless ways. Similarly, the fluid and obscure editorial history of the *Bahir* eventually produced a more stable text after its reception amongst the first generations of kabbalists, even if here too it was rewritten in minor but highly significant ways. The *Zohar*, as has been shown here, is the strongest example of literary instability, especially in its form, with various attempts at organizing the textual materials until its codification and canonization in printed formats.

The goal of textual scholarship of medieval Jewish mysticism (and theosophic Kabbalah as its most prominent form), in this context, is to chart and understand the changes that were made to the texts and construct a more sophisticated methodology for appreciating the meaning of how and why texts were produced, changed and refashioned for different cultural norms and aims. As we have seen, the foundational premise of this methodology is a destabilizing of the term 'book', and a valuation of all the permutations of text

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[27] The authorship of Hebrew books by authors, namely individuals who saw themselves as unique, individuated thinkers who were freely constructing literary forms to produce works and with such an intent is a topic which goes beyond the more limited field of inquiry of this study. I would divide such an inquiry into the literary conventions and contexts of antiquity and the medieval period at the very least. Major steps toward the periodization of literary activity in the medieval period can be found in Robert Brody's *The Geonim of Babylonia and the shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, New Haven and London 1988, pp. 213-234. I would add that the influence of Greek works in translation had a major impact of Jewish writing in all periods and I repeat here the major difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardic attitudes toward the author and the work, where Ashkenazi culture, beginning with the first composer's relationship to his own text, permitted and even encouraged the free use and revision of text as distinct form a work whose structure was preserved and respected as such to a much greater degree.

[28] Prior to the publication of his edition of *Sefer Yeṣira*, Peter Hayman wrote a sophisticated study exploring the many arrangements of the manuscript texts and concluded that a scholarly edition that accounts for its full history is an illusion: A. Peter Hayman, 'The "Original Text": A Scholarly Illusion', *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer*, ed. J. Davies, G. Harvey and W. Watson, Sheffield 1995, pp. 414-433.

that is not measured in light of an ideal text configured and valorized in the mind of the scholar. Scholarship must therefore abandon the belief that it is creating the new received text, the standardized edition that normalizes all readings, in the aim of offering *the* version that offers the reading that conforms to current expectations and ascribes this meeting of text and meaning to the authorial intent in its reified form.

Kabbalists and scholars part ways on the fluidity of the text. The medieval figures both produced and, it can be said, enjoyed the dynamics of textual variation, finding meaning in textual instability. The modern scholar faces multiple witnesses with trepidation, realizing the ominous task of sorting through data in order to select, privilege and discard various readings and even sources. If we view the physical page as the mirror to the mindset of the kabbalist and scholar, we note that medieval authors and scribes cited and discussed variant readings in the body of the text, interpolating the multiple and conflicting versions with relative ease, while the scholar relegates variants to small fonts on the bottom of the page. This is not a question of technology or the quantity of data, but a statement concerning the philosophical and textual orientation of scholars. The scholar seeks to present the definitive edition, but in most cases, at least following developments in textual theory and the rising self-awareness of scholarship to its theoretical assumptions, realizes that any edition is preliminary and beholden to the aims of the project and methods employed.[29] With the distance of time and the limited textual witnesses that have survived, scholarship assumes to present the earliest recoverable text, even if many enthusiastic editors equate their editorial product with the original text, and then perceive the 'work' synchronically across the best readings from different periods.

My criticism throughout this book has been aimed at uncovering the problematics of such a polarized view of textual scholarship. The best recoverable text is a more honest assessment of the inability of scholarship to re/produce the original, without however relinquishing the belief in the original, however elusive, at the expense of the later history of the text. The theoretical and actual consequence of editorial practice that emerge from this thinking is the presumption of such a text that can be carved out of the surviving witnesses, an unspoken form of textual idealism.

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[29] Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius*, New York 1991, p. 11, who shows how intended texts are seen as (mere) stages in the history of textual editions.

Kabbalah scholarship has yet to acknowledge and present in an edition an open book from various manuscripts.[30] Even the synoptic editions of the Hekhalot literature were not intended to demonstrate the textual instability or transmission through the ages and highlight the interventions of the later copyists, recensional or localized changes, imitations and interpolations, but to argue that the original form of the text was a macroform that was best preserved in the large manuscripts. This presentation, as noted in the first chapter of this book, was accomplished at the expense of better manuscripts that preserved only one book or work within this corpus.

In the pursuit of definitive statements, unitive texts and even implied authorship and intended meanings that reside between the lines of variant readings, scholarship has missed the opportunity of embracing complexity for the reader. I am convinced, even without reference to any social or religious orientation, that editors presume to offer a cultural product that will become canonical through its participation in the library of critical editions realized in the academic setting. My call is for the production of editions that do not provide a definitive answer to a scholar's particular interest.[31]

Sefer Yeṣira

As detailed in the first chapter of this book, the earliest critical work on *Sefer Yeṣira* with an eye to presenting an edited text based on manuscripts was offered by Ithamar Gruenwald and Israel Weinstock in the early 1970s. Their work presented different possibilities for presenting the first chapter of *Sefer Yeṣira* and negotiating an edition that was responsible to the short, middle and long recensions, mapping out the basic structure of a recensional history for later scholarship. Various studies have been published in the following two decades, related to aspects of the language of the text and questions about its dating. The most significant study of this category for our purposes is that of

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[30] Israel M. Ta-Shma, 'The "Open" Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature: the Problem of Authorized Editions', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75:3 (Autumn 1993), pp. 33-52. [*Theme Issue, Artefact and Text: the Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. Philip S. Alexander and Alexander Samely, pp. 17-42].

[31] On the methods, aims and problematics of preparing a definitive critical edition, see Colette Sirat, 'Les éditions critiques: un mythe', *Les problèmes posés par l'édition critique des textes anciens et médiévaux*, éd. J. Hamesse, Louvain la Neuve 1992, pp. 159-171.

Joseph Dan, 'Three Phases of the History of the *Sefer Yezira*' (1994), since he discussed the text itself within a history of its reception.[32] In 1997, Tzvi Langerman published an article suggesting the existence of another recension in a unique manuscript.[33] In 2000, Yehuda Liebes published a monograph that analyzed the text of *Sefer Yeṣira* concerning the ideas and context of the work, as a work.[34] Liebes' book includes an appendix of a facsimile of the text from the first printing, Mantua 1562, forwarding particular assumptions about the canonicity of the text. In a pointed review of this study, Elliot Wolfson summarized much of the textual work accomplished to date, noting that at best, we can speak of the complexities of the text in moments of its redactional history, but decidedly not a uniform or monolithic text:

> Properly speaking, the work should not be described as a single composition, but rather as a composite of distinct literary strands that have been woven together through a complicated redactional process whose stages are not clearly discernible and, in all probability, will not be ascertainable by the critical methods of historical investigation.[35]

In all, Wolfson criticizes Liebes' assumptions about authorial intent that can be extracted from a study of a text that is treated as both stable and identifiable as a work.

In a recently published study (2007), Ronit Meroz offered a thematic analysis to the text of *Sefer Yeṣira*, suggesting three 'accounts' to explain the

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[32] Joseph Dan, 'Three Phases of the History of the *Sefer Yetzira*', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 21 (1994) 7-29, reprinted in his *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity*, Northvale and Jerusalem 1998, pp. 155-187.

[33] Y. T. Langermann, 'A New Redaction of *Sefer Yeṣira*?', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 49-63.

[34] Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 2000 [Hebrew].

[35] Elliot Wolfson, 'Text, Context, Pretext: A Review Essay of Yehuda Liebes's Ars Poetica in *Sefer Yetsirah*', *Studia Philonica Annual* 16 (2004), pp. 218-228, quote from p. 218. A second review which strongly criticized the lack of a textual grounding to the study and the author's reliance on the *Zohar* to interpret *Sefer Yeṣira* is that of Meir Bar Ilan 'Review of: Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsirah*, Shocken, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 2001', *Catharsis* 10 (2009), pp. 126-155 [Hebrew]. See also Y. Tzvi Langermann, 'On the Beginnings of Scientific Literature and on Studying History through *Maqbilot* (Parallels)', *ALEPH: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 2 (2002), pp. 169-190.

creation, the Covenant Account, the Depths Account and the Sealing Account. The author of the last account, she writes, 'took the earlier accounts, learned from them, reworked them, and edited them into a single, quite coherent unit'. As demonstrated by the following passage, Meroz negotiates between similarities and differences to deconstruct the editor's efforts:

> This book was created through the combination of three different answers to this question (in the language used in this paper, three 'accounts'), edited into a single coherent whole. The contradictions in contents between the different accounts seem to have remained as they were, but the 'stitches' connecting the different accounts to one another are not particularly recognizable, as all three were written in the stylistic pattern of a 'numerical saying' and in all three there is a relatively high degree of rhythm.[36]

Meroz's method accepts the identity of the text as a book, namely a coherent edited work. Her thematic analysis breaks the traditions down into three more original documents and bases itself on the overall consistency of similarity within their differences in order to uncover the stages of editing that allowed for its redaction and presentation in its current form.

We can now turn to the studies of A. Peter Hayman on *Sefer Yeṣira*, which extend back to the 1990s and culminated in the publication of a volume in 2004 that contains a study, translation and edition of the three recensions recognized by modern scholarship, and a follow-up study published in 2007.[37] Peter Hayman grappled with the main textual questions of establishing a critical text of *Sefer Yeṣria*. In this edition, Hayman overcomes, as it were, his earlier claim which titles a previous article he published, that restoring the 'original text' of *Sefer Yeṣira* is a scholarly illusion.[38] Hayman, to be sure, does not reverse his position, but rather turns his attention to the major moments in the work's redactional history.

Hayman therefore placed himself methodologically and historically in the

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[36] Ronit Meroz, 'Between *Sefer Yezirah* and Wisdom Literature: Three Binitarian Approaches in *Sefer Yezirah*', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 18 (2007), pp. 101–142, quotation from page 130.

[37] A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary*, Tübingen 2004. A similarly structured edition, albeit with different circumstances and methodology of reconstructing the text, is offered in *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs*, ed. Eva Haverkamp, Hanover 2005.

[38] Hayman, 'The Original Text": A Scholarly Illusion'.

middle ground between the conclusion that the 'original' text cannot be recovered and the rejection of the latest printing, or received and canonical text, as the representative voice of a single work produced in antiquity that was received and which enjoys textual stability. In some senses, Hayman completed the work begun by Weinstock and Gruenwald to critically edit the three recensions (as discussed in chapter one), although it should be noted that the scope of Hayman's project, and his methodologies of editorial practice are by far more sophisticated. That is to say, Hayman's comparative approach in presenting the three versions synoptically affords new opportunities for study and comparison that reach far beyond the efforts of Gruenwald and Weinstock. While his program was implemented with great care and attention to detail, the edition is lacking in that it canonizes *post facto* these three versions as the exclusive representations of the text's transmission history. Hayman's aim surely was to provide the single best representative of each of the three recensions as the ground for further study and should be applauded for doing such. However, as he has demonstrated in his earlier study,[39] the text has always been rather fluid, both in organization and language, allowing for nearly every possible configuration and textual variation. Hayman took his methodological lead from my 1994 edition of *The Book Bahir*, a choice I no longer think is the best for such textual problems. I will cite his discussion at length as it provides an opportunity for a comparison and discussion of recent editions in the field:

> My solution to the problems of editing the text of SY may be contrasted with that chosen by Daniel Abrams in his edition of *The Book Bahir*. Faced with the more than one hundred extant manuscripts of this text Abrams chose to provide a diplomatic reproduction of the earliest dated manuscript (Munich 209) with an apparatus recording the variants of the next earliest dated manuscript (Vatican-Barberini Or. 110). These two manuscripts represent two separate recensions of the text and, in Abrams's opinion, all the other extant manuscripts descend from one or other of these recensions. The Munich manuscript has been extensively corrected and readings from the other recension (and some from an unknown source) recorded in the margin and hence the manuscript represents 'a kind of critical edition of the *Bahir* as it was known in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries'. But to more clearly illustrate the differences between his two manuscripts Abrams does also set out in parallel columns thirteen of the one hundred and forty paragraphs of *Sepher*

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39 Ibid.

> *Ha-Bahir*. It might have been better and more helpful to the reader for him to have set out all the paragraphs in this fashion. Abrams regards his work not as a definitive edition of the text but as providing 'what will hopefully be the groundwork for future enquiries in the text and its influence' (1994: *11). He provides a list of the other manuscripts of the text and refers to some of their readings in the course of his discussions of the redaction and reception history of the text. Reading between the lines one has the feeling that Abrams thinks that not a great deal would be gained by the massive amount of work required to provide a complete critical edition based on all the manuscript evidence. That is my own feeling in the case of SY. What is required at this stage is an edition that makes the major recensions and variants available to scholars in as usable a form as possible. SY is a short enough text to make an edition based on nineteen manuscripts possible, but one based on the one-hundred and thirty-one manuscripts listed in the Collective Catalogue of the Jewish National and University Microfilm Institute would be a daunting task and probably virtually unreadable, unless the choice of variants to be included in the apparatus was ruthlessly selective – very much more so than the choice represented in this edition of SY. But what represents a real variant and what is just a scribal error are matters over which scholars constantly disagree, and, in any case, real variants can arise as the result of scribal attempts to correct previous errors! So, much like Abrams, my use of the manuscripts whose text is not diplomatically reproduced in the parallel columns but utilised in the critical apparatus is much more aimed at providing evidence for my judgments on the history of the text than conforming to the structure of the traditional critical edition. Scholars who wish to see the full range of evidence from the early manuscripts of SY can still have recourse to Gruenwald's edition.[40]

Hayman understood me correctly. At that time, I believed that there was little point in providing variants from more manuscripts of the same family, given the early dating of the Munich manuscript and the corrections and textual comparisons offered by two other scribes on the same page (which sufficed as textual variants, provided from what I believed then to be the earliest dated manuscript of the second family). I now see my reliance on the Munich manuscript served as a hypercorrection to the exclusive and total hold Margolioth's edition had on scholars and scholarship, and it would have been better had a provide a number of full transcriptions of manuscripts of differing quality and origin in order to better present the reception history of the text *as the means of uncovering its earliest transmitted form(s).* An edition of texts

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[40] Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira*, pp. 10-11.

presented in parallel columns is a useful tool, but in the case of the still highly important manuscript from Munich, nothing compares to a diplomatic edition presented opposite a facsimile of the manuscript.

The methodologies employed in his and my editions are comparable to the extent that both are intended as tools for readers to compare and *use* the data in a critical way and are thus open to future work that will clarify additional textual issues. Neither edition attempted to present all the data nor did they claim to have recovered the author's original version. The textual situations however are not parallel. The central manuscript of the *Bahir* presented was chosen in order to can serve as a type of critical edition in that various traditions were recorded on the page and the differences between the two recensions I identified were not nearly as great as those of *Sefer Yeṣira*. Moreover, my edition of the *Bahir* was supplemented by annotated listings of *everywhere* the *Bahir* was mentioned in kabbalistic literature, in manuscript and print for hundreds of years, tracking the use and adaptation of traditions. The transcription, termed a diplomatic edition by Hayman, was only part of the edition, and formed an interlocking part of the overall project of a multi-layered edition, driven by a methodology of reception history.

Methodologically speaking, in preparing an edition of *Sefer Yeṣira*, it would have been best to track the later versions in manuscript in order to identify the interpolated comments and accretions to the text, and gradually peel away the layers added to the text from which the basic comparison by Hayman could have been attempted. Hayman's edition presumes that the earliest manuscripts provide for the best texts of each recension, clearly demonstrating that his aim is to recover the earliest version as best he can, what he calls, 'the earliest recoverable text'.[41] My view should be clear at this point, that the full story of traditions known as *Sefer Yeṣira* are important to scholarship. And so I would recommend a different first step in documenting the history and text of *Sefer Yeṣira*.

I would begin the study of *Sefer Yeṣira* by publishing a listing of all the manuscripts to the text, including an annotated listing of its commentaries, within and without kabbalistic circles, much like Scholem's list of commentaries to the ten *sefirot*. I would then work on two fronts, creating a data base of the full text of as many manuscripts of this short text as possible, accessible to the user through a computer program that would present the

[41] Ibid., p. 6.

versions for comparison based upon their similarity, period or provenance. Separately, I would reconstruct the texts that were embedded in the various commentaries, such those of as R. Judah Barzeloni, R. Azriel of Gerona and many others.[42] Both goals would therefore be advanced, first a fuller picture of *Sefer Yeṣira* from its own transmission history, and second, the textual history of the work as it was received in the commentaries.

The essential point here is to distinguish between late readings that might have preserved earlier formulations not found in the manuscript transmission, and those changes made to the text that were influenced by the commentator's understanding of the text. The latter can only be appreciated by understanding the orientation of the commentary. This is basically the case for Saadia's version, as Hayman himself acknowledges. Saadia's text is included, and in fact, was made canonical in Hayman's scholarship, specifically because Saadia's text bears the marks of his editing a separate recension and is dated significantly early enough to be placed alongside the other recensions. However, as should be apparent from my argument, the early dating of Saadia's recension, the crafting of his own edited text, is not significant in itself for the study of *Sefer Yeṣira* as an antique work, but belongs more appropriately in the realm of reception history. In other words, Saadia's version is clearly an edited text, determined by the choices made by a medieval figure and so his final choices do not inform us about the early nature of the work and its development. Nevertheless, that this recension can be dated and named does not remove it from being an equally significant moment in the overall history of the text defined as its composition and rewriting, namely the evolution, transmission and reception of the work seen together. *My critique is thus to exclude 'recensions' as part of the work's reception history, by breaking down such a dichotomy and embracing all versions under the rubric of the fluidity of textual versions of works as their collective identity or the states of textuality which characterize so many writings of Jewish mysticism.* This holistic approach to the life of a work admittedly destabilizes the importance of any one version, especially if an Urtext is unrecoverable. The advantages should be clear, in that this approach accounts for various textual negotiations with the

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[42] An annotated catalog of all the commpentaries to *Sefer Yeṣria* is a major desideratum of the field. Note the list of commentaries offered by Abraham Abulafia in *Oṣar Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 16b and first discussed by Adolph Jellinek. See further the listing of works that used *Sefer Yeṣira* published in the final pages of notes to the edition by the printers of the Mantua edition.

disparate versions, and does not discount for the separate attempt to peel aware the layers of editing and added glosses to establish the earliest recoverable version(s).

This admittedly select review of countless studies on *Sefer Yeṣira* is telling of the scholarly obsession that persists till this very day in scholarship *within* the field of Jewish mysticism to uncover the identity of the original text and views of its author. My sense is that these various studies were composed as the conciliatory fruits of textual scholarship. That while disappointed in not having uncovered the authentic and original text, editors assigned an early date to the text and constructed a history of ideas around this determination. As a compensatory act, textual scholarship has turned its efforts to the surviving redactions, which, in some mediated sense, reflect back upon the irretrievable original version.[43] All this is to say that what has yet to be realized by scholars of Jewish mysticism is a reception history of *Sefer Yeṣira*, namely a reconstruction of versions that were utilized by the main commentators in the Middle Ages, and a history of their interpretations in German esotericism and the first few centuries of kabbalistic literary activity. Such a project would undoubtedly begin with a listing of commentaries to *Sefer Yeṣira*, similar to Scholem's listing of commentaries to the ten *sefirot*, which although related to this topic is quite different in that an earlier text is not formally commented upon in this genre.

My point is that while a study, history and the production of scholarly editions of such commentaries would fundamentally advance the study of medieval texts, particularly kabbalistic texts, it would also advance the study of *Sefer Yeṣira* in particular, as it would reconsider the bifurcated interests between antique and medieval forms of Jewish mysticism, extracting a contextualized study of the meaning of 'the work' to an ever-changing use of a dynamic text and its recensions along a gamut of interpretations that present the continuum of Jewish mysticism as the over-arching literary and historical construct, not radically subdivided into isolated periods.

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[43] This interpretation is confirmed by P. Hayman in his remarks that postdate the 2004 edition: 'The "Original Text" of *Sefer Yeṣira* or the "Earliest Recoverable Text"?', *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. R. Rezetko, T. Lim, W. Brian Aucker, Leiden-Boston 2007, pp. 175-186. In this study, he charts the development of his reasoning for producing the 2004 edition in light of the methodological impossibility of reproducing the original text and sufficing with a presentation of the 'earliest recoverable text', by which he means the three recensions.

The Book Bahir

The *Book Bahir* was invented as a book at a later stage of its development as a collection of textual traditions, its language, symbolism and form. Even the title, *Sefer ha-Bahir*, which transforms the term taken from the verse cited in the opening passage into a book – literally, the *Book Bahir* instead of just the *Bahir* – is a late addition to the earliest manuscripts, added in all the important examples by a separate and later hand.[44] It would be an error to deem the historical construction of its evolution as a matter of reception history, a scholarly interest that is not natural to the work's identity in the Middle Ages. The *Book Bahir* is a work in the sense that it provided the literary frame for its traditions to be assembled within one structure and to be transformed through small changes in the text and its order, so that it could become the *Book Bahir* that the kabbalists at the beginning of the thirteenth century knew and disseminated. The work cannot be appreciated outside of the flux that marked its inception and which continued on to a lesser degree after its dissemination in different circles.

We can nevertheless speak about the integrity of the (text as a) work. The passages or traditions cited in the name of the *Bahir* in other works are all imitations, wishful attributions or otherwise mistaken references with respect to the transmission history of the textual units that comprise the kabbalistic work, the *Bahir*. I say this because despite the lack of a consistent style and a clear internal organization, we *can* speak of the character of the *Bahir*, identifying what is Bahiric and what is not. Those passages found elsewhere and cited in its name of the '*Book Bahir*' bear a different stamp, which is telling of what was formulated within the structure of the *Book Bahir*. The passages identified by Scholem in the name of the *Bahir* in the appendix to *Das Buch Bahir*, and the few additional passages I uncovered in my 1994 edition, have thus been misunderstood by later scholarship as breaking down and expanding the textual borders, such as in Ronit Meroz's extensive efforts to interpret one

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[44] Note, however, that R. Efraim bar Shimshon and R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan know the work by the name *Sefer ha-Bahir*, even if they have different versions. R. Moses ben Eleazar cites text from *Raza Rabba* alongside such references (see Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, Jerusalem 1948, p. 216). Scholem notes that the students of R. Isaac the Blind in Gerona cite its name as '*Yerushalmi*' (*Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 41 n. 68). See further Idel's introduction to my edition, where he shows that R. Ezra incorporated the *Bahir* only into his late works (p. 2 of his introduction).

more such passage located in a zoharic manuscript, as a lost passage *from* the *Book Bahir*.[45]

Similar efforts have been made to question the identity of the work from a thematic analysis of the text in order to identify early and late strata that have their own authorial sources, existing separately from the work or interpolated into the work once it existed. All of these attempts similarly come up empty despite their claims. Such historical moves on the part of these scholars go far beyond the specifics and general method outlined by Scholem. It will be recalled that Scholem uncovered in a work by one of the last representatives of German Pietism, R. Moses ben Eleazar ha-Darshan, citations from an otherwise lost work, cited as *Sod ha-Gadol*. These passages from an Ashkenazi source, it must be emphasized, proved to be an earlier version of the *Book Bahir*, prior to its theosophic reworking. While the whole work was not cited, its presentation indicates that he was citing from a larger text which he did not provide in full. Scholem was quite enthusiastic in uncovering the pre-history of the medieval and European Kabbalah and hence overread the mentioning of the very similar title, albeit cited in Aramaic as *Raza Rabba*, of a rabbinic magical work in a ninth-century Karaite polemic as the same work quoted in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz. As I wrote in my 1994 edition, since no quotes were offered in the Karaite source, it can safely be said that the rather common title of a book of secrets (or, even 'The Big Book of Secrets' or 'The Big Secret'), yields no necessary connection to the European precursor of the *Bahir* that the later German Jewish mystic cited. Moreover, the recently published article by Ronit Meroz to interpret the so-called Babylonian layer of the *Bahir* thus lacks any basis, and the presentation is additionally confounded by the confusion between the titles of '*Sod ha-Gadol*' and '*Raza Rabba*' throughout her study, basing the analysis on her assumption of their total identification.[46]

Another strong reading of Scholem's history of the texts and trajectories of development of the Early Kabbalah was offered in a study by Haviva Pedaya. Scholem placed the *Bahir* somewhere between the German Pietists and the

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[45] See the annotated list of all such passages in the name of the *Bahir* in my edition, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 48-54 and Meroz, 'A Passage Attributed to the *Bahir*'.

[46] Ronit Meroz, '"A Bright Light in the East": On the Time and Place of Some of *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Da'at* 49 (2002), pp. 137-180 [Hebrew]; idem 'The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah', *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (2007), pp. 39-56; Idem, 'A Journey of Initiation in the Babylonian Layer of *Sefer Ha-Bahir*', *Studia Hebraica* 7 (2007), pp. 17-33.

Provençal kabbalists, noting its appearance and publication in this first recognized social circle of theosophic mystics. As a pivotal point of reception and further dissemination, Pedaya claimed to have uncovered the Provençal stratum (*shikhvah*) in the *Book Bahir*. Similarly based on a thematic analysis, in this case of a single passage, her argument is that one of the Provençal kabbalists reworked a passage with ideas and language that bears the unique mark of their thought, pointing to a Provençal editing of the text and, following the title of her article, a stratum of the work. My impression is that this passage does not demonstrate a redaction of the *Bahir* as a work, but at best, the interpolation of glosses or the rewriting of one passage alone with no necessary source in the school of R. Isaac the Blind. The textual observation and analysis are undoubtedly important, but point more to the instability of the text than to some proof of the existence of a Provençal redaction. The implication here, echoing Scholem's historiographic construction of the emergence of the Early Kabbalah, is that the *Bahir* existed prior to such a reworking and what we now have is its later form in the work's evolution in Provence, such that the locations of each of its transmissions to this point is marked by a recensional revision.

We see therefore that the *Bahir* existed in Ashkenaz in some pre-theosophic form before it was transformed into the first kabbalistic work. There is no (surviving) evidence of the existence of earlier or later recensions from other circles. Nevertheless, even if its identity as a work was fixed, its transmission history displays constant textual instability, both amongst the first generations and on through its transmission in Spain, Safed and even editions of the last hundred years. It is best to distinguish between two types of variation. Regarding the first, I uncovered a second family of manuscripts to the *Bahir* in which a number of passages demonstrate recensional differences. A second type of variation occurs at the level of small changes, comments and interpolations that affect the meaning of the text and these can be found throughout its history.

Corroborating proof for the gradual formation of the *Bahir* as a collection of traditions, the consolidation of a critical mass of material that was refashioned into a theosophic key as a work with an overall coherency is provided from outside of the textual tradition itself in the polemic of R. Meir ben Simeon of Narbonne. His comments have been discussed a number of times, Scholem first published the relevant excerpts from his very long work, *Milḥemet Miṣvah*. Like R. Isaac ha-Kohen's comments, and the parallel passages found in the works of the late German Pietist figures, R. Efraim bar Shimshon and R. Moses ben Eleazar, the comments in *Milḥemet Miṣvah* indicate that the *Bahir* arrived

in fragmentary form in Provence and was not composed by the first known social circle of kabbalists.[47]

> We have heard that a book with the name of *Bahir*, which we have already mentioned above, has been published, in which no light can be seen. This book has now reached us, and we find it attributed to R. Nehonya ben haq-Qanah. God forbid. Such a work of his has never existed. This pious man has never stumbled upon it, and he was not numbered with the transgressors (Is. 3: 12). The style and the contents of this book show that the author did not know the pure language, not to say that it often contains the grossest heresy. We have heard that the author of it has composed also commentaries on Canticles, Ecclesiastes, on the books of the Creation and on that of the heavenly palaces and other books, which all savor his heresy. Do investigate if these books are found among you, and, if so, make them disappear from your country, as we did in ours, so that they should not become a stumbling block to you.[48]

R. Meir ben Simeon is credible in that he is careful to distinguish rumor from what he read himself in a manuscript and further notes what he heard from living kabbalists. In another comment nearby this passage, he writes, 'This is what we found in one of the books of their error, which they call *Bahir,* and some scholars have also heard this from their mouths'.[49] In this last context he discusses at length matters of the intention of prayer that are known from traditions taught in the school of R. Abraham ben David, but are lacking in (the

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[47] See my comments in the new entries for second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, to the '*Book Bahir*', and 'Isaac the Blind', (Detroit and New York 2007, vol. 3, pp. 62-63; vol. 10, pp. 51-52, where I discussed how the Kabbalah of R. Isaac the Blind emerged separately from the *Book Bahir*, that he didn't know of the book or at least ignored it.

[48] I have preferred the translation of Neubauer to that of Scholem for reasons that will be apparent. See Adolph Neubauer, 'The Bahir and the Zohar', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 4 (1892), pp. 357-358. Compare to the text of Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 43. 'And we have heard that a book had already been written for them, which they call *Bahir*, that is 'bright' but no light shines through it. This book has come into our hands and we have found that they falsely attribute it to Rabbi Nehunya ben Haqqanah. God forbid! There is no truth in this. That righteous man, as we know him, did not come to ruin [by editing such a work] and his name is not to be mentioned in the same breath as sacrilege. The language of the book and its whole content show that it is the work of someone who lacked command of either literary language or good style, and in many passages it contains words which are out and out heresy'.

[49] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 54, 399.

known manuscripts of) the *Bahir*.[50] Nevertheless, in the lengthier passage presented R. Meir ben Simeon groups together the various sources as the religious and textual phenomenon of Kabbalah. He separates out the historical personality of R. Neḥunia ben Haqanah as having nothing to do with what was produced in his name.

For Scholem, 'the word *ḤBR* is therefore to be read, as is often the case here, as *pu'al*, *ḥubbar*. Adolph Neubauer, the first to publish this text, concluded that the word should be read as *pi'el*: *ḥibber*, "he composed", arriving at the erroneous understanding that the author wished to designate R. Azriel as the author of the *Book Bahir*. Commenting on Neubauer's interpretation, Scholem notes, 'Naturally this reading was possible only as long as the writings of Azriel himself were largely unknown'.[51] Following Scholem, R. Meir ben Simeon is therefore careful to note that the Provençal (or even the Geronese) kabbalists whom he knows received the book from another circle, namely, that the book was written *for them*, or as we might frame the matter today, that the book was received by them. Returning to R. Meir ben Simeon's text, we might translate this second use of the same verb *ḤBR* to be that these works were also written amongst them, namely, in their circle. We know that R. Ezra wrote a lost commentary to *Sefer Yeṣira*[52] and that he is the author of a commentary to the

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[50] See Gershom Scholem, 'The Concept of *Kavvanah* in the Early Kabbalah', *Studies in Jewish Thought: An Anthology of German Jewish Scholarship*, ed. A. Jospe, Detroit 1981, pp. 162-180; Moshe Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah'; idem, 'Intention of Prayer'.

[51] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 43 n. 74. For further discussion of this passage see Jonathan Dauber, 'Standing on the Heads of Philosophers: Myth and Philosophy in Early Kabbalah', Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2004, pp. 219-220, who seeks to rehabilitate Neubauer's reading or at least suggest its plausibility which further serves Mark Verman's suggestion about the continued or final redaction of the *Bahir* in Gerona. See Mark Verman, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, Albany 1992, pp. 166-173. Pedaya has argued that the *Bahir* was redacted in Provence, although her claim is based on one passage which does not represent the entire text. The apparent interpolations which she presents could also be characterized as emerging from another context. See Pedaya, 'The Provençal Stratum in the Redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir*'; Dauber, 'Standing on the Heads of Philosophers', p. 162. Dauber, it should be noted, takes further steps to argue the late redaction, building on the suggestions of Verman and Pedaya and offering further analysis of select passages to demonstrate the Geronese context.

[52] See the manuscript text of Aharon Yaniv, who sought to reconstruct the lost

Song of Songs. The passage would suggest then that he or another 'author' wrote an otherwise unknown commentary to [a book of] the Hekhalot literature, possibly what scholars today called *3 Enoch*, known in Ashkenazi sources as *Sefer ha-Hekhalot*.

My interest here in analyzing the earliest external testimony about the origin(s) of the *Bahir* is to appreciate distinctions already made of geographic sources, literary activity in its formation, and the manner in which the text was translated and entered into the conceptual register of literary production as written, edited or received. R. Neḥunia ben Haqanah is not mentioned as having edited the *Bahir*, even in its presumably pseudepigraphic attribution, as Scholem adds in brackets in his translation.[53] For Neubauer, the *Bahir* was not authored for the kabbalists, but 'published' in their midst, even if *HBR*, in the second instance is rendered 'composed'.

The main question, however, which I have not addressed until now, is whether the *Bahir* was ever written, that is invented with intent, as a book. The *Bahir* could ultimately be compared to *Sefer Yeṣira* and to the *Zohar* in that the first was an identifiable *literary context* of textual traditions whose textual quality was in flux across a long period of time, and that the second was constituted, in fact constructed, as a book from smaller units which were (or possibly had been) written separately. Scholem attempted to identify the inner structure of the *Bahir*, suggesting an earlier organization of the units within those that 'survived' the vicissitudes of its transmission history. This of course begs the question, certainly in light of later zoharic pseudepigraphy, whether the *Bahir* was composed to appear as surviving fragments or whether indeed much was lost and the (partial) organization of its traditions amounts to the vestiges of its former structure. Here too there is much instability in the passage divisions, beginning with the scribal tradition(s) of leaving a space or blank line before the beginning a new unit, to the modern attempts to affix numbered divisions, ranging from Scholem's 140 passages, based on his thematic analysis to Margolioth's round number of 200, implying some sense of perfection or

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commentary from citations in other works by R. Ezra. Texutally speaking, the effort is fascinating for when it was attempted and in what it says about editorial practice. The manuscript is bound as the eighteenth item within the fourth volume 9 (from a total of nine) 'Varia' codices, that Scholem bound together early on in his career (Scholem Collection #68220.

[53] So in his 1962 German edition, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala*, Berlin 1962, p. 37 [das heißt: mit der Abfassung eines solchen Buches].

wholeness. Unlike Schäfer's stated position about the numbering of text blocks or passages of the Hekhalot literature for the purpose of scholarly reference only (as he must in order to maintain his claim that they are not books), the passage divisions of the *Bahir* speak directly to the question of the text's literary character and identity.

We may thus conclude that the *Bahir* was invented as book by the first kabbalists who wanted to call it 'the *Book Bahir*' and who virtually codified its text in its fragmentary order, and thereby refrained from dissolving its literary borders by reorganizing the text or interpolating 'new' passages from external sources. The phenomenon itself of passages recorded in the name of the *Bahir* speaks to the resolve of the editorial tradition to keep them external to the work, and yet is also telling of the impulse of others to produce yet more traditions similar to the *Bahir* or which purport to have emerged from the storehouse of ancient traditions that fed into the work copied as the *Book Bahir*. I now turn to efforts of editorial practice in the last century as statements of scholarly positions on these theoretical issues.

Margolioth integrated three late manuscript from the Jewish Theological Seminary, including many later readings, and smoothed out the text in an integrated fashion from the various sources. I understand Margolioth to boast the strongest conception of textual idealism in that he freely (by which I mean, from an academic perspective, uncritically) restored the singular text that he established for widespread consumption, a text that would be authoritative and would replace previous versions.[54] Scholem relied on the celebrated Munich manuscript but modified it, or in his idealist conception, corrected 'the' *Bahir* according to external quotations from some early kabbalists. He scoured many kabbalistic texts for its later use and interpretations but did not read these sources with reception history in mind.

My 1994 edition layered the various moments in the text's formation and the types of testimony about the text and its quality in separate chapters. The edition placed the facsimile and transcription (in Hebrew, for the first time) of the Munich manuscript center-stage as a correction to the field in light of Scholem. This section was not presented as some have misunderstood, as *the* edition in the volume, but as one part of a more complex edition and presentation of multiple sources about the formation and transmission of the

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[54] Occasionally, Margolioth noted a number of variant readings in his commentary of sources and citations, but did not identify the manuscripts he used. In the first edition, he wrote that he would later discuss them, but he never did.

Bahir, within a greater methodology of reception history. The text of the Munich manuscript was interpreted by placing marginal comments and corrections in the notes and apparatus, with variants provided from the Vatican manuscript that represented the second family of *Bahir* manuscripts. As I wrote then, the Munich manuscript constitutes a type of critical edition of the *Bahir* from 1298 when two additional hands offered alternative readings and countless corrections. I now appreciate the implementation of this methodology as a missed opportunity to have highlighted the historical layerings on the page (although the facsimile nevertheless offered all the data to the reader). Then, I sought to mediate the 'correct' text of the work of the *Book Bahir* that should and could be redeemed from the type of critical edition produced by the three scribes from the beginning of the Kabbalah. Alongside this (misleadingly) heightened sense of isolating one tradition from within the critical work already accomplished sometime after 1298, I sought like to balance this effort with variant from the second manuscript family. Today, I realize to an even greater extent than I believed then, that traditions should be respected independently, and the various traditions on the page should have been respected as three separate sources which by the circumstances of history appear on the same physical page because these scribes encountered these particular traditions.

Most recently, Saverio Campanini's edition presented yet another transcription of the Munich manuscript I previously edited, now with variants from other witnesses from the same family as the Munich manuscript, but without reference to the second family of manuscripts or citations in other kabbalistic works of the period and thereafter. From Campanini's perspective, he had published the first and only critical edition of the work. As he states, his preference for the Munich manuscript and the textual tradition lies in its use and prominence for the Christian Kabbalah, since Mithridates generated a Latin text from this early source or one remarkably close to it. Campanini corrected some mistakes introduced in my transcription, copied additional mistakes I had made,[55] and suggested different choices than those which I

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[55] All editors are fallible, producing errors when engendering a new text or edition. While I have never intentionally introduced an error in an edition, the reproduction of such errors by later 'editors' is iron-clad proof of the source of later editions, which take from the work of others. Note that some cartographers intentionally include blunders or non-existent locations in maps to prevent and catch those who copy their work. See Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps*, Chicago 1993, pp. 43-44. Similarly, companies that rent out mailing lists 'seed' their address lists with a few addresses of unrelated

chose from the various hands that recorded the textual traditions on the page of the Munich manuscript which appeared in facsimile form in my edition. In all, his edition is more rigorous with respect to editorial decisions about the importance of the Munich manuscript, at the expense of other types of sources, and strongly interprets the Hebrew text in accordance with the Latin translation.

In his edition, Campanini argued that, formally speaking, I had not prepared a critical edition of the *Bahir* in that I edited a semi-diplomatic text and offered variants from a manuscript from a different family of its textual transmission. On this point, he is absolutely right. A fuller and erudite presentation of his argument appeared in a separate study, which cannot be fully addressed here.[56] A few words of praise are in order here as Campanini advanced in this article an understanding of the glosses in the margins of the manuscript text first completed in 1298, Ms. Munich 209. The later glosses of variant readings reflect the text found in another manuscript of the Munich collection, codex 53. While Campanini suggests that this manuscript served the second scribe in offering marginal notes of a second textual tradition, I suspect that this sixteenth century manuscript was produced from the thirteenth-century copying and so this later scribe accepted the marginal glosses as corrections to the work generating a clean copy. Whichever relationship proves to be accurate, the publication of other versions in later manuscripts will illuminate the life of the *Bahir* as a fluid structure of textual discussions that took place within its transmission history, the underlying methodology of my edition in 1994.

As in the case of the *Book Bahir*, editorial practice can therefore reflect the textual state of events in its manuscript history by layering and comparing the various versions and even redactions, pre-theosophic, and the received kabbalistic forms in a complex edition that does not essentialize the text. The

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individuals to track the unpaid and repeated use of the rented list. The metaphor of the map is particularly relevant to the production of editions as maps are intended to authoritatively model in a condensed form something that exists elsewhere on scale that cannot be appreciated in a single view. Ideologically motivated maps (of text) that unintentionally mislead the reader from seeing the texts that exist in the manuscript sources are a case in point of the power an editor can yield over his or readership.

[56] Saverio Campanini, 'Problemi metodologici e testuali nell'edizione del *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Materia Giudaica. Rivista dell'Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo*. XII 1-2 (2007), pp. 21-43, see especially pp. 31-32.

point here is to open up the textual research and editorial practice to be respectful and embrace the multiplicity that exists in the manuscripts instead of imposing an idealistic structure upon the data.

The Zohar

As discussed in the fourth chapter of this volume, the *Zohar* was not produced as a book. The multiple forms that exist in manuscripts and the printed editions from 1558 through 1715 replaced the earlier forms and received canonical status. The *Zohar* was thus invented by the printers as a book and from here it is important to further qualify the forms this book took on, the forms that were not realized and which remain in manuscript and the reasons for all of these moves. The question then remains for the modern editor, what is the intent of a critical or scholarly edition? Is the purpose of such editions to reconstruct the 'book' of the *Zohar* in a fashion that is different from the choices made by the sixteenth-century printers under the presumption that a book did exist or should have existed by authorial or editorial intent from the end of the thirteenth century? Or, is scholarship attempting to construct a book of the *Zohar* for its own ideological or cultural reasons?

My claim is thus that the greater context of the multiple forms of the *Zohar* that have been produced in the history of its printing, and especially in the last century, inscribe the modern edition as part of the work's reception, a chapter in its history as an open book.[57] Maybe the *Zohar* was once a closed book, a designation that might have been limited to just the '*Body of the Zohar*', and later became an open book in the variations of its reception? My point is that so many versions of the *Zohar* have been produced that no one edition can authoritatively be recovered or re/constructed by academics in a scholarly edition that accounts for the *various* literary forms extended to the texts that never possessed any one, original form. Academic scholarship might still be under the false impression that they can position themselves outside the chain of negotiations with the text and stop the flux that has marked the ideological and cultural engagements with the text, when in fact, particular editorial practices aimed at producing a critical, and so an authoritative, edition, become de facto the latest link in this pre-existing chain. In short, scholars may falsely

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[57] On the beginnings of this process in one of the first attempts in manuscript to edit the *Zohar* as a book, and as an open book, see Avraham Elqayam, 'The Holy *Zohar* of Sabbatai Ṣevi'.

believe they have the needed distance to evaluate the work through the prism of later copies of 'the work', when in fact they inscribe themselves within the lineage of the work's openness.

We might ask then whether revisions are a function of the period, the windows of opportunity that afforded multi-valenced literary creativity, or whether they are a function of the writer and literary form? Indeed, in this period of Spanish Kabbalah, many commentaries were composed by particular authors to *Sefer Yeṣira*, who participated in the growing genre of commentaries to the ten *sefirot*. The *Zohar*, as a commentary to scripture, was not unique, and did not seek to alter or enhance existing genres of literature. Liebes writes that the various versions of the *Idrot* were written to prepare it for the book form,[58] whereas I see the *Zohar* more as a literary phenomenon, or more precisely, *a series of literary phenomena*. Furthermore, Idel speaks of 'creative revisions', contrasting these literary efforts against the Ashkenazi revisions which, following Ta-Shma's suggestion,[59] were the product of oral instruction. Indeed, kabbalists did re-write or produce texts after their travels or encounters with new figures and texts, but the creativity evident in the *Zohar* is not marked by these causes from what we know of its context. Matt's and Meroz's comments about the stylized or 'Aramaized' copies of the zoharic texts shed much light on the ongoing process of revisions to the zoharic corpus that did not stop in the beginning of the fourteenth century.

A critical edition of the *Zohar* has long been desired in the field, and serious efforts were undertaken by Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer nearly a generation ago.[60] Nevertheless, most scholars since Scholem have been content with the most readily available edition, adopting the traditional view of the printed edition as the received and canonical text that could serve scholarly purposes just the same. I note that the Schatz project sought to produce a new edition based on the text and literary layout of the Mantua edition, identifying the manuscripts used by the printers, and printing passages that escaped their

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[58] See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 11-12; 95-110; 126-134 and discussion by Idel, 'Window of Opportunity', p. 189.

[59] Idel, 'Window of Opportunity', p. 190 note 82. See Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages'; idem, 'Addendum to My Article: "The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries", *Qiryat Sefer* 61 (1986-1987), pp. 581-582 [Hebrew].

[60] See Zvia Rubin, 'The *Zohar* Project: Goals and Achievements', *Supplement to Qiryat Sefer*, volume 68 (1998), pp. 167-174 [Hebrew].

attention along with a new Hebrew translation.[61] While various other tools and aims were listed in their research program, the project was structured overall around the acceptance of the 'received text' of the first printing.

In all, I believe, it fair to say that over the last generation, the obsession with pseudepigraphy and the works of R. Moses de León have certainly delayed any serious treatment of the text of the zoharic literature. Here too, the hope of discovering the original text of 'the book' (of the *Zohar*) was presumably motivated at finding some original intent within the pseudepigraphic activity and identity of 'the author' of these documents, a form of textual idealism. Much has changed, and again, I believe it is unacknowledged by many of the scholars involved, that the question of the text has changed since the publication of Liebes' thesis concerning the collective authorship of the *Zohar* by a circle of Castilian kabbalists. That is, the hold has been broken on Scholem's constructs, even if the immediate effect was to transform the idea of the single author into the chief editor, leaving the text as a stable construct. Scholem's conception was thus substantively changed, but from within his discourse, so that one could move in and out of the old paradigm and still offer new insights. The next series of moves, including my own, was to destabilize the text as well and investigate questions of form and textual consistency within the manuscripts. This includes foremost the development of more sophisticated methodologies than are presently in use, that take into account, separately (but in some circumstances integrally) the presumption of uncovering the earliest form intended by the author(s) and the forms of the text(s) that were constructed, and repeatedly revised in the re/production of printed editions of the work of the *Zohar*. Here, zoharic scholarship should follow the lead of Peter Shillingsburg who appreciated and theorized the methods of intentionalist and materialist "schools of editing".[62] In zoharic scholarship, this would amount to appreciating the disparate sections and qualities of the zoharic texts in manuscript and their later states in print.

This process should conclude, I believe, with the acceptance of the idea that textual idealism is misplaced in editorial practice of the zoharic corpus. An original version was not produced by the author or authors of the *Zohar*, as it was an ongoing process as far as their (ongoing) literary activity was concerned,

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[61] Ibid., p. 168.

[62] Peter L. Shillingsburg, 'Individual and Collective Voices: Agency in Texts', *Resisting Texts: Authority and Submission in Constructions of Meaning*, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 151-164.

as well as for their mystical and literary intentions. Therefore, not only can the original or earliest and best surviving text not be recovered from a comparison of the scattered manuscripts, but such a project is methodologically flawed. This form of textual idealism began with the first attempts to edit the book's form and rework its language, to conform it to the general consistency its various editors, copyists and printers *expected* to find and so constructed in their editorial products, each according to one of many essentialized views of the book. This process was neither linear nor uniform, although the tendency to Aramaize the text and assert the Tannaitic origin of the fraternity of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai stands out as its dominant features. The last century of editing, with increasing intensity, has sought to integrate the textual units of the zoharic corpus, again into a canonical book, and with a contemporary appeal as an agent of cultural change within and without of the traditional communities. To this end, the course of linguistic revisions has been reversed, whereby the *Zohar*, as a sacred text, was rendered into Hebrew (and a Hebrew that is more readable to modern Israeli or Hebrew speakers), through the acts of commentary and translation. These translations include anthologies, ranging from Yudl Rosenberg's *Zohar Torah* to Judah Ashlag's *Sulam* and Isaiah Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, providing accessible Hebrew texts at the expense of its (earlier) literary form(s). To varying degrees, therefore, beginning with the earliest manuscript changes and continuing on to present times, adaptations and changes were made in new editions such that the celebrated distinction between accidentals and substantives has been blurred, or arguably that the text has been altered so that this distinction is irrelevant in the new cultural agendas of modern editors.

This assessment of modern editions of the zoharic corpus, relative to the prior history of its composition, manuscript transmission and the first editions, should be positioned in comparison with the textual study of modern English literature from which so much of contemporary theory of textual scholarship and editorial practice is based. In many examples from the modern period, manuscripts survived documenting the transformation of the author's early, and final intention, revisions by later editors and printers and the history of editions that evolved from these editions. Critical editing thus sought to peel back the layers of change that were often informed by the desire to normalize, modernize and appropriate the work that underwent various revisions. The major difference between these methods and case studies with those of the zoharic literature is that little or no manuscript evidence has survived from the desk(s) of the author(s) or its 'performance' and reproduction in the century

following its composition. Much of what we have of the zoharic literature emerges from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at the earliest. Editions of the *Zohar*, beginning with the sixteenth century, attempted similar adaptations with an eye to consistency of style and language and were motivated by their conception of what the *Zohar* is. Editions of the last century have been driven by similar aims no less than the Hebrew translations including those produced in the academy. This brings us full circle to the issues raised by Fredson Bowers, 'The editing of the classics – which profoundly influenced the treatment of the vernacular – dictated modernization and the flexible, eclectic treatment of texts'.[63] In short, editing the *Zohar* is wrapped in a double bind, of amassing and presenting data of the history of the texts' adaptations under the pretext that it is uncovering the original, or, by producing eclectic or singular versions, even if by translation, for the purpose of the popular consumption of its scholarly product, while it downplays the culturally driven methodology as the currently relevant fruits of a culture produced by academic tools.

If indeed the interests of textual scholarship in this as well as in many other parallel circumstances are to reproduce the text that was and avoid the new and artificial constructions of a text as imagined by the modern reader, then the life of the *Zohar* should be presented in its various stages of development, neither privileging the earlier nor the later forms of a text. My view, therefore, of future editorial work of zoharic texts is that it is best to contextualize particular manuscript versions and position them within the learning practices, scribal and transmissional traditions in which they were produced and appreciate their uniqueness instead of identifying these in order to discard them as contaminations. It is long overdue for the scholarly community to come to terms with their unstated agendas as participants in the cultural program of restoring and producing the *authoritative* volumes of the library of the Jewish people, no doubt a worthy project on in its own, but one that compromises the methodological standards of how to approach and work with manuscript sources in the academy. Certainly, an integration of the manuscript versions into a stable and uniform text and form further serves the traditional and cultural assumptions, which are themselves the object of study and not the means and method for its replication. *Editorial practice is, to be sure, a social practice in that it emerges from, and returns to, the community of readers that engages texts.* The social element can quite easily, and without much self-

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[63] Fredson Bowers, *Textual and Literary Criticism*, Cambridge 1996, p. 117.

awareness, slip from a related characterization of its source and the readership who enjoys the end product of its work into its main driving force.

Tiqqunei Zohar

Perhaps no work, or volume appreciated as a work, from the library of the Jewish mystics has influenced more communities of readers than *Tiqqunei Zohar*. This collection of *Tiqqunim*, traditionally understood as seventy chapters (with an additional eleven *Tiqqunim* that appear as an appendix already in the first edition), which comprise the book entitled *Tiqqunei Zohar*, continue the zoharic writing style and themes. As a volume it has been printed more times than any other kabbalistic text, perhaps more than the *Sefer Yeṣira*, the *Book Bahir*, and the *Zohar* combined. This is most likely due to the liturgical use of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, read ritually according to divisions that accorded with the Jewish calendar.[64] Nevertheless, relative to its importance and the treatment of the other texts of the zoharic corpus, the scholarly attention to the textual state of this work is meager at best, and with few exceptions the commonly printed format of the twentieth century has served scholars as the object of study.

Major contributions to the study of *Tiqqunei Zohar* were offered by Scholem,[65] Baer,[66] Tishby,[67] Gottlieb,[68] Séd-Rajna,[69] Giller[70] and most recently

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[64] Of course the *Zohar to the Torah* was also appropriated for such purposes but apparently for other reasons, especially its size, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, has gained and continues to have greater popularity. Of note is the Sabbatean use of *Sefer Yeṣira* for similar purposes. See for example its printing with the *Mishna*, Venice 1704-1705 and later for ritual purposes (on *Hoshana Rabba*), *Sefer Hadrei Qodesh*, Diharnfurt 1812, which includes *Mishna, Zohar* and *Sefer Yeṣira*.

[65] See especially, Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 218. For notes on the printing history see Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, pp. 177-182. Scholem annotated a rather common edition he received at an early date in his career (Scholem collection, R 2261, Kapost 1825).

[66] Yitzhak Baer, 'The Historical Background of the *Ra'aya' Meheimna*', *Zion* 5 (1940), pp. 1-44 [Hebrew]; idem, *History of Jews in Christian Spain*, 1, pp. 266-277.

[67] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 5, 98-99.

[68] See for example Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, pp. 545-550; idem, *The Hebrew Writings of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar and Ra'aya Meheimna*, introduction by Moshe Idel, prepared for press by Shmuel Reem, indexes prepared by Michal Oron, Jerusalem 2003 [Hebrew]

[69] Gabrielle Séd-Rajna, 'Manuscrits du *Tiqqūney ha-Zōhar*', *Revue des études juives*

Huss,[71] Goldreich[72] and Liebes.[73] These studies treated *Tiqqunei Zohar* as a volume and/or a work and discussed *Ra'aya Mehemna* as an additional work written by the same author, with few references if any to manuscripts or a selection of which is the best printed edition.[74] Scholarship on these documents has treated the units separately under the larger rubric of the activity of this kabbalist and almost always in relation to the *Zohar* as the book that was previously written. Scholarship has yet to apply a holistic view of these texts and read across them to establish the intellectual and spiritual world of the author behind these various texts. More importantly, the privileged and sanctified place of the printed edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar* persists within scholarship, skewing the directions of research have been undertaken thus far.

In terms of editorial practice, the Mantua printers who first published their volume of *Tiqqunei Zohar* in 1557, (and notably, prior to the printing of the *Zohar to the Torah* in 1558) established the literary boundaries of the text as a work, which was critiqued by later kabbalists and printers in a significant fashion, even though they never went so far as to reconceive the literary structure of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and edit a new format from the manuscript traditions. The record of the scholarly community is more indebted to the circumstances of earlier conventions than are the later kabbalists with no editorial effort or published critique to imagine the complete work of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, an anthology of all its texts of a collection in an edition or volume of all the literary products of this individual and the texts written in this literary style.

So let us begin with the manuscripts, as initially described by Gabrielle Séd-Rajna and Pinchas Giller. The manuscripts show a different order and configurations of the material than that found in the printed editions. The later editions demonstrate that the Mantua printing was basically rejected as a good text even though its format served as a near canonical starting point for the later printers who altered that text. As will be detailed below, the editions

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129 (1970), pp. 161-178.

70 Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 131-132, n. 9.

71 Huss, *Like the Radiance*, p. 134.

72 Amos Goldreich, 'Investigations into the Self-Perception of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar', *MASSU'OT: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 459-496 [Hebrew].

73 Liebes, 'The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*'.

74 Giller's highly informative extended note, cited above is a major exception.

published in 1719 in Ostrog and Amsterdam revised the Mantua edition in accordance with the handwritten notes of Menaḥem di Lonzano or some source which closely resembled it. Lurianic kabbalists such as Jacob ben Ḥayyim Alfandari, Moses Zacuto and Joseph Ḥamitz were all involved in improving ('correcting') the later editions of the zoharic corpus in light of the Safedian erudition and manuscript traditions.[75] The question must be raised whether the later editions are better because they were modified according to a comparison of earlier manuscripts or also in accordance with the editorial decisions of later readers who evaluated the style and content of the text. These are not mutually exclusive categories and an assessment must account for the relative weight of each in evaluating how and why the later editions were modified. Nevertheless, we learn that in this case the print did not stop the production and adaptation of the transmission history of manuscript reproduction, but rather sparked such activity.

The texts of what might comprise the work (or texts) of *Tiqqunei Zohar* include the material printed in the first editions, beginning with Mantua 1557, which were corrected in the better readings of Ostrog and Amsterdam, but which are nevertheless found in different organizations in manuscripts. Some of these manuscripts lack the first *Tiqqun*, texts of varying lengths (recensions?), including the omission of some *Tiqqunim*, and in varying qualities of the text in manuscript sources. Some manuscripts, as Giller notes, do not even conform to the arrangement of the printed edition. Other materials were printed in the *Zohar to the Torah* (Mantua 1558, 1, fols. 22a-29a and in the appendices added to the Amsterdam 1715 and later editions),[76] in *Zohar Ḥadash* (second edition, Cracow 1603, separate pagination 45 folios, even as the later editions gradually included more material including *Midrash ha-Ne'elam Ruth*),[77] and finally, the texts printed in the end of the *Sefer Livnat*

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[75] See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 386 n. 8. Joseph Avivi has demonstrated that R. Jonah ben Jacob was responsible for printing the *Zohar* in Constantinople 1736 according to the Lurianic revisions which were undertaken by R. Moses Mizraḥi in Damascus. Avivi has further shown the Buzaglo polemicized against these chanes in the Amsterdam 1772 edition and Hayyim Joseph David Azulai defended the changes in the Livorni 1791-1793 edition. See Avivi, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, vol. 3, pp. 1122-1129 and the discussion below.

[76] On the relationship to *Tiqqun* 70 see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 218.

[77] See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 98-99, showing the development in the first three editions; in the second and third editions, Salonica 1597; Cracow 1603

ha-Sappir (Jerusalem 1913, fols. 95b-100a).[78] Additional sources by this kabbalist were composed as works, namely the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and a number of texts in Hebrew which were published by Ephraim Gottlieb, with additional texts found in manuscript to be issued shortly by Amos Goldreich.

While the instability of the literary form of the *Tiqqunim* in the surviving manuscripts testifies to an early debate or competition between traditions, it also amounts to the early chapters in its reception history and important moments of text criticism regarding these texts. Alternatively, the *Tiqqunim* as distinct from the form(s) of the work, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, might be appreciated better as a genre or style of writing which might have been initiated by an author's creation of a work, but which broke down into a recognizable textual phenomenon with imitations, expansions and reorganizations of the early material, later combined with other texts. Here we have a strong, and perhaps more clearly defined parallel to the literary history of the *Zohar to the Torah*.

Cordovero was perhaps the earliest figure to attempt to edit each of these groupings of texts into works (and within a corpus), with the editorial awareness of the literary state of the materials at his disposal and the end result of the work(s) he was trying to create or restore. But again, Cordovero did so as part of his overall construct of the zoharic corpus as the overall frame, when he set out to compose his *Or Yaqar*. Much later, criticism of the dispersion of the texts and an attempt to address that problem editorially was undertaken by R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna, who composed a commentary to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, which was published in Vilna 1867, in which the *Tiqqunim* from *Zohar Ḥadash* were added on to the end of the text of the then traditional arrangement of *Tiqqunei Zohar*.[79] At a later date, the *Tiqqunim from Zohar*

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and Venice 1658. The later included *Midrash ha-Ne'elam Ruth*, which was earlier published as a separate volume, Tiengen 1559; Venice 1563. More on the history of this work see the introduction to my facsimile edition of the second edition of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam Ruth*, Jerusalem 1991.

[78] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 219; Goldreich, 'Investigations into the Self-Perception', p. 459. n. 1.

[79] For a thorough discussion see Joseph Avivi, *Qabbalat ha-GRA*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 18-19, 22-24. For a printing history which I found lacking in a few items on this question see Yeshayahu Vinograd, *Thesaurus of the Books of the Vilna Gaon*, Jerusalem 2003, pp. 128-129. For thematic comments which place his textual method of treating Kabbalah within a study of Jewish classics, biblical and Rabbinic literature see Yosef Rivlin, 'The Influence of Kabbalah and Zoharic Literature on the Gaon's Writings and

Ḥadash, were printed separately in a slim volume, highlighting the charachter of this move.[80]

Not much has been attempted to re/produce the entire Zoharic corpus until recently, until that is, the edition by Daniel Frisch in his multi-volume commentary to the zoharic corpus which includes editions of both *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash*. His edition consciously attempts to go beyond previous editions in incorporating the various readings of the printed editions under the rubric of a modern edition that presents what is to his mind the best text, and accompanied by a selection of annotations from the classical commentaries and a translation and paraphrase of the text in his commentary which appears on the page below the Aramaic text. In his seventeen-volume edition of the *Zohar to the Torah*, he did not formally translate each word,

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Commentaries', *The Vilna Gaon and his Disciples*, ed. M. Hallamish, Y. Rivlin and R. Shuchat, Ramat Gan 2003, pp. 1371-154 [Hebrew]. The methods of textual scholarship used by the Vilna Gaon, his construction of texts and his textual criticism at the level of the version of the text and their form need further study. See Immanuel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2002, pp. 16-17; Allan Nadler, 'The Gaon of Vilna and the Rabbinic Doctrine of Historical Decline', *"Let the Old Make Way for the New" – Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Eastern European Jewry, Presented to Immanuel Etkes. Vol. I: Hasidism and the Musar Movement*, ed. D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 137-161. See the recent dissertation by Eliyahu Stern, 'Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2008. I would like to thank the author for kindly providing me with a revised version of the first chapter related to these questions. Stern argues that under the influence of Leibniz through the works of RaMHaL, the Vilna Gaon sought to restore and original textual harmony that was not necessarily based upon a comparison of manuscripts. Following a discussion of an important study by Menahem Zvi Fox, "The Glosses of R. Elijah, the Vilna Gaon to *Midrashei Halakhah* as a Basis of Understanding his Religious Worldview', *Sidra* 15 (1999), pp. 111-117 [Hebrew], Stern writes: 'Interpretation and criticism, for GRA, did not involve the knowledge of manuscripts or ancient history, but rather a form of rational intuition, based on what the reader thought the text ideally ought to say. Evil and error were not meant to be coolly analyzed but aggressively removed'.

[80] Warsaw 1872; Warsaw 1875. In Scholem's copy of the latter (Scholem library #2127) he writes that additional material is found in this edition: ובדפוס ורשא תרמ"ה עוד נמצאים כמה דפים יותר עם ליקוטי תקונין! The Jerusalem 1991 edition of *Tiqqunim from Zohar Ḥadash* is a facsimile of the last pages of the Vilna 1867 edition with the Gaon's commentary.

though, as he states in his introduction to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, he changed his method to do just that.[81] And although he reproduced the *Tiqqunim* of *Zohar Ḥadash* in his four-volume edition of what was initially the single volume of *Zohar Ḥadash*, he followed the various comments in Cordovero's commentary that *Tiqqunei Zohar* was a single work. Nevertheless, he added that the first half of the *Tiqqunim* were intended as an introduction and the second should be seen as additional sources (and reiterations, *hakhpalot*) to the main body of the work which was published as *Tiqqunei Zohar* and in the *Zohar to the Torah*.[82] Frisch thus works conceptually, although not in editorial practice with an idealized view of the literary nature of the work.

In a most insightful study, which sought to clarify the self-consciousness of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Amos Goldreich extrapolated from a wide range of sources written by this figure. Goldreich assumes that *Tiqqunei Zohar* is a corpus, referring to the 'Literature of *Tiqqunei Zohar*', much like the term 'Zoharic Literature', which has been adopted by a number of scholars to refer variously to either the collection of literary units published in the three volumes of the *Zohar to the Torah*, or all five volumes of the printed corpus, which includes also *Zohar Ḥadash* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*. But certainly *Tiqqunei Zohar* remains a different case even years after the deconstruction of (the identity of) the single author of the *Zohar* as a book. A consensus still exists amongst scholars, and forms the basis of Goldreich's more detailed conclusions, that one individual authored the various texts in Aramaic and Hebrew that are known or connected to the name of *Tiqqunei Zohar*.[83] In Goldreich's article, he briefly discusses automatic writing, as the technique which translated the zoharic and midrashic mentality into various textual products which bear many common features.[84] The importance of the technique in this context is that it might explain some of the variegated writing and so direct scholarship to address writing as a means for appreciating the mystical personality (or in Goldreich's terminology, the self consciousness) of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. It is thus appropriate to extend the conclusions offered earlier about the *Zohar* and state that *Tiqqunei*

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[81] Daniel Frisch, 'Introduction', *Sefer Tiqqunei Zohar*, Jerusalem 1991, vol. 1, p. 2 (unnumbered).

[82] Daniel Frisch, 'Introduction', *Sefer Zohar Ḥadash*, Jerusalem 2002, vol. 4, p. 8.

[83] See, however, Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 5 who asks whether there might be a number of authors.

[84] See Goldreich, 'Investigations into the Self-Perception', p. 483. idem, *Automatic Writing*.

Zohar is not a book in many senses. While the object of study in Goldreich's research is the author and textual traditions he produced, we also see that the traditional editions have broken down much of the presumptions of the textual presentation of the first edition.

To complete this process of textual criticism, a new edition is in order, one that would collect in a single volume all of the zoharic writing of the book or literature of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, which could sit on the shelf next to the editions of the other works of this same figure. Multiple editions may be needed to account for the different arrangements and versions and some would most likely expect or prefer that this be done in an all-inclusive synoptic edition. Such a massive volume would undoubtedly be helpful in that it would highlight these differences. However, decisions should nevertheless be made in out of an argument of how the various texts came to be, namely its history after the initial composition. While this suggestion might seem a bit rigid, inventing a corpus that might not exist in the earliest manuscripts, and is beholden to the expectations of the printers and the modern and traditional readership, which has been influenced by them, it nevertheless completes a process that had begun long before. One might wonder whether the *Tiqqunim*, as the ongoing project of adorning and (re-)establishing the zoharic literary style, as its name suggests, was always intended as an open book and so defies this very project.[85]

3. *In Pursuit of the Urtext: A Central Myth that Drives Editorial Practice*

Critical editions are meant to be used for defined purposes and by select audiences. Even if the editor claims to be beholden to an objective method that sifts through all the surviving witnesses, it is an unavoidable fact that particular conceptions had formed the type of edition that was created and which were then be used for certain purposes. Editors often believe that they are reconstructing the original work, that is, a version that captures the final intent of the author's creative product and therefore their efforts are innocent of any

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[85] So, for example, much later Ramḥal wrote *Tiqqunim Ḥadashim* (Jerusalem 1997), even if also wrote more zoharic material in another work. See Isaiah Tishby, *Messianic Mysticism: Moses Hayim Luzzatto and the Padua School*, tr. M. Hoffman, Portland-Oxford 2008, p. 323 and Joseph Avivi, *Zohar Ramḥal*, Jerusalem 1997. See more recently the fourteen-volume set by Judah Sheinfeld, entitled *Nofekh Da'at*, Jerusalem 1990-1995, which includes a translation and paraphrase of *Tiqqunei Zohar* that incorporates the commentary of the Vilna Gaon, as well as Ramḥal's *Tiqunei Zohar*.

intervention or bias. Accordingly, the history of a work in manuscript copyings is viewed as the necessary means of transmission of the author's lost original, a process which produced errors that corrupted the textual quality in a linear process that privileges the earlier manuscripts and devalues the life of the work outside of the author's hands. Scholarship thus seeks historically valid statements that can be extracted from editions that have been extracted from the original version, the Urtext. The establishment of an Urtext thus cuts through all of the later changes, corruptions and assorted modifications of a work and thereby preserves an author's original intent. The motivation of an editor to establish such a text is indeed ideologically motivated in order to achieve authenticity, legitimacy or some lasting power within a historically invested scholarly community or a traditional culture that has already inscribed the text within its canon. These goals are rarely, if ever, expressed in the academic project, even if the voiced justification is to exclude the later life of a text, which, as has been argued here, should be considered by many scholars who ultimately share the interests of what such a project could yield. But the pursuit of the Urtext cannot be discussed without coupling this interest with another principle that guides editorial practice, final authorial intention.[86] When multiple versions exist from the lifetime of an author, an editor will often seek to reproduce the last approved version that was crafted or viewed by the person who first began to create the work. This move similarly sifts through multiple documents in order to validate one text as the authoritative copy for its value and function within a target audience of readers.

These two dynamics of the pursuit of the Urtext and the author's final intent mirror the aim of the Lachmannian method of constructing a family tree of the manuscripts' transmission history and entering into the complexities of its reception history. Here too, scholars of Jewish mysticism, beginning with Scholem and continuing on through the present day, *have used late manuscripts to construct a history of ideas of what took place solely in an earlier time*. For example, a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century manuscript of a work composed in the early thirteenth century is used in order to evaluate the thought of an earlier time. When later ideas are recognized or presumed to be present in the text, the scholar feels free to 'correct' or dismiss them as irrelevant to the historically invested reading for which the manuscript is being

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[86] Thomas Tanselle, 'The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention', *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 167–211, reprinted in idem, *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing*, Charlottesville 1991, pp. 27-71.

used, even if no other philological evidence guides this correction of the existing text to conform to the ideal text in the mind of the modern readers which is presumed to have existed in the medieval past. All this is to say that editorial practice and its methodologies, even the choices of methods, are prompted by ideologically invested stances.

The idea of the Urtext has been debated in early Jewish texts,[87] the study of rabbinic literature and to a degree in the study of early Jewish mystical texts, namely the Hekhalot literature (but no formal discussion as such has been undertaken in the study of multiple versions of medieval works).[88] Schäfer has highlighted redaction as the determining principle for evaluating a text's value, believing that an Urtext is lost, irretrievable or may never have existed. Milikowsky distinguishes between variants and redactional identity to conclude that closed works have survived within the plurality of manuscripts which permit the preparation of a single edition. The question at hand, is at what time did a fixed form of a text come into being and are the surviving manuscripts beholden to this fixed form. Stemmatic analysis, Milikowsky argues, is needed to sort out the mutual dependence and inner history of a work's transmission. Most important however, is the claim that even if an Urtext cannot be successfully reconstructed, this does not mean that it never existed. Milikowsky is set on the question of textual identity, concluding in the case of rabbinic literature that texts can be 'defined and clearly delimited'.[89] Schäfer remains steadfast to a distinction between recensions and redactions, as the revisions and editing of documents, respectively.

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[87] See for example Gary Martin, 'Textual Histories of Early Jewish Writings: Multivalences vs. the Quest for "the Original"', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2007, who argues for a greater tolerance of textual variation (and their meanings) on the assumption that in reconstructing textual histories there are 'legitimate multivalences', even in the origins of a text's early history and so methodologies that aim for univalent texts are too narrow. Martin therefore presumes an initial complexity that precludes the 'theoretical construct of an original', and so it rejects the need to presume that an Urtext can and should be uncovered when editing such texts.

[88] Peter Schäfer, 'Research Into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the *Status Quaestionis*', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986), pp. 139-152; Chaim Milikowsky, 'The *Status Quaestionis* of Research in Rabbinic Literature', *idem* 39 (1988), pp. 201-211; Peter Schäfer, 'Once Again the *Status Quaestionis* of Research in Rabbinic Literature: An Answer to Chaim Milikowsky', *idem* 40 (1989), pp. 89-94.

[89] Milikowsky, Ibid., p. 207.

As argued above in theoretical terms about Jewish mystical literature in general, the following discussion of scholarship concerning the Hekhalot literature will demonstrate the need to revise the scholarly lexicon of editorial practice, particularly the meanings of redaction and recension as identifiable moments in time. If reconsidered as fluid parts of the ongoing processes of textual activity, and subsumed under a broader view of a text's longer life, the discrete events of redeaction and recession are awarded less importance. In the case of Hekhalot literature, much of this textual instability has been framed in terms of the relationship between the macroform and microform, which serve to a large extent as substitute terms for similar textual phenomena. Schäfer's editorial work on the Hekhalot manuscripts was based on the belief in macroforms that were interwoven into each other in the large manuscript copyings of the Hekhalot corpus. The prior existence of microforms is proven by the Geniza fragments, and 'defined works' which emerged through the medieval process of redacting them in manuscripts that subsume them within the fuller manuscript compilations. Strictly speaking, Schäfer does not claim that the books ever existed on their own, but rather that the work is the definition of a literary unit that the scholar 'superimposes' on the text:

> The term macroform concretely denotes both the fictional or imaginary single text, which we initially and by way of delimitation always refer to in scholarly literature (e.g., *Hekhalot Rabbati* in contrast to *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, etc.), as well as the often different manifestations of this text in the various manuscripts. The border between micro- and macroforms is thereby fluent: certain definable textual units can be both part of a superimposed entirety (and thus a 'microform) as well as an independently transmitted redaction unit (thus a 'macroform').[90]

Textual units known as microforms are thus the building blocks of the macroforms that were constructed by medieval copyists in the redaction of the seven larger manuscripts. As critiqued in chapter one, Schäfer is reflecting in this monograph on the principle that guided his earlier research and editions of the Hekhalot manuscripts, but has abandoned this method *de facto* in his monograph, *The Hidden and Manifest God*. Macroforms had been a predetermined category in the selection of the manuscripts for the edition of the Hekhalot literature. As we have seen, instead of identifying the mobility of passages from one place to another within the medieval editings of the works, when these late editors constructed near-complete anthologies of the separate

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[90] Schaefer, *The Hidden and Manifest*, p. 6 n.14.

books, Schäfer understood this phenomenon as the independence and distinct identity of the units as microforms. An additional gap between the material, as it was produced, initially transmitted, and finally copied and redacted, in these large manuscripts, is evident from the admittedly arbitrary and practical decisions made in numbering the passages for the *Synopsis*. In hindsight, we can say that these editorial decisions do not reflect the editors' methodology, providing confusion as to the identity of the microforms, which have no necessary relationship to the paragraph divisions.[91]

The *Synopsis* amounts to a graphic presentation and comparison of *medieval* attempts to (re)define the corpus of the Hekhalot literature and blend it into a whole, virtually indivisible literature. This is undoubtedly a major achievement, even though the vestiges of earlier Ashkenazi divisions of the books into chapters or sections remains within some of these large copyings. This inner history of its formulation is not highlighted for the reader, neither are the even later attempts to harmonize one anthology with another. As we have seen in the first chapter of this book, Schäfer copied the contribution of two scribes from a given page in a single font and column, even if the input of each scribe could be attributed to different traditions, periods and locales. The *Synopsis* further re-interpreted the typographical divisions of the material through its method of a neutral transcription of all text in the same font and size, thereby removing the (scribal) tradition of section breaks and other literary divisions that had defined the works.[92] Schäfer's deliberation on whether to include other texts that resemble the Hekhalot texts in subject or style betrays this difficulty in his methodology. In terming such works as *Re'uyot Yeḥezqel* as a macroform,[93] he has shown the inconsistency between

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[91] For a discussion of Schäfer's textual methodology and its reception in scholarship see Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, Leiden-Boston 2009, pp. 228-233.

[92] P.S. Alexander, 'Review of: Peter Schäfer (ed.), in collaboration with Margarete Schlüter and Hans Georg von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, Tübingen 1981', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 102-106, esp. p. 103 where he discusses the heading offered in Vatican 228 at passage 81. It should be noted that a different font was used when repeating texts out of their position in the manuscripts for the sake of comparison, noted as well in the *Synopsis* by an arrow between the two numbers assigned to the passage, based on their 'natural' position in each of the two particular manuscripts being compared.

[93] Ithamar Gruenwald, 'The Visions of Ezekiel: *Critical* Text and Commentary',

thematic and literary decisions and editorial practice, both by the medieval scribes and by modern scholars, who most often disagreed with each other on whether to include the various materials in the same volumes of a printed edition. In other words, scholarly constructs fail to coincide with the transmission history of the texts and their reception in the Middle Ages and in any event, no one textual tradition ever defined the literature as a corpus.

My suspicion is that the methodologies that were conceived for and applied in the later projects of the Jerusalem Talmud and *'Avot de Rabbi Natan*[94] were projected onto the Hekhalot works as equally appropriate, subjugating their unique histories and literary forms to those of rabbinic literature. But ultimately, the synoptic method of editing is borrowed from editions of the New Testament with the implicit claim that the methods that have traditionally served Jewish studies to edit its classical texts have been insufficient. What we have seen, however, in the case of the *Synopsis* of the Hekhalot literature is that this method misguided scholarship more than it helped to establish the earliest recoverable versions of the texts. Putting aside for the moment the irony that this edition brought renewed interest in this group of texts, it also created a generation of scholarship that inherited the faulty assumptions of an edition that presupposed its own conclusions.

Many presumed that the presentation of the *Synopsis* was separate from research (assumptions) about the texts. The overwhelming impression in the studies that followed, both inside and outside of Schäfer's school, was that the *Synopsis* presented the texts *as they are* and according to the best representatives of the known manuscripts. This impression is arguably part of the intended structure of Schäfer's project, which assigns the task of analysis and interpretation to monographs and annotated translations. The *Synopsis* itself uses various notations to mark the method of transcription, but lacks any notes or editorial intervention in such transcription, or comments about the comparison between the manuscripts. I offer an extensive quote from a review by Rachel Elior of the *Synopsis* that captures the sense of my argument:

> A brief introduction explains the structure of this edition and offers technical advice on how to utilize the sections. Schäfer's primary editorial principle has been to abstain from any intervention in the transcribed text and to adhere to

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Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism 1 (1972), pp. 101-139 [Hebrew].

94 *Avot de-Rabbi Natan: Synoptische Edition beider Versionen*, herausgegeben von Hans-Jürgen Becker; in zusammenarbeit mit Christoph Berner, Tübingen 2006.

the original sequence of the manuscripts, while avoiding the previously common division into individual treatises. Consequently, Schäfer has abstained from giving or emphasizing titles in the manuscripts, and refrains from correcting or editing the manuscripts in any manner, thereby avoiding any historical or ideological insinuations.

Schafer adherence to the editorial principles of presenting the exact sequence of the manuscripts, disregarding previous divisions as well as avoiding prejudgment of the existence of different treatises and of the problems of interrelations of the various parts, must be met with full approval and agreement. Since modern research has recognized the need to review the nature of the hekhalot corpus, this synopsis offers a solid base for further investigation, free from prior editorial intrusions into the texts. However, the reader must bear in mind the fact that the material here published is by no means the entire corpus of the hekhalot literature. Here we have but a selection of the available manuscripts. Important treatises, such as the so-called *Alfa-Beta de-Rabbi Aqiba*, the hekhalot portion of *Midrash Mishle*, the hekhalot portions in the genizah fragments, and hekhalot traditions in midrashic and kabbalistic literature, are absent in midrashic and kabbalistic literature, are absent. Others, such as *Seder Rabba de-Bere'shit*, are included because they are found in a particular manuscript, although their inclusion in the hekhalot corpus has not been established. Many manuscripts and portions of almost all of them may be cross-referenced in other, parallel manuscripts and printed sources which may offer important variants. The reader should therefore bear in mind that further textual evidence is available, although often in a much less convenient form. The *Synopsis*, nevertheless, offers a very practical presentation of the major hekhalot traditions in their original manuscript form, emphasizing the inherent editorial difficulties. True, it cannot replace a much needed critical edition of all the various parts which must include the selection of texts and the evaluation of all available material. But the *Synopsis* is not intended to be a critical edition; rather it offers to the scholar the manuscript material required to attempt such a complete critical work.

The guiding editorial consideration-presentation of the original sequence of the manuscripts – is essentially correct, although fault may be found with the total adherence to incidental variations and errors found in the manuscripts.[95]

Note that what informed Schäfer's project, and the assumption that was replicated by Elior, is the definition of Hekhalot literature as a literature. In

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[95] Rachel Elior, 'Schäfer's *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literature*', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 (1986), pp. 213-217;

acknowledging that other textual materials that *belong* to this literature or corpus can be found outside of this manuscript tradition, the present collection is deemed incomplete and therefore is seen to faithfully present the material in its natural state.[96] In other words, the edition is vindicated with objectivity and neutrality because it does not include other 'works' that scholarship has included within its construct of the literary products of the mystical activity of the period and the characteristics shared by them.

Downplayed and overlooked, therefore, is the great degree of involvement in preparing the edition, foremost the manuscripts that were excluded from the pool of witnesses to be presented, those manuscripts that copied the discrete units as works or books. Scholarship thus privileged the disorder of the larger manuscripts under the presumption – and again, one that would later determine the literary conclusions of research conducted after this 'neutral' edition was published – believing that what was undefined was obviously primary. Psychological expectations thus fell back on themselves, so that order was falsely perceived to be a later invention. Moreover, the *Synopsis* was anything but neutral in that, although duly noted, it also reproduced passages out of their order, so that it could offer a comparison between them. This method constructed a metanarrative of the literary form for what we now understand to be different attempts by late editors to construct a corpus, ironically 'a literature', of the Hekhalot texts. Variation was the product of multiple efforts of late editors, not proof of the early hylic form of the earliest texts. Indeed, in the case of the synoptic editions of the Gospels,[97] the consensus that predated such editions was that orality and interpretation were the engines that refracted the text into its various forms, thereby justifying such a presentation of the earliest states of the texts. In the case of the Hekhalot literature, the European manuscripts were preserved by the Ashkenazi esotericists who, despite Elior's observation that Schäfer did not add titles of his own in structuring the texts, added their own divisions which *do* appear in the many of the manuscripts chosen by Schäfer. And while the *Synopsis* does and does not play with the ordering and structuring of the texts, Elior took Schäfer to task for not intervening with annotations on clearly mistaken transcriptions and noting how the text *should read*, offering as proof the

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[96] Peter Schäfer, 'The Demarcation of Hekhalot Literature', *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division C*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 87-92 [Hebrew].

[97] D. C. Parker, An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts, Cambridge 2008, pp. 311-314.

strongest examples in Schäfer's edition of orthographically similar misspellings of God's names and miscitations of biblical verses.

Providing a fascinating map of methodologies, Schäfer also wrote a review of Elior's edition of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*. Schäfer's unstated agenda is to defend the methodology of his *Synopsis* and he thereby highlights the literary assumptions that frame Elior's edition. They include the presumption of a 'book' that exists with consistency of style and theme, the relative dating of the textual material that constitute the edition, the uncertainty of the literary boundaries of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* in relation to other Hekhalot texts and the choice of only part of Ms. New York, JTSA Mic 8128, which contains a larger literary frame of Hekhalot literature. Aside from the question of literary form, Schäfer challenges Elior's intervention in correcting textual readings, even if the context highly suggests her decision. In all, his criticism is one of a lack of precision in presenting all the data, leaving scribal errors as they appear, the original punctuation, and other siglia contained in the manuscript. Emendations appear to be the most disturbing to Schäfer who tows the line on textual re-presentation regardless of the editor's desire to offer some measure of interpretation (of the editor) or sense that could be attributed to the scribe's intent.[98]

The cycle of articles between Milikowsky and Schäfer on the *Status Quaestionis* of Rabbinic literature is telling in that they discuss the methods of how to view and edit Hekhalot literature in the context of rabbinic literature. Put more sharply, the presentation of an edited document such as the Jerusalem Talmud in synoptic form,[99] that is, running the manuscript witnesses in parallel columns, is not intended to destabilize the text and highlight the forms of the text, but rather my suspicion is that it was intended, and so received, as the critically responsible way to dispense of the differences and *to imply to the reader that a single work and textual quality exists behind and within these manuscripts* for the reader to reconstruct in his or her mind (and without the editor having to take responsibility for such a reconstruction). Applied to the Hekhalot literature, Schäfer's impression that a corpus has been defined by the large manuscripts leads to a necessary conclusion about the identity of the works and is an editorial act that excludes texts, even if the methodology is presented as a neutral transcription of the natural state of the

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[98] Peter Schäfer, 'Review of Rachel Elior's *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*', *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 153-157 [Hebrew].

[99] *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, Tübingen 1991-2001.

literature. As P.S. Alexander wrote in a review to the *Synopsis*:

> Whatever is not in Schäfer will for most scholars simply not exist. He cannot be totally blamed for the possible shortcomings of his readership, though he may be contributing somewhat to their misapprehension. My main point is more serious. Schäfer has reacted strongly against any attempt to identify and delimit individual Hekhalot treatises. He argues that to speak of redacted works in the way Scholem and Gruenwald do, is not sanctioned by the manuscripts, which do not recognize the existence of the so-called Hekhalot texts as finished products. The treatises are largely a fiction of modern scholarship. I would go a long way with Schaefer on this point. I believe that he has drawn attention to a fundamental fact, with wide implication, which we have all largely ignored. However, I think that he is now in danger of substituting for the fiction of individual treatises the fiction of a Hekhalot 'corpus', or 'literature', in some narrow sense of that term. The quest is on to recover the Hekhalot corpus! The truth however is that the manuscripts do not recognize the existence of such a 'corpus' or 'literature', any more than they recognize the existence of finished, finally redacted, individual Hekhalot treatises. *Ma'aseh Merkavah* material shades off imperceptibly into *Ma'aseh Beres'hit,* into straightforward magic, into Qabbalah, and into works of uncertain genre and diverse content such as *Midrash Elleh Ezkerah* and the *Alphabet of Aqiva.*[100]

Despite his pointed criticism, which identifies conceptual leaps on the part of Schäfer, Alexander was nevertheless seduced by the *Synopsis'* organization and program. The works or books that constitute the Hekhalot literature are not fictions as Schäefer would have it, but existed as delimited literary units with independent identities prior to the great compilations that served his edition. Moreover, calling the corpus or literature a fiction is similarly off the mark. The fiction of scholarship is merely that its definition of what should be in the collection and range of citations amongst German Pietists should have included more works. But this does not negate the facts that each 'treatise' has its own unique stamp, themes and style and was copied separately in the manuscript tradition. It further does not negate the fact that the preservers and transmitters of these texts understood these texts as a body of traditions, and as discussed, imitated its style, interweaving it into their own writings which bore a distinctly different tone.[101]

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[100] Alexander, 'Review of: Peter Schäfer ....*Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*', pp. 105-106.

[101] Kuyt, 'Traces of a Mutual Influence'.

In his study and edition of the *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions, Martin Cohen claimed to have identified the Urtext.[102] What is interesting here is the dynamics in the scholarly debate between the two camps that believe in the existence of an Urtext and those that claim that it *cannot* be found.[103] Both are stuck on the same question, and from a perspective of reception history their conclusions group them together. Published in 1985, a very early date for scholarship considering the publication of the *Synopsis* in 1981, Cohen's comments strike at the heart of criticism about the methodology behind Schäfer's project:

> 'The great manuscripts, it is observed, do not really present the works that have been hewn from their quarries as separate literary works with titles, chapter divisions and clear conclusions. Rather, the great manuscripts: Munich mss. 22 and 40, Oxford ms. 1531, JTS ms. 8128, as well as the Dropsie, Budapest and Vatican manuscripts, seem merely to present vast compendia of traditions grouped together according to various principles, but not actually organized as literary texts. This suggests that perhaps the actual presentation of these grouping as literary text unto themselves may in fact be a late medieval phenomenon and that the historically correct setting for these traditions is without their scribally imposed literary frames'.[104]

As I understand his comment, the Hekhalot traditions, what Schäfer calls text-blocks and later, microforms, are either the original units, which need to be appreciated as such despite their later editing into books or macroforms, or as Cohen argues, these texts began as discrete works and their later history largely obscured the literary boundaries to most readers, such that only careful philological inquiry can identify and re-present the original, the Urtext.

I do not wish to take sides on this debate here, but rather to note that both options may be off the mark, as the question needs to be reframed. In the spirit of the present monograph, I suggest that what is meaningful for textual scholarship and the study of Jewish mysticism, its texts and ideas, is an evaluation of how texts were used across the centuries in the process of the

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[102] Ms. London, British Library 10675 (Gaster 187). The manuscript was apparently copied centuries later than presumed by Cohen, even if the question of the text contained in it remains a separate issue.

[103] David J. Halperin, Review of Martin Cohen: *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), pp. 577-578.

[104] 'Texts and Recensions', p. 4.

text's transmission. I am not discounting, of course, the medieval recasting of the traditions in the great manuscripts, as Cohen has described them, as indeed much editing was done. In a study on the most celebrated passage from *Shi'ur Qomah*, I demonstrated that a polemical dialogue developed between the Jewish mysticism, who, as scribes, copyists and authors, refashioned the text to reflect their views.[105] In the debate between Cohen and Schäfer on the question of the possible existence of an Urtext and the status of (clearly late) changes to a an early or earlier text, my critique is that the later textual products are not artificial to an 'original' version, but equally significant and meaningful to the larger goals of the field as is any early or original form of the text. In other words, it is virtually irrelevant from this perspective if an Urtext is truly the first stage in an author's literary construction or just one early form of the text's evolution. What is important is an appreciation of the process of textual engagements with constellations of traditions.

Returning to Schäfer's early study, 'Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature'[106] we note that he compared the Geniza fragments to the medieval manuscripts, noting the differences in form to the editorial divisions of the large manuscripts. What is not noted is that in most all cases these divisions bear the Ashkenazi stamp, namely literary sections named *hilkhot*.[107] Schäfer's methodology thus misses the opportunity of distinguishing between different stages in the medieval redaction(s) of the Hekhalot literature, those of the German Pietists, those of other anonymous copyists and editors and those of the later anthologizers.[108] Moreover, advances in research in medieval German

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[105] Daniel Abrams, 'The Dimensions of the Creator – Contradiction or Paradox? Corruptions and Accretions to the Manuscript Witnesses', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 35-53.

[106] Peter Schäfer, 'Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot literature', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14 (1983), pp. 172-181, reprinted in idem, *Hekhalot Studien*, pp. 8-16.

[107] For further headings see further, Herbert Basser, 'The Blessing for the Torah at the Beginning of *Sefer "Ma'aseh Merkavah"*', *Hebrew Studies* 24 (1983), pp. 151-154 [Hebrew]. Much work needs to be done to identify the Ashkenazi editing and additions within the manuscript traditions, including but not limited to those chosen for the *Synopsis*. For now see the comments by Idel in his *BEN: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 242, 274 n. 312.

[108] See Joseph Dan's review of the *Synopsis*: 'Manuscripts of Heikhalot and Merkavah Literature', *Tarbiz* 53 (1984), pp. 313-317 [Hebrew] and his review of Schäfer's *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot Literatur*, Tübingen 1984, *Tarbiz* 56 (1987), pp. 433-437 [Hebrew], where he discusses three sources for the Hekhalot Literature: Citations from other works, the European manuscripts and the geniza fragments. See however the

esotericism have shown that additional circles were active outside of the Qalonymide circle and therefore one should not even turn exclusively to R. Eleazar of Worms and those close to him in order to track any special influence on, or change to, these texts. That is to say, there might very well be competing organizations of earlier material in Ashkenaz that the later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century copyists relied upon to construct their anthologies. In order to advance the research on this subject, it is first necessary to map out the familiarity of Hekhalot traditions in all of Ashkenazi esotericism, subdivided of course by the different centers, such as the works of R. Eleazar of Worms and R. Neḥemiah ben Shlomo.[109]

Schäfer concludes by saying: 'The final literary product of a certain work is in most cases a fiction, the redactional identity of which is questionable. It is therefore a false presupposition to reconstruct the individual "works" of Hekhalot literature and to delineate one in comparison and contrast with another'.[110] Once destabilizing the literary form of the Hekhalot works from the Middle Ages, Schäfer moves to a different extreme and relies on the most basic building blocks of the textual units or traditions. This move avoids the existing form(s) of this literature that have been copied out on velum and paper. Having his literary expectations disappointed, Schäfer terms the literary forms 'fictions'

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comments made by Schäfer in 1993, where he lists the eastern tradition from the Geniza and the Ashkenazi manuscripts of Europe, noting the 'particular role [they played] in the redactional process', but not discussing quotes in their *works*. *Peter Schäfer, 'Research on Hekhalot Literature: Where Do We Stand Now?', Rashi 1040-1990: Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach*, ed. G. Séd-Rajna, Paris 1993, pp.229-235, esp. p. 231. For references in scholarship to the intervention of the German Pietists in the Hekhalot texts see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 80 n. 37; Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism, and Merkabah Mysticism*, Leiden 1995, pp. 89-90 n. 58.

[109] Moshe Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings'; idem, 'The Commentaries of Neḥemiah ben Shlomo'; idem, 'On Angels and Biblical Exegesis in Thirteenth-Century Ashkenaz', *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination – Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, ed. D. Green and L. Lieber, Oxford and New York 2009, pp. 211-244; idem, 'Incantations, Lists, and "Gates of Sermons" in the Circle of Rabbi Neḥemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, and their Influences', *Tarbiz* 70 (2009), pp. 475-554 [Hebrew]. I could imagine a volume in which the frame of the *Synopsis* as published by Schäfer is filled in quote by quote with Hekhalot passages from the works of either Neḥemia ben Shlomo or Eleazar of Worms, allowing for a *synoptic* comparison.

[110] p. 15.

and identifies smaller units as real. In other words, he abandons redaction as an authentic category, and replaces the 'scholarly fiction' of works that are apparently imposed by scholars on the texts with the smaller textual units which are seen as legitimate traditions. However, *the polarity between tradition and redaction is the true scholarly 'fiction'*, in that these smaller units never existed anywhere in writing, but were identified by modern scholarship and so they are the products of contemporary readers. What did exist, and what always existed, were different redactions or versions of the works and their collection in a particular codex as corpus, which, although not uniform, had an internal organization. That is, the scribe invested that organization with intentionality which should be respected and recovered by scholarship.

Schäfer rather arbitrarily divided the texts of these manuscripts into numbered units which do not reflect the editorial reorganizations that were accomplished by the editors. So whether we call them text-blocks, traditions, microforms, recensions or redactions, it is important to appreciate the way the texts were understood by charting how they were broken down and reconfigured. Schäfer writes: 'The individual traditions have been combined into different and variable literary units. The relationship of such a literary unity to a certain "work" is of secondary importance'.[111] Again, the definitions of these literary boundaries might be a fiction if we are exclusively focused on the authorial intent of the first authors, but are dramatically meaningful if we are interested in the life of the text throughout the history of Jewish mysticism. Or more importantly, if we abandon the idea of the Urtext, we might consider the identity of the text to be the history of its configurations, not as a matter of reception history but a question of perspective, that the work indeed had such a fluid history and therefore scholarship should relate to the work as such. A critical edition as has been repeatedly argued throughout this book, need not sift through late manuscripts in order to identify and discard contaminations to a lost original, in what amounts to a synchronic view of variously dated materials, charting its descent into history, but rather an edition can respect the life of the text diachronically.

A great irony of Schäfer's edition of the Hekhalot literature, the *Synopsis*, is that in its attempt to highlight the lack of literary form it *de facto* presented a single volume of texts that appeared to some as a book, that is an organized work. Despite Schäfer's disclaimers that he was presenting unified material, he

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[111] Ibidem.

was in fact copying the large European manuscripts which were editings of discrete works into a compendium, or versions of such a compendium. Whether we can attribute an impression of literary coherence to the medieval copyist or to the modern editor as his voice or agent of culture in the twentieth century, it had such an effect outside of the academy. Various defenses have been offered for Schäfer's methodology in preparing the *Synopsis*, but it is clear that the well-intended project could now be better executed with all that was learned after its publication. That is, in hindsight, the field knows very well that anthologies betray more the marks of medieval editors than the earlier forms of the text in manuscripts which copy smaller quantities of material, not configured as a corpus. To justify these methods decades later as pragmatic choices given the understanding that no original exists or can be recovered misses the point.[112]

In 2000, Nezer Shraga published a collection of texts in the volume *Yalqut ha-Ro'im*, as an expanded and revised edition of a volume by this name from Warsaw 1885. He included in this new edition the 'Book of Hekhalot', which was a single text, *Sefer Hekhalot ha-Gadol*, that harmonized the various manuscript traditions according to the literary frame and presentation of Schäfer's edition and other editions such as *Shi'ur Qomah* and *Ḥarba de-Moshe*.[113] This edition far outstrips any caution exercised by academic editors even if its many textual choices and decisions, not to mention their reliance on the above editions, remain unstated. What is interesting though is that the medieval rabbinic, scribal methods of re-fashioning a text as a work and producing a new and 'better' text based on multiple sources are flourishing in the twenty-first century. The interdependence between the traditional and scholarly publishers is at the center of this particular phenomenon. The dynamic which could ensue, however, is the reliance of scholars, for economic reasons or the mere convenience of a singe text, to substitute the poorer imitation of a scholarly edition, indeed its substitute, for the original academic edition.

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[112] Giuseppe Veltri. 'From the Best Text to the Pragmatic Edition: On Editing Rabbinic Texts', *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. R. Bieringer, F. G. Martínez, D. Pollefeyt and P. Tomson, Ledien-Boston 2010, pp. 63-78.

[113] *Yalqut ha-Ro'im*, Jerusalem 2000; *Sefer Hekhalot ha-Gadol* – influenced by Schäfer's *Synopsis* making a book out of the literature.

4. *The Kabbalistic Footnote: The Descent of the Marginal Gloss to the Foot of the Page*

In his duly celebrated volume, *The Footnote: A Curious History*,[114] Anthony Grafton charts and analyzes the emergence of 'the *historical* footnote' as that which serves to prove an argument, support a claim, and document sources for what is offered in the body of the text. There can be no doubt that the footnote emerged out of a long (cultural) history that serves the modern academic in ways that characterize and even identify the scholar as using particular methods that were not previously in play. In editorial practice, the footnote can be said to have a different character and history,[115] but as a modern convention, certainly in the popular consciousness of academics in Jewish studies, who appreciate the footnote as a device that mirrors the historical footnote, it is the means and statement of academic methodology that identifies the critical product. In other words, the footnote has afforded the modern scholar distance from the text presented in the center of the page, whether that be the text of the same author, or the primary source from antiquity which is being edited in a scholarly edition.

The 'modern footnote', as Grafton calls it, is part of a system of citation (and quotation), of linking evidence to the claim offered in the text above. My claim is that for editorial practice of medieval texts, the footnote is a strategic place on the page that continues earlier practices of intervention in the text and becomes part of the text such that its placement below is only in part a statement of difference and in fact masks at times its substantive place as part of the very text upon which it comments as its object. Grafton's excurses comes full circle when he argues that the footnote transforms the linear development of an argument from the flow of the written text line by line into a conversation between the structured parts of the text on the page.[116] He uses this phenomenon in order to uncover the functions of proofs and the illusion of

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[114] Cambridge 1997.

[115] For other approaches to the history of the footnote that take a wider view than that which defines Grafton's monographs see Chuck Zerby, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*, New York 2002. See also Antoine Compagnon, *Le seconde main ou le travail de la citation*, Paris 1979; Oliver Pollak, 'The Decline and Fall of Bottom Notes, op. cit., loc. cit., and a Century of the Chicago Manual of Style', *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 38 (2006), pp. 14-30.

[116] Ibid., p. 234.

proofs in explaining the roles and effects of texts of such a character. Critical thinking was both created by and has reflected upon this type of footnote, but it simultaneously served a political and cultural end as a means of isolating in substance and in name only the editor from the primary source.

The footnote is thus a marker of cultural identity for the scholar, and provides the construct, indeed the illusion, of difference with prior textual negotiations on the page, either those that are found within the earlier source or those not present in its earlier transformations of what is present. Modern editors see their editorial work, and relationship to the sources cited as being qualitatively different from the earlier histories of comments and interventions with text on the page. The footnote thus provides literal distance – in every sense: a cultural and spatial distinction from the words themselves – from the earlier source and seeks to remove the modern author and editor from the chain of interactions with the text. The division of the page, and the insertion of the superscripted number or other sign into the text as a referent that sends the reader of the author's text to a place outside of the text, but yet still on the page, constructs the reading of the two texts in relation to each other. This move presents the construct of the editor and scholar as 'the other', removed from the history that is being created by that very act. My claim is that when appreciated in this light, the footnote reveals the hidden agenda of modern scholarship as a culturally invested project that denies the continuum of textual negotiations that were part of the textual culture of the text's composition and transmission that in fact includes the very edition that seeks to place itself outside of this overarching genealogy.

The kabbalistic footnote, I will argue, is a spatial demotion from the privileged place of the gloss in the margin. A history of the kabbalistic footnote, or more precisely, the footnote on the page of the kabbalistic text, emerges from a history of manuscript production, learning and transmission, which mark, quite literally, the textual engagements of later figures who assume the position of author. As has been argued throughout this study, many of the textual notations perceived by the modern scholar as later *interventions* in the author's original text and intent were perceived of as being part of the continuous collective project of negotiating meaning with the text in efforts that included its rewriting, not necessarily viewed as corrections made by a late or external agents to its production and preservation. The modern academic footnote, which critiques the language of the text and notes other or better readings, is thus a cultural signpost of the modern resistance to the continuum of the textual process that was once accepted as an integrated act. The redefinition of

the page and the new status of the footnote thus marks the artificial construct of intervention, and ironically, intervention into the older fluidity of rewriting that now creates a textual stasis that may never have existed).

The notations that can be found in early printings of kabbalistic works include interlinear additions and changes to the text, marginalia and other comments that found their way into any open space on the page, often linked to a place in the existing text by recognized siglia, or other conventions of scribes. Later copies of these manuscripts intentionally incorporated these additions as integral parts of 'the work', and is perhaps better understood as some medieval understanding of the text that lies somewhere between our modern understanding of text and work. Many of these interpolations marked the transition to such additions with ambiguous markers such as ר"ל, or פי', which could be construed as an original digression of meaning or textual quality or that of a later hand. At times however, the later editors sought to include, within parentheses, diverging textual evidence gleaned from other witnesses, marking these variant readings as ס"א or נ"א, and at times in a different typeface. Citations from other contemporary authors were often introduced by the opening of a quote וז"ל and concluding with the words עכ"ל, all quite common in medieval manuscripts. Works that gained canonical status, such as the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*, were often cited by name, although references within these works, as pseudepigraphic texts, are often referred to openly.

The widespread impression is that the footnote is the sole property of modern academic scholarship, weighing in as a cultural signpost of academic methods and marking the edition as belonging to the university setting. In recording some significant features of the editing and presentation of kabbalistic texts in print, it will become possible to blur the boundaries of such a history. A sample presentation of editorial practice of kabbalistic literature can be gained from the first few editions of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, arguably the most sanctified and influential book of kabbalistic literature.

The first edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, printed in Mantua 1557,[117] is not the transcription of a single manuscript witness or textual tradition, but is an edition of a work that is integrated from various manuscript versions. The first edition includes the presentation of a different manuscript version in two

[117] See Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, p. 177; Marvin Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus*, Leiden-Boston 2004, volume one, p. 461.

columns and in separate type faces,[118] alternative readings of words and short phrases presented within the flow of the text in parentheses[119] and editorial notes in a smaller font concerning the arrangement and order of the text.[120] Some editorial comments are also offered within the body of the text introduced by the words אמר המגיה. A copy of the Mantua edition with copious notes in the hand of R. Menaḥem di Lonzano is housed in the National Library of Israel, a copy once owned by Scholem and which includes a number of notes in his hand as well.[121] Di Lonzano's notes are of extreme importance, including comments, corrections, alternative readings, and literary criticism regarding the organization of the text and missing sections.[122] There is no doubt that this edition with his notes should be reissued. While a facsimile version alone would immensely advance the study of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, an edition that would integrate these notes along those of the other editions and manuscripts would seek to restore the work, or more carefully formulated, track the history of the editing of *Tiqqunei Zohar* within its full transmission history, including, the manuscripts, printings and later notes.[123]

The second edition was published in Amsterdam, with the commentary of Ṣevi Hirsch Ḥotsch, in 1709, and presents the pagination of the Mantua edition in the running header. This edition was followed by two printings in 1719, one in Amsterdam and one in Ostrog (the latter was reprinted there with small corrections in Constantinople 1740), which show significant advances in the

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[118] See e.g. 5a, 29b-30b.

[119] ס"א, e.g. 15a.

[120] See fol. 26a.

[121] Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 28° 6562 (B396). Unfortunately a different copy without notes was scanned for the online database of rare books provided by the library: http://aleph500.huji.ac.il/nnl/dig/books/bk001758795.html. Both copies were owned by Scholem. The former includes a few hand notes and underlinings by Scholem (see especially fol. 120a regarding a manuscript that includes a missing passage which was noted by di Lonzano) and loose sheets in Scholem's handwriting. Scholem carefully studied this printing and the notes. Note for example his marginal notes, aside those of di Lonzano on fol 128a, comparing the text to that of Cordovero in *Pardes Rimmon*. Most unfortunately a binder of the volume cut some of di Lonzano's notes, e.g. fol. 104b.

[122] Almost every conceivable category of editorial note was offered in his hand notes. See for example fol. 78a where he unities two separate *tiqqunim*. A separate study would be required to seriously discuss his various notations.

[123] See further below, in chapter 5 on *Tiqqunei Zohar*.

critical methods of editing and presenting the text. This Amsterdam edition also preserves the pagination of the Mantua edition, while the Ostrog edition offers a chart of comparisons at the end of the volume. The Amsterdam edition appears to be far superior in the amount of textual information and types of apparatus it employs. Included in the margin of the Amsterdam edition is the commentary *Derekh 'Emet* (printed in Venice 1663), but more significantly, it offers textual criticism in the form of variants, corrections and editorial comments, using asterisks, and superscripted Hebrew letters for footnotes. In one case,[124] the Mantua edition had already offered a passage in two versions in parallel columns, so that the editor of the Amsterdam edition could comment on the variant in a footnote at the bottom of the page (see figures 4.3, 4.4). By comparison, the Ostrog edition also uses footnotes marked with Hebrew letters and asterisks. Similarly, some 11 years later in the Constantinople 1740 edition, which is a reproduction of the Ostrog edition, footnotes are once again used.

A basic inspection of the Mantua edition, a copy of which was annotated by di Lonzano, demonstrates that the Ostrog edition is a reproduction of the text from the Mantua edition, which was corrected according to his annotations or other manuscripts of the family that informed his annotations. Some corrections or notations were functionally interpreted as alternative readings offered in parentheses, following the text reproduced from the Mantua edition. Cross outs were omitted, but I noticed some readings marked by di Lonzano as from another book (א"ס), which were not included in the Ostrog edition. Similarly internal references that instruct the reader to compare other sections were not included (cf. fol. 102a). A consistent theory of how the Ostrog edition was edited from di Lonzano's copy cannot be ascertained. Either the editors were sloppy or possibly they worked from a similar source. A new edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar* as the work produced in the fourteenth century should thus base itself on the manuscript's sources and begin anew without the text of Mantua as its historical under layer!

The Amsterdam edition, also issued in 1719 also appears to have also been a reproduction of the Mantua text following the handwritten notes of di Lonzano. This edition, however, gave more weight to the Mantua edition, first by preserving its pagination and second, by offering many of the alternative readings and changes in the margins and in footnotes. Crossed out readings are often preserved in square brackets to demonstrate both the earlier version from

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[124] fols. 103b-104b. See the copy in the National Library of Israel, Scholem Library, R2278.

Mantua and di Lonzano's reading. Apparently the markings were divided by length as a practical matter, with minimal intervention of the text from Mantua, small changes in the margins and lengthier notes below. Biblical references that appeared in parentheses in Mantua were also removed to the margins in the Amsterdam edition. No attempt was therefore made to offer a 'clean text'. Instead, the layers of its history are preserved even if their sources are not revealed.

What is clear is that any new edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, as an improvement of the printed edition, or an edition that seeks to better produce the work that was created and/or received, must return to di Lonzano's copy and sift through his notes and understand how the Ostrog (and Amsterdam) editions were produced. It is widely assumed that with the inception of print, the printed text achieved a great deal of stability and hand notes became more increasingly rare, relative to manuscript transmission. I once followed the wide-spread notion that marginal glosses as well as interlinear corrections were viewed, and should be viewed, as particular moments in the printed text's reception, after the completion of the manuscript history of the work's transmission. This was based on the premise that there was no categorical difference between the fluidity of the text in the scribe's transcription and proofreading and the manuscript emendations offered by later readers who served as proofers and commentators to the text. Many examples could be cited to refute this, and in the present context, the first edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar* offers a very important test case.

Tiqqunei Zohar serves as a wonderful example for the entrance of the footnote into the printed page of a kabbalistic text. The issue at hand is, however, far greater than just this and my point is to relativize the various notations and treatments in order to break down the sharp divisions modern scholarship has offered, which I claim are largely artificial. That is, modern scholarship has acquisitioned the lower part of the page as the area of (academic) textual criticism, as if nothing of the sort had been done before.

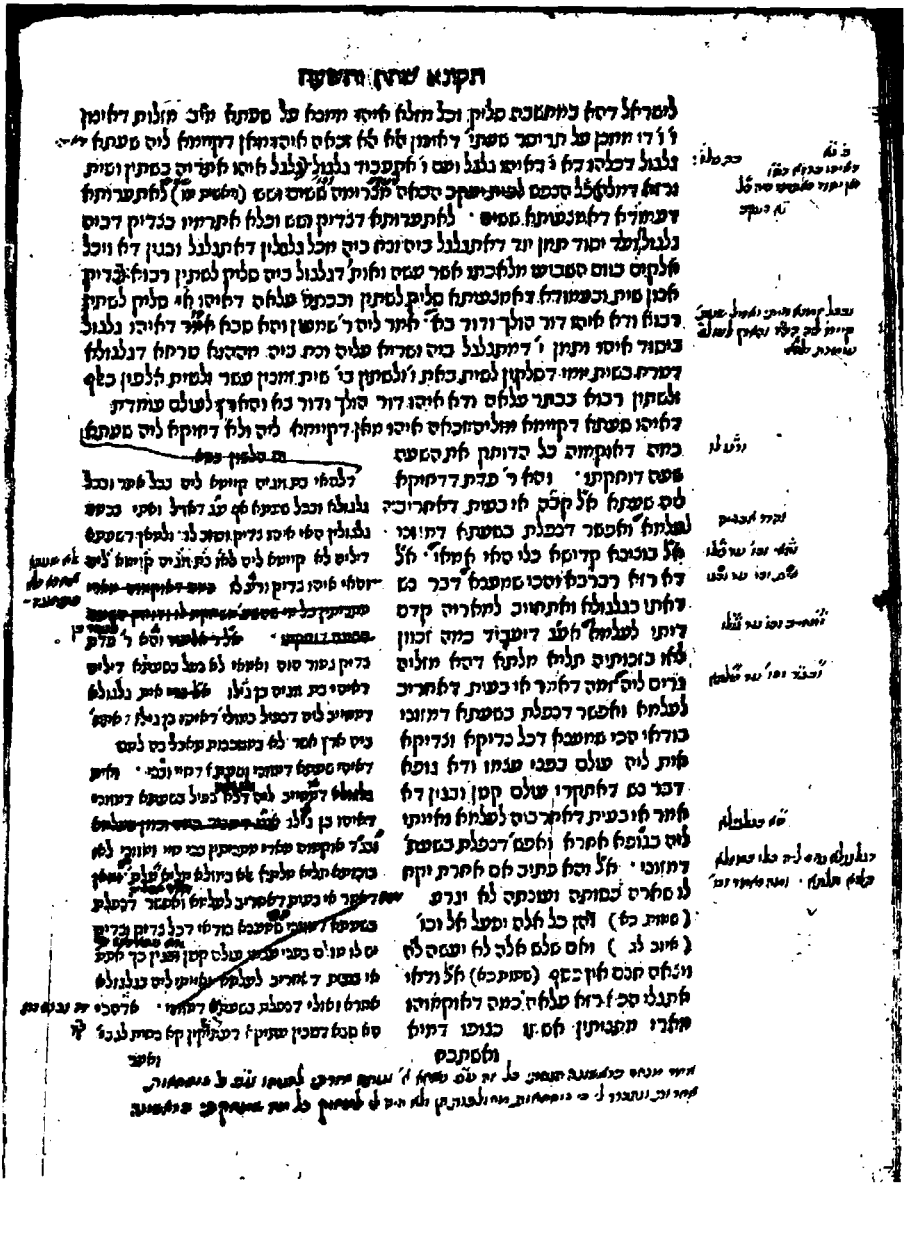

Figure 5.1: Tiqqunei Zohar, Mantua 1557, fol. 103b

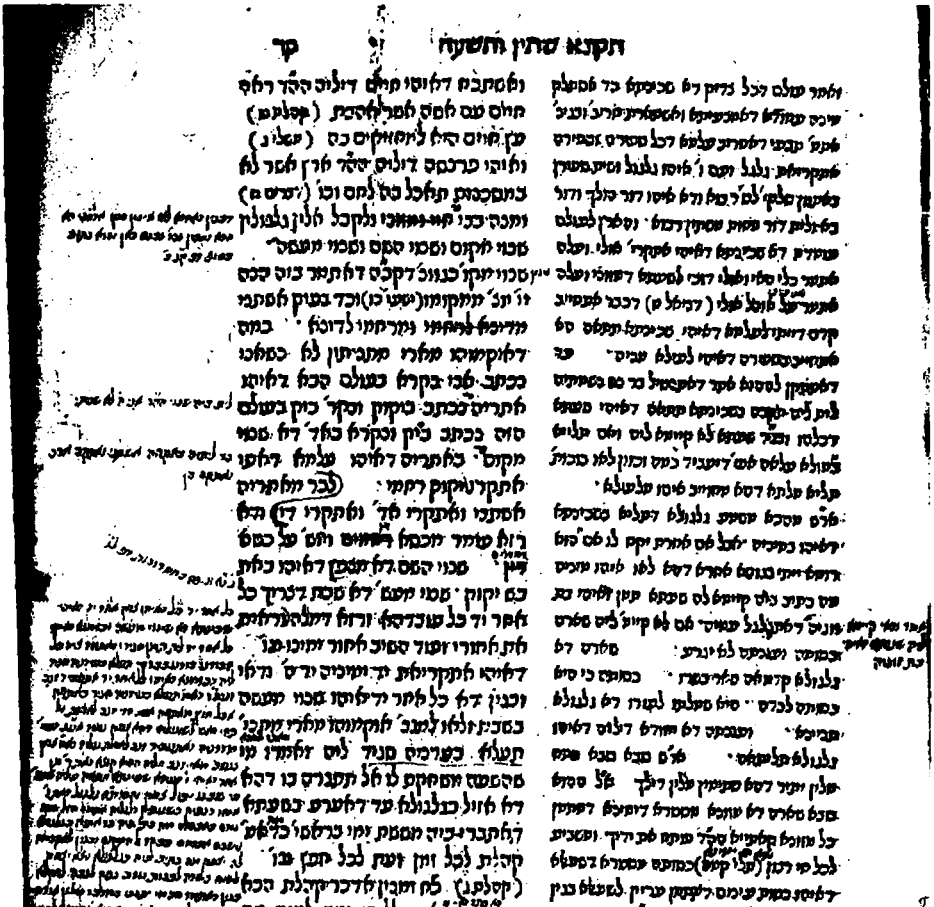

Figure 5.2: Tiqqunei Zohar, Mantua 1557, fol. 104a

תקונא שתין ותשעה

Figure 5.3: Tiqqunei Zohar, Amsterdam 1716, fol. 103b

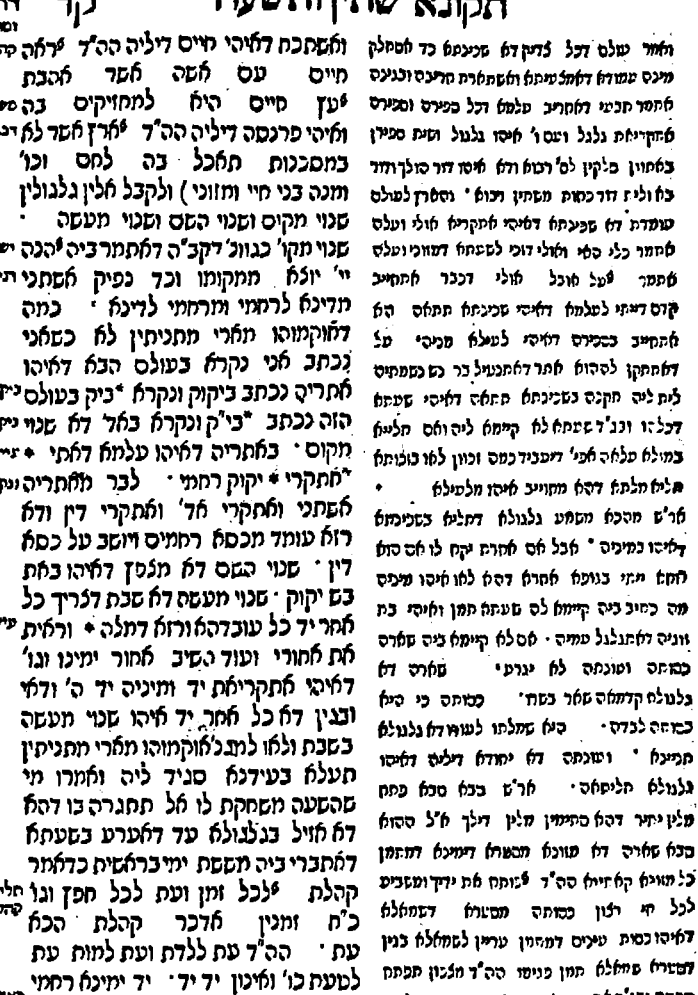

Figure 5.4 : *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Amsterdam 1716, fol. 104a

תקונא שתין ותשע

ביסוד ליסו • ותמן י׳ דמתגלגל כיס הדין עליה ומה כיס מסקולא טריחא דגלגולא
דטרח בשית יומי • דסלקין לשית כלה ו׳ • ולשתין בי׳ שית זמנין עשר • ולשית אלפין
באלף ולשתין רבוא בכתר עלאה ודא איהו דור הולך ודור כא והארץ לעולם עומדת
ובכל זמנא דאתי ואזיל בעתה קיימא ליה כס״ד והארץ לעולם עומדת • דלהאי כת
זוגיה קיימא ליה בכל לתר ובכל גבורה ובכל שעתא לף על גב דאזיל ואתי בכמה
גלגולין • הלי איהו נדיק וטוב לו • ומאן דשעתא דיליה לא קיימא ליה אלא שעתא
אחרא דלהו כת זוגיה קיימא ליה והאי איהו נדיק ורע לו • כמה דאוקמוה מארי
מתניתין כל מי שדוחק את שעה שעה דוחקתו • א״ל ר׳ אלעזר ושל ר״פדת נדיק
גמור הוא ואמאי לא בכל שעתא דיליה דאיהי כת זוגיה בן גילו • א״ל ברי • איתי
גלגולא דמחייב ליה דנפיל במזלא דאיהו בן גילו דאתמ׳ כיס אחרן לא במסכנות
תלכל כס נחש דאיהי שעתא דמזוני ושעתא דחיי ובני • ואיתי גלגולא דמחייב ליה
דלא נפיל בשעתא דמזוני דאיהי כת גילו • אע״ג דעביד כמה זכות בעלמא • ובג״ד
אוקמוה מארי מתניתין בני חיי ומזוני לאו בזכותא תליא מלתא אלא במזלא תליא
מלתא • דגלגולא גרים ליה כאלו במזלא תליא מלתא • ומה דאמר לי בעית דאחרייב
לעלמא ואפשר דנפלת בשעתא דמזוני • שמעא בודאי דכל נדיק ונדיק יש לו עולם
בפני עצמו דא בוקא דבר כם דאתקרי עולם קטן ובגין כך אתמר לי בעית דאחרייב
לעלמא ואייתי ליה בגלגולא אחרא ואולי דנפלת בשעתא דמזוני • אדהכי הא סבא
דסבין עתיקא דעתיקין קא נחית לגביה ואמר • עולם דכל נדיק דא שכינתא כד
אסתלק מינה עמודא דאמצעיתא ואשתארת חריבה • ובגינה אתמר תבעי דאחרייב
עלמא • דכל ספירה וספירה אתקריאת גבל • ועם ו׳ איהו גבול ושית ספירן באתוון
סלקין לס׳ רבוא • ודא איהו דור הולך ודור כא ולית דור פחות משתין רבוא • והארץ
לעולם עומדת דא שכינתא דאיהי אתקריאת אולי • ועלה אתמ׳ כולי האי ואולי דעבי
דיאלא ח לשעתא דמזוני • ועלה אתמר״ על אוכל אולי • דכבר אתחייב קדם דייתי לעלמא
דאיהי שכינתא תתאה • הא אתחייב בספיר׳ דאיהי לעילא תנים • עד דאתתקן להאוא
אתר דאתנטיל בר כם בהמתיב לית ליה תקנה בשכינתא תתאה דאיהי שעתא דכלסו
ובג״ד שעתא לא קיימא ליה • ואם תליא במזלא עלאה • אפילו דיעביד כמה זכות לאו
בזכותא תליא מלתא דהא אתחייב איהו מגעילא • אר״ם מסכא ומשמע גלגולא דתליא
בשכינתא דאיהו מינים • אבל אם אחרת יקח בו אם סטרא רוחא ייתי בגופא אחרא
דאיהו לאו איהו מינים מה כתיב כיס קיימא לא שעתא • תמן אוקמוה בת זוגי׳ דאתגלגל
עמיה • אם לא קיימא ליה אלהים בסותה ועונתה לא יגרע • שאיהו דא גלגול׳ קדמאה
שאר בשרו • בסותה כי שיא בסותה לבדה היא שמלתו לעורו דא גלגולא תניינא •
ועונתה אלהים יחודא דיליה דאיהו בגלגולא תליתאה אמר ר״ש סבא סבא פתח מלין
יתיר דשא שתימין מלין דילך • א״ל אסור סבא שאיהו דא מזונא מסטרא דימינא
דמתמן כל מזונא קא אתיא • אס״ד פותח את ידיך ומשביע לכל חי רצון • בסותה
מסטרא דשמאלא דאיהו בסות עינים דמתמן ערדין לשמאלא בגין דסטרא שמאלא
תמן פגימו • אס״ד מכסון תפתח ארעא • ובג״ד אתמר בינחק ויצחק כי זקן יצחק
וחכסין

Figure 5.5 : Tiqqunei Zohar, Ostrog 1716, fol. 100b

Figure 5.6: Tiqqunei Zohar, Ostrog 1716, fol. 101a

This formal structure of the academic footnote is, to my mind, in dialogue with previous forms of textual notation and criticism and seeks to distinguish itself as new or separate when it is clearly part of the ongoing history of textual negotiations within editorial practice. There can be no question that textual methodology has developed over time and that the academy has refined its methods with many important advances both technically and theoretically. These developments notwithstanding, the categories of textual engagements, at least in the case of manuscript reproduction and the transmission of kabbalistic texts through their printing in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, display all the features of modern scholarship. More surprising is the reversal of complexity and attention to detail in the variations of the manuscript traditions in the modern printings. While scholarship has yet to establish any text of *Tiqqunei Zohar* for critical purposes, it has relied on Margolioth's 1948 edition and numerous facsimile reprints, most likely because it is inexpensive and widely available. A hand note in Scholem's copy of Margolioth's edition comments that the pagination is similar to the Slavuta 1826 edition, which in turn returns to its source in the Ostrog, but not the Amsterdam 1719 edition. All this goes to show that the most basic work on what is arguably one of the most important and influential texts of all of Kabbalah has yet to be seriously investigated.[125]

The same processes of editing, publishing and adding marginal glosses, that in effect proofread and amend the printed editions, can be documented for the *Zohar to the Torah*.[126] The historical layering of the texts as appreciated from within the history of the editions reveals how later commentaries and ideologies, particularly the Luranically invested readings, were entered into the later editions, beginning in manuscripts copied in Safed and culminating in the

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[125] Of great help and importance in assessing the texts of the various editions of *Tiqqunei Zohar* are the tables presented in Yehuda Ashlag, *Sefer ha-Zohar... with the Wonderful Interpretations of the Sulam*, Jerusalem 1956, volume 1, pp. 12-26 [Hebrew] which includes comparisons to editions of both *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Zohar Ḥadash*.

[126] It is no coincidence that di Lonzano inserted copious notes and emendations to the second volume of the Mantua printing of the *Zohar*, 1559. This copy was purchased by Scholem (now in the National Library of Israel, Scholem Library R2146). Unfortunately many years ago it was rebound with various marginal notes cut when the margins were reduced by the binder. This volume too is of tremendous importance to deciphering the quality of the zoharic text, its transmission history and the history of its printing.

comments of the Gaon of Vilna and the Vilna printing that served as the base text for the most widely distributed editions in the twentieth century. In this context, Joseph Avivi has written about Moses Mizraḥi, who in Damascus between the years 1618 and 1635, added Lurianic comments to all three volumes of the Constantinople edition of the *Zohar*, published in 1736. Moses Mizraḥi had access to the copies of his contemporaries in Damascus, R. Ḥayyim Vital and R. Judah Mishnah. His unpublished corrections and additions to *Tiqqunei Zohar* can be found in the copy housed in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Mic 1741).[127]

The Amsterdam 1715 edition of the *Zohar* similarly marks a major turn in the critical appreciation of the text. As discussed elsewhere, this edition sought to display all the textual data from both the Cremona and Mantua editions. The Mantua edition was chosen as the base text and structural frame with the passages found exclusively in Cremona inserted into appendices at the end of each volume. Word by word comparisons with Cremona were not offered, but the Amsterdam edition is the first edition of the *Zohar* to insert various siglia, including superscripted Hebrew characters, in order to offer textual notes at the foot of the page. The footnotes are culled from R. Issakhar Baer's *Imrei Binah* (Prague 1611), a work which relied on R. Moses Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim*, and was first used in the Sulzbach 1684 printing of the *Zohar*,[128] the second reprint of the Cremona edition. According to the introduction superscripted letters refer to biblical verses and asterisks to Lurianic comments about the text. Corrections were offered in parentheses and omissions with square brackets, noted with a superscripted circle.[129] The margins contain the commentary *Derekh 'Emet* as well as scriptural citations and comments about variant versions. When necessary, *Derekh 'Emet* is also found at the foot of the

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[127] Avivi, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, vol. 3, pp. 1123-1129.

[128] There are three editions in this format, Cremona 1558; Lublin 1623-1624 and Sulzbach 1684. For greater detail see Gerhard Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, pp. 167-168; Boaz Huss, '"The Text and Context of the 1684 Sulzbach Edition of the Zohar', *Tradition, Heterodoxy, and Religious Culture; Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period*, ed. C. Goodblatt, H. Kreisel, Beer-Sheva 2006, pp. 117-138.

[129] The editor is clear present with the insertion of brackets (fol. 71a) and a superscripted circle directing the reader to the margin where the editor noted that the line should be omitted (ל"ג: עיין למט'), and refers to the versions in the commentary *Derekh 'Emet*.

page,[130] so that textual comments wrap around the body of the text. Indeed, in the printer's introduction, the editor praises the Sulzbach edition (despite various problems which he claims to improve upon) as the best printing but explains that all of the Lurianic works refer to the Mantua edition and the reprints according to its layout. Moreover, in order to include *Derekh 'Emet*, he reluctantly uses the same text and framework as his starting point. This is a major move that explains the dominance of the text of the Mantua edition in the numerous reprintings of the *Zohar* throughout the centuries. The kabbalists have known since the sixteenth century, what scholars have discovered only recently, that the Cremona edition contains a superior text. The initial commercial success of the Mantua edition, disseminated in numerous copies throughout various textual communities, afforded it a central place in the reception of the printed editions. Its centrality could not be uprooted without much work in relocating the various comments offered in the margins and to the pagination of the Mantua edition in later volumes of commentaries and related works. This was due in no small part to the Lurianic additions and commentaries that were structured around the Mantua edition. It is thus an ironic turn that modern scholarship which otherwise has been conscious about its agenda to separate out the Lurianic ideological reinterpretation of zoharic literature in its attempt to contextualize the *Zohar* within its Castilian context has relied on the editions that have been informed by these very kabbalists.

I add that unfortunately scholarship has not freed itself from the similar bias of privileging the popular over the qualitatively superior text. Again, for scholarship manuscripts should be privileged over the printed text. To a certain degree, the Cremona and Mantua editions mark the end of the *Zohar*'s fluidity, establishing the canonical text and inventing its form as a book. Accordingly, these editions should be studied for the particular editorial moves they made in negotiating multiple manuscripts and textual traditions to produce a new and synthetic version. Therefore, one could argue that any serious textual treatment of zoharic literature would utilize the manuscript tradition to uncover what existed prior to the influence of the printed formats. I have argued, nevertheless, that the *Zohar is a series of fluid literary phenomena* that were engendered from its earliest moments and on through present times, and in this sense, the borders between manuscript and print are blurred, as in the case of di Lonzano where the handwritten marginalia instill new life in the printed text.

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[130] See e.g. vol. 1, fols. 8a, 82a.

The dynamics of textual variation in manuscript reproduction and the revisions that mark handwritten documents should be seen to extend in many cases to the printed medium, in its interaction with handwritten notes and the re-editing of the printed edition in future printings.[131] The Gaon of Vilna thus marks a settling and integration of these methods, using manuscripts and independent criticism to remark on the text. In this light, the process of textual criticism, which includes the establishment of (the) text, would include Gershom Scholem's notes as reproduced in the facsimile edition of his personal copy. I note here the existence of an additional volume of *Tiqqunei Zohar* from Kopyst 1825, which is replete with such hand notes by Scholem,[132] and the Vilna 1884 edition of *Zohar Ḥadash* which he rebound with blank sheets, interleafed for his copious notes to these texts which he added throughout his life.[133]

The Jerusalem 1874 edition of *Sefer Yeṣira* includes footnotes to the commentary of the Gaon of Vilna, and some to the text of *Sefer Yeṣira* as well, offered by the insertion of Hebrew letters within parentheses. Similarly, in the widely disseminated Vilna 1884 edition, asterisks within the text of *Sefer Yeṣira* direct the reader to textual footnotes regarding the text of the first edition of Mantua 1562,[134] alongside editorial comments about what should be the correct text [*ha-nosḥa ha-nekhona*].[135] So too this edition, and not the Jerusalem edition implements alternative readings with rounded and square parentheses.[136] My first interest here is to demonstrate that the types of decisions made about text in modern times can be found in medieval manuscripts. My second interest is to call into question the difference between marginal and interlinear glosses as well as comments and footnotes. The positioning of a note at the bottom of the page does not guarantee distance that removes the editor from intervention with the text. Marginalia can and should be considered as important as footnotes, and the content and quality of this textual engagement should determine for our purposes the character of the

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131 See Yehoshua Mondshine, 'On the Edition of *Torah Or*', *'Alei Sefer* 9 (1981), pp. 160-167 [Hebrew], responding to the earlier study of Moshe Hallamish, 'On the Editions of *Torah Or*', *'Alei Sefer* 5 (1978), pp. 176-181 [Hebrew].

132 Scholem Library #2261.

133 Scholem Library #2260.

134 fol. 36b, 38b.

135 fol. 35a

136 2:6 fol. 83a, see also 4:1, fol.48b.

relationship to the source that is presented and sculpted into a particular intention by the editor and publisher.[137]

The difference between the original intent of a text and the later reader and editor who understands the text and reacts to it and from within the text has been shown throughout this volume to be a rather fluid dynamic which calls into question any clearly demarcated attempt to qualify the various engagements. My overriding thesis has been to appreciate the life of a text outside of a framing of its *history* as origin and reception. In Jewish sources, a full survey would begin most significantly with Michael Fishbane's study of inner-biblical interpretation,[138] which appreciated the revision and reaction to earlier texts, uncovering the pre-history and formative history that lies within the canon. The identification of intrusive glosses reveals the dynamic nature of the text that ultimately included a history of its readers as authors who shaped or reacted within the text to the textual tradition in its transmission and formation. Following Fishbane's studies and the development of Jewish hermeneutics historically, we see that midrashic and kabbalistic literature each continue to engage and complement the biblical text and are in their own right open texts in various senses, often anthologies of anthologies of a continuous project to re-write scripture and re-write their own re-writing about the same.

In expanding the frame of what constitutes the text and breaking down the identities between the author, transmitter and commentator, in the case of kabbalistic literature, it is appropriate to cast this project as an appreciation of *kabbalistic paratext*. From early Jewish mystical literature and on through late printed editions of kabbalistic works, there are signs and graphic contributions to the material presentation of these texts, which shape the intention of how the reader can and is expected to understands what he or she reads.[139] Mention

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[137] See H.J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, New Haven and London 2001. See especially 'Motives for Marginalia' on pp. 81-100 where he categorizes various types of reactions and interactions with the body of the text. See also William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, Philadelphia 2008.

[138] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1985. idem, 'Inner-Biblical Exegesis' in Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300), in co-operation with Ch. Brekelmans and M. Haran, ed. Magne Sæbø, Part 1, Antiquity, Göttingen 1996, pp. 33-48.

[139] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Richard Macksey, Cambridge 1997. On indexing as paratext, see Nancy C. Mulvany, *Indexing Books*, second edition, Chicago and London 2005, p. 6; L.

should be made in this context of Shlomo Mussayef's edition of Hekhalot literature in his *Merkavah Shelemah*.[140] Firstly, Mussayef faithfully presented the section divisions entered into the text by the German Pietists, with centered subtitles. More importantly, he divided the page horizontally providing other and parallel texts below the main text, either as a footnote to the base text or as a synoptic edition, basically columns presented horizontally.

The 1883 edition of the *Book Bahir*, which includes the commentary *Or ha-Ganuz* and notes from the Gaon of Vilna, marks a significant turn in the edition of the work. This edition offers superscripted Hebrew letters for the scriptural references provided immediately below the text of the *Bahir*. These notes are titled '*Or Bahir*', formally presented as a commentary, even if the content is the textual data alone. A second set of notes, also presented as the commentary *Hegahot ha-Gra* is referred to in the text by superscripted Hebrew letters in a Sephardic script (Rashi typeface). Here the Gaon of Vilna comments and critiques the text, offering corrections and suggestions to the locutions from his own learning and insight, decidedly not from a comparison of manuscript sources. His method, as evidenced by the edition of this canonical work of kabbalistic literature is testimony to an Early Modern turn in philological method and editorial practice. Finally, in consort with Grafton's project, we turn to Elyaqim Milzahagi's numerous and voluminous works on kabbalistic literature, many of which were lost. Active in the nineteenth century and outside of academic circles, Milzahagi offered literary analysis about major kabbalistic works and footnoted his claims in his manuscript works, taking on much of the form and methods of what would later became modern scholarship in the university.

Marie Battiste, 'Print Culture and Decolonizing the University: Indigenizing the Page, Part 1', and M. Findlay, 'Print Culture and Decolonizing the University: Indigenizing the Page, Part 2', in: *The Future of the Page*, ed. P. Stoicheff, A. Taylor, Toronto 2004, pp. 11-124, 125-142. Such an appreciation of scholarly apparatus in modern editions of medieval texts can highlight the contribution of academic editorial practice and then place it on a continuum of paratextual material added by scribes in the transmission history of a work in manuscript form. Little has been written on the application of Genette's theories in the context of Hebrew literature. For a few exceptions see Elisabeth Hollender, *Piyyut Commentary in Medieval Ashkenaz*, Berlin-New York 2008, pp. 83-126; Shlomo Berger, 'On the Use of Hebrew Words in Parenthesis in a Yiddish Text: the Case of *Keter Malkhut* (Amsterdam 1673)', *Zutot* 3 (2003), pp. 34-39.

[140] Jerusalem 1921.

כתיב "עושה אור כשלהבה:בא [כא] אי"ר אמוראי נ"ע
היכן הוא א"ל בארץ [כב] דרש ר' ישמעאל לר"ע
מ"ד את השמים ואת הארץ אלמלא לא נאמר
את היינו אומרים שמים וארץ אלוהות הן א"ל
הקבה"ה נגעת (ולא פגעת) אבל לא ברית כן
דברת אבל את לדבות חכמה ולבנה כוכבים
ומזלות ואת לדבות אילנות ודשאים הן עדן א"ל
הכתיב והשליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל וא"כ
נפלו א"ל אם קרו לא שנו ואם שנו לא שלשה
מלא"ד למלך שזרעה לו עפרה נאה על ראשו
מלת נאה בבתפיו ובא לו שמועה רעה והשליך
העפרה מעל ראשו והמלת מלפניו: כב [כג] שאלו
מפני מה צורת חי"ת פתוח ונקודה ב"פתוחה קמץ "א"ל
מפני שכל הדרגות סתומות ואין מרחה צפון שהיא
פתוחה למזרח ולרע א"ל למזרחה והכתיב והנה רוח
סערה בא מן הצפון ענן גדול ואש מתלקחת ואין
אש אלא הרקיעא דכתיב ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל

תורה אור ה פסלים קי: ו מיכה כ: ז מיכה מ: ח שמות לב: ט תהלים כד:

הגהות הגר"א [כג] אי"ר אמוראי נ"ע היכן הוא א"ל בארץ. ע"ל למטה קודם א"ל הכתיב והשליך: [כד] שאל רי"י את ר"ע מ"מ
את השמים ואת הארץ הכתיב לא נגעת אלא אלמלא כו' א"ל הקבה"ה נגעת אבל את לדבות כו' א"ל אם
קרית לא שנית ואם שנית לא שלשת ט': [כה] שאלו תלמידיו מפני מה צורת ב פתוח א"ל לא יעשה עבדך דבר זה
לפולם כו'. כמ"ל: [כו] שאלו תלמידיו מפני מה ת"א פתוח מן הצד כזה ה"ן א"ל מפני שהיא נקודה כפתוח קמן שנאמר פתוחי
עולם שם פתוח לפשלת פתוחי לפשה ומאי פתוח ומאי פתוח הוא השער לגלגל עליהם כו': כז
אור הגנוז

לפוה"ל כנה מיניך דומות מהבלמה נתלג ל"ח ומשלמו מוד ו'
מלקים נתלר נדול ומפה סקרע כו' מכות מתלור מגדול לנלמס
מה נלכן ו' מלקים לף כתן ו' חלקים מהיין דזנמת על מפלה
ונכן נתחמו ו' קלות ומפתה לם מתרם כו' קלות עמן נגמלה
והנגדים כמ"ת והגלה ושכוח ושיכול ומכלות בכללה פוד ותם
כו' קלות שמוא דום ומחם מחרת תפרה לפון ודדום תוכל ולין
סיוק: כא אי"ר אמוראי נ"ע היכן הוא. פי' מלם כגן ב נמדן
ידפנו עלקה מגדישות מקום מעמתר ויקפ כי תלנים גן נמדן
מקדם פי' מהיכן לקחם מן מהבלה מעקרא קדם תמנם נפסם
לא ידענו היכן נמדם: כתרן פי' נמפלה מלקלמת תרן ומה
תופן מ' נתרן ופו' מגמיקה מידלם עם מגמיקות תמר כו
מקדם. **) [דהם כיס כ"ישמעאל נל"ש דמלין ומילנות היכן נעמס
פי' דמלין ביקוד מלין לך כל מעגר מלמקה מלין מר מ' מלמפלה
מכה מתמו ומומר לו נדל מעמתר מדנמת מקום מתים לם מגים
מעמנו נתרן וקנטלוגות ומה מלינן בכר נתלמרי לפיו מ"ל נתרן
פי' מס נמוגי' נתרן ומן]: מגלא ל' ישמעאל נל"ש מתי לם המגים
ומת מתרן (ל"ל) [מ"ן] מלמלה לא נתמר לת המגים ומת כו':
מגרות הן. פי' לם מה תמר נגלמים כרם מלגים המגים ומרן
מיתי לתמר המגים ומרן נגלו מגרותם ומה מיגו כי מס יולנים
ומוקים ומה נולים כי כל ילינה ומגיה נתמר מל המגים ומסרן
ל"ל ה"ת ומפנת למגם נגיתם ילמר מל מלגים נגד ל"ל מגיגה
מגם ה"מגה: מ"ל המגדה עגמת. פי' מגר ומה נלמ בירכת (מדת
כיסד) [הכוד]:בן דנגת. פי' גם מה מדנגת מגת מה מה מגמ לת
המגים לנגות מגה ולנגה מכוכבים ומאות פי' מגם בכלל נג"ד
פפל"ם ז' מוכבים ונם בכלל הו"ת מגל"ם נל"ם מלל"ם ל"ב מגיות
מם ל"ב מגות **). כי כל מלו מן המגים ל"ל מפל: ומם מתרן.
לנגות מילנות ומפלין ונן פדן מגם נמגים נמגמת: מ"ל ומה
מגיב מגלי המגים מרן מפגרת ומלל. נמי דנגיך מגגן
נמוש נתרן ל"ב נגם כמוגבן נקגנו ומגמה: מלה"ל נמלך מגים
מגמת נמה מל לחגי ומגים נמה בגמיפיו ונלם מגומה ומה ל"ל
מוכן מגגה:בגליך מגמים מגל נחגו. פי' מגל"מ: והגליך המגלה
מגמיגו (ס"מ מכתביו)אגל לא המגיגה: כב שאלו לו מ"מ מ"מ
*) פי' בגוגל מגת. **) זה מגר בגהיר מגנ. ***) נמ"ם נפ"ד ונמ"ם נמ"ש.

אותם ומומתו א"ל לא קשיא כאן בזמן שישראל
עושין רצונו של מקום כאן כשאין ישראל עושין רצונו
בזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו אש קרובה ובזמן
שעושין רצונו מדת הרחמים מתגלגלת ומובבת
תח"ד "נושא עון ועובר על פשע משל למלך שרצה
לדחות את עבדיו וליסרם עמד הבמון אחד ושאל
על מח א"ל על כן א"ל לא עשו עבדיך דבר זה
מעולם ואני ערב לך בהם ואתה תבדוק אותיתם
בין כך ובין כך שכבת חמת המלך: כב [כו] שאלו
תלמידיו ואמרו מפני מה ד' עבה מן הצד כזה ד
אמר להם מפני המגדל שהיא בפתח קמן שנאמר
פתוחי עולם שם שם פתח למעלה וסגול למטה
ובאמצע עבה מאי פתח פתח ומאי פתח הוא רוח
צפונית שהוא פתוח לכל באי עולם מן השער שיצא
הרע יוצא הטוב ומה טוב לגלג עליהם הלא
אמרתי לכם פתח קמן אמרו לו שכתבו שנה לנו
שנה לתם למלך שהיה לו כבא לפעמים לוקח

5. *Intention and the Subject: The Kabbalists in their Own Eyes and their Re/Presentation in Scholarship*

Intentionalist hermeneutics appreciates the text as the expression of the subject, whether that be the author or editor who forwards a particular idea or meaning through a text. While the medieval kabbalist does not often show signs of knowingly participating in these scholarly constructs, and certainly is not aware of the historically placed emergence of the individual and subject in early modern times, the production of pseudepigraphic texts might indicate a certain awareness of the gap between the (early or original) intention and the received text by removing the medieval figure from the equation. This is in part an argument from silence, as I am suggesting an unstated awareness based upon style and literary form. Certainly, within the early history of Jewish mysticism, texts were not produced by 'authors' and their texts were respected as stable, static entities throughout their transmission history. Little has changed from antiquity through the rise of Jewish esotericism in medieval Germany and France.

Here, we might consider a series of texts which fall on the line between pseudepigraphy and aggressive editing. In these cases, the construct of a forgery serves as too clear-cut a determination to appreciate the intentions of those who produced such texts, as well as the literary phenomenon of the re-use, re-shaping and imitation of earlier styles and written traditions. The first example is *Sefer ha-Ḥokhmah*, which for years was considered by scholarship to be the authentic work of R. Eleazar of Worms. Much to the embarrassment of the academy, David Segal has reassessed the academic consensus with striking findings about the figure, R. Azriel ben Eliezer, who 'forged' [*silef*] the work and attributed it to the main literary figure of German pietism.[141] Nevertheless, the final word has not been written on this text, as older material was reworked, imitations added and traditions from other schools edited into

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[141] David Segal, *Sefer Sodei Razei Semukhin*, second edition, Jerusalem 2001 [Hebrew]. See Joseph Dan, 'R. Eleazar of Worms' *Sefer ha-Ḥokhma*', *Zion* 29 (1964), pp. 168-181 and Asi Farber-Ginat, 'The Concept of the Merkabah in Thirteenth-Century Jewish Esotericism: *Sod ha-'Egoz* and Its Development', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986 [Hebrew], who wrote about the 'proto-kabbalistic' symbolism and the various possibilities of whether R. Eleazar of Worms mechanically copied such terminology and ideas without it having an effect upon him. See further Elliot Wolfson, 'The Image of Jacob Engraved upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists', *Along the Path*, p. 151 n. 206.

this literary construction. The point here is that we have a multi-faceted phenomenon for which no single characterization is sufficient. While scholars and critics of all types today are interested in cataloging works as either authentic or forged, a more subtle approach will be more fruitful in identifying the editorial behavior and privileging such an assessment over the characterization of the final product and cultural reception of the work in popular consciousness. This work should thus be placed upon a spectrum of the uses of pseudepigraphy, which overlap at times with aggressive editing.

Developing the character and role of pseudepigraphy further, beyond that suggested in the previous chapter, we may wish to consider whether in some cases both author and audience understood pseudepigraphy as a literary device, that was initially adopted by the writer as neither forgery, authentic invention nor were these writings attributed to the receiving of divine or ancient traditions. I am suggesting a playful literary streak within the consciousness of medieval authorship of the Jewish mystical tradition that entertained, allowed, and in some cases encouraged an 'author' to step out of his (personal) identity and merge with that of a known or invented source or figure of the past. This idea builds on Matt's insightful observations about the self-awareness of the ancient and the new in the *Zohar's* locution,[142] but it takes this tension in a new direction. In my understanding, this historical self-awareness was not an occasional slip that rose to the surface of the text. Similarly, this tension mot formulated as a contradiction, in paradoxical statements indicating ambivalence or the initial signs of their awareness that two distinct positions were in conflict with each other. Instead, my reading suggests that the kabbalists were very much at home, and therefore self-aware, with the apparent contradiction in their writing (new) texts in the name and style of ancient traditions and that they presumed that their readers shared in this understanding.

To illustrate the point, let us revisit the most striking statement of literary self-awareness by a kabbalist, that of R. Jacob ben Sheshet who wrote in his *'Emunah ve-ha-Biṭṭaḥon*: 'If I had not said this anew, from my own mind, I would maintain that it was a tradition [*halakhah*] given to Moses at Sinai'.[143]

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[142] Matt, 'New-Ancient Words'; idem, '*Matnita Dilan*'.

[143] *'Emunah ve-ha-Biṭṭaḥon*, chapter 5, published in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Chavel, ch. 5, vol. 2, p. 370. See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 120; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 376 n. 30; Daniel Matt, 'The Mystic and the *Mizwot*', *Jewish Spirituality From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green, New York 1987, p.

Here, R. Jacob ben Sheshet is openly stating the status and value, not the origin, of his insight, equating its authority against the historical frame of which is he aware. Note by comparison the appropriation of his phrasing by R. Menaḥem Recanati who, when writing his *Rationales of the Commandments*, cites the earlier work of R. Ezra of Gerona and writes:

> But everything that I innovate about them [the commandments], I say that were it not for the hidden secret contained within them, it would have been worthy to provide the rationale that I will mention. And all of this is because I have not received these rationales from the mouth of a wise kabbalist, because had I received them, I would have said that they were the tradition [*halakhah*] of Moses at Sinai, even though the majority of the matters that I explain are hinted at in the *Book Bahir* and also in the great *Book of the Zohar*, and in *Genesis Rabba* and in the Midrash[im] of our Sages, may their memories be blessed, as I will cite as the help that I receive from the books.[144]

I do not understand this passage as a radical departure from the comment of R. Jacob ben Sheshet, but rather as an amplification of his intent. The two passages share the notion that the figures of ancient times orally exchanged and invested in writing, through veiled references, the secrets that the medieval kabbalists expose and detail in their works. Recanati has thus collapsed together the three categories of ancient oral traditions, ancient texts and the new compositions of the kabbalists. What we surmise from this move is that the historical periodization that marks a modern, and not incidentally, an academic appreciation of pseudepigraphy, is turned against itself so that the difference of ancient and new provides the opportunity to exegetically affirm the continuity between the bodies of literature. Here we might recall the earlier discussion about the apparent internal references within the zoharic literature,[145] such as 'this verse as has already been established' (האי קרא אוקמוה), which should be re-evaluated, I argue, as references to discussion in Rabbinic literature, and not to other sections of the zoharic literary project. Such statements demonstrate the sense of pseudepigraphy that I am arguing, namely that the awareness that is shared with the readers is one of a concerted attempt, through writing, to

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379; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 84; idem, 'Kabbalah and Elites', p. 14; Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism', pp. 78-79.

[144] R. Menaḥem Recanati, *Rationales of the Commandments*, ed. S. Lieberman, London 1963, p. 11.

[145] See chapter 4, p. 335 n. 234.

connect with the spirit of ancient documents in revealing that which was concealed and left implicit in biblical and rabbinic texts and which requires the explicit literary efforts of kabbalists to unfold it and to do so by continuing their discourse and style.

And note that in many cases the names of Tannaitic figures and ancient books were invented, playing simultaneously with all that was familiar and foreign to the readership. Some examples worth citing here are the Geonic texts penned by R. Moses de León, *Sefer Ginat Beitan*,[146] and the many sources cited by R. Moses Botriel in his *Commentary to Sefer Yeṣira*.[147] My reassessment of zoharic pseudepigraphy, including the works of R. Moses de León, suggests that it was an enthusiastic effort, prompted by the self-granted literary license to write from within the identity of what these writers so passionately believed to have emerged from those figures and times. Botriel's example breaks from this mentality, only because he formally cited countless *works* that existed only in his religious, and literary, imagination. The final example cited, *Ginat Beitan*, was, despite the well-intention assessment of Ephraim Gottlieb, arguably not a case of a 'literary fiction' or 'forgery'. Rather, as he has shown, the work, as an anthology, imitation and reworking of known texts, embodies the spirit of textuality in the Middle Ages, which does not always conform to the expectations and natural connection between an individual and the integrity of the work he produced. Close in spirit and provenance are the countless treatises attributed to Nahmanides going back to manuscripts dated as early as the end of the thirteenth century!

In the cultural world of manuscript reproduction and transmission, no less than in many circles today, the furtherance of a work in a community of readers, and in fact a sign of its confirmation as a significant work, is the attribution, however groundless, to a known figure who did write the work.[148]

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[146] Efraim Gottlieb, 'The Two Commentaries to *Ginat Beitan* by R. Isaac ben Ṭodros and R. Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon – Forgeries', *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, ed. Joseph Hacker, Tel Aviv 1976, pp. 477-507 [Hebrew].

[147] See Elliot Wolfson, 'Hai Gaon's Letter and Commentary on *'Aleynu*: Further Evidence of Moses de León's Pseudepigraphic Activity', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 81 (1991), pp. 365-410; Tziporah Brody, 'Rabbi Moses Botarel: His Commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* and the Image of Abu Aharon', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 20 = *Gershom Scholem (1897-1982): In Memoriam*, ed. J. Dan, pp. 159-206 [Hebrew].

[148] See the related discussion of Nahum Rakover, *Copyright in Jewish Sources*, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 27-30 [Hebrew], who shows rabbinic precedents for attibuting

Other examples include the need to delineate what is an authentic work of a particular figure as against anthologies, editings and rephrasings of earlier formulation, which, of course, could all be the product of a single individual.[149] Scholarship has thus been too eager to extend its epistemological assumptions, the categories of its historicism and the mentality of cataloging a history of texts to the intentions of the textual practices of scribes and students of kabbalistic texts in the Middle Ages. Through these examples of enthusiastic editing and invention, pseudepigraphy can be cast in a new light, subsumed into the category of editing and revision.

Let us re-evaluate the positivistic evaluations of historical authenticity from another angle, and consider the ways in which modern scholarship categorizes the nature of the use of earlier texts by medieval kabbalists. My aim here is to identify the misrecognition of the function of text and textual citation by the kabbalists in the mindset of modern scholarship. Take for example the erudite discussion of Isaiah Tishby in his brief study of 'Passages from the *Book Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* in *Sefer ha-Ṣiyyoni*',[150] where he writes:

> The copying of passages of one book into another without reference to their source is a [widespread] phenomenon in the Middle Ages, especially in kabbalistic literature. There are many reasons for this and space does not provide for a [full] accounting. In any event, it is a fact, that every kabbalists extensively cited the words of his predecessors either verbatim or in some other form, and on the whole, without citing them in the name of their authors. In general, this should not be seen as a statement of ill will, but the [common] practice of authors in this period. Nevertheless, there are a number of books, such as *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *Sefer ha-Peliah*, in which their authors intentionally hid their sources. In such books, it is not difficult to catch the author in his offense, because they have embossed with the stamp of plagiarism.[151]

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traditions perceived to be highly important to respected figures, who were not their source.

[149] Joseph Weiss, 'Is the Hasidic Book "*Kethoneth Passim*" a Literary Forgery', *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1958), pp. 81-83. See also my discussion in *R. Asher ben David*, where I present various suggestions regarding the short, middle and long versions of this texts and work.

[150] *Qiryat Sefer* 19 (1942-1943), pp. 55-57 [Hebrew].

[151] Ibid., p. 55. On Ṣiyyoni's library see Heidi Laura, 'The Ashkenazi Kabbalah of R. Menahem Ziyyoni', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2005, pp. 9-17. On the

Tishby misses the point, I believe, in casting modern conceptions of the author and his text onto the medieval and kabbalistic uses of textual traditions, and so frames his discussion in ethical concepts and terms such as responsibility, honesty, 'offenses' and 'plagiarism'. In the continuation of his study, he focuses on the ways in which the passages from *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* were altered to mask their source from the reader so that the author could appropriate them for his own work and authorship, stealing, as it were, the words of another. Tishby seeks to demonstrate that this case is different from those in which the author consistently ignored his sources when citing extensive sections because in the opening pages of his book, Menaḥem Ṣiyyoni, named the library of the works at his disposal. Therefore, Tishby concludes that the altering of the passages shows malicious intent on behalf of the author, that he 'knowingly concealed the sources' he used.

My claim is that these concepts of plagiarism and the standards and expectations of how a medieval kabbalist *should* cite sources are anachronistic and presume constructs and conventions about authorship and literature that were developed at a later time. This is not to say, of course, that one cannot muster up plenty of examples from medieval kabbalistic works where sources are cited by name. Rather, the general impression one does receive from a reading of this form of medieval literature is a sense that texts were often produced and received as an ongoing discussion of engagements with the previous heritage and growing library of texts, such that unattributed citation, paraphrasing, free appropriation, adaptation, and reworking of earlier sources was part and parcel of this writing as an ongoing and collective project. To impose categories that draw the line between the old and the new work, as a protected source which necessarily preserves and asserts its independence and identity from later works and texts of a particular discourse is tantamount to misrecognizing the nature of kabbalistic writing.

Most kabbalistic texts were therefore written anonymously, describing the heavens abstractly and not as experienced by the mystic. It is here that we can

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sources of *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *Sefer ha-Peliah*, see Michal Oron, '*Sefer ha-Peli'ah* and *Sefer ha-Qanah*: Their Kabbalistic Principles, Social and Religious Criticism and Literary Composition, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980 (and published in facsimile, Jerusalem 1982), pp. 71-115 [Hebrew]. See especially p. 71 and p. 84 n. 2 for different characterizations of these uses of earlier sources, where Cordovero discusses copying (possibly, reproducing) sources [*ve-he-'etiq*] and Jellenik terms the author a thief [*ganav*].

consider kabbalistic texts that lack authorship, not that their authors have yet to be identified or that the information is forever lost, but rather to remove the consideration or category of authorship in evaluating the origin of the text or the process of constructing meaning from a text.[152] To read a kabbalistic text of some length and extract meaning from it – for example the type of theosophy, the role of theurgy or messianism, or the identification of the constituent parts of a myth[153] – all require the organization and transformation of the text into a work. While to some the existence of a work implies authorial intent, namely the personality of an author behind the ideas expressed therein, it could equally be argued that alternative hermeneutic assumptions afford reading the work as a text in its own right.

The approach that views texts as a work is clearly invested in modern scholarly assumptions of hermeneutics, culture and literature. At this juncture, therefore, it would be fruitful to compare this approach to the medieval kabbalists in appreciating the gap between the two. A good starting point for such an inquiry is the 'self-perception' of the kabbalist in relation to the documents that he creates. Of course, such psychological and textual terms as self-perception and documents are anachronistic to the medieval mind. This is true for most of the theosophic kabbalists. Exceptions to this rule are the works composed in the first person by a number of kabbalists, some of whom wrote mystical diaries,[154] but most importantly, R. Abraham Abulafia who disseminated his Ecstatic Kabbalah with dozens of works, many of which describe his personal experiences as an individual and contain biographic detail. In the most revealing work, *Sefer ha-'Edut*, in which he recounts of his attempt to speak with the Pope Nicholas III, he writes about the concept of meaning, and directly expresses and defends the construction of meaning as intended by an author in a work defined by literary boundaries. I will cite this remarkable statement in its larger context of a passage about meaning that is rendered through the lens of the plain and esoteric hermeneutics that are applied to text:

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[152] Greetham, Theories of the Text, p. 49. See also John Mullan, Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature, Princeton 2008.

[153] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', as cited in chapter 1, note 53.

[154] Michal Kushnir-Oron, 'Autobiographical Elements in the Writings of Kabbalists from the Generation of the Expulsion', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), pp. 102–111; Morris Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, New York 1999.

> Raziel said: On the fifth month, which is the month of *'Av*, on its second day, God showed me two visions in one form. Know that regarding what a prophet testifies to, which is a vision or a dream or a parable, and the like, there is no need for someone to take issue with his words, because the words that come from his mouth are equal to those of a hundred witnesses. Nevertheless, all of the points of disagreement occur where one sees that his words should be taken in their plain sense. Therefore, one should interpret his words in their plan sense and according to their hidden meaning. And even when they are rendered according to their plain sense, it will still occur with all these matters that there is nothing that should prevent their interpretation according to their hidden meaning, because every plain sense can also tolerate its hidden meaning, but not every hidden sense can tolerate its plain sense. And know, that sometimes I will interpret many matters in these works [*be-'eleh ha-sefarim*] which appear in their plain sense according to their hidden meaning. And sometimes I will speak about them simply and will not interpret any such thing about them because I will have based myself on the knowledge of the enlightened who will delve into this book of mine. And this is the general principle which is said here, and there is no need to respond to it in every instance. And anyone who wishes to know my opinion will inquire well into it here, because it is known that it not fitting that any of the enlightened would cast judgment on the opinion of the author until he has read all of his work [*she-shum maskil eino ra'uyi she-yadun da'at ha-meḥabber 'ad she-yireh kol sifro*] and until he has understood all that he has said in general and in detail. And he should thus obligate himself to study his words many times until he has comprehended his intention [*'ad she-yasig da'ato*]. And the author need not concern himself [with the formulation] of his own words except for [how it will be understood] by the enlightened, because it is already known that his writings, even in their plain sense, will not be understood, except by them, by way of God.[155]

Abulafia is clearly aware of the separate categories of the mind of the individual, a work which contains not only particular ideas or intentions, but also captures in its literary identity as a work, the various parts of an author's mindset, and the various ways in which any text can be construed and misconstrued. Even though Abulafia does not employ all of the modern literary terms, his formulation of the mind of the author [*da'ato*] captures the idea of authorial intent across the larger frame of a literary work. Here, Abulafia uses the term *sefer* to mean book, as a clearly defined work, beyond any selection of

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[155] *Sefer ha-'Edut*, printed in *Sefer Meṣaref ha-Sekhel ve-Sefer ha-'Ot*, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 58-59.

a passage, or relating to writing as text. Abulafia is keenly aware that he cannot guarantee the sense in which his words will be understood by all future reader and so states quite plainly that he writes for the imagined audience of esotericists who will understand his work in its context. Admittedly, this is a rare passage and much work needs to be done to collect from kabbalistic texts the various statements in which authors have reflected on their self-perception and their intention of constructing a work with its own literary integrity. My impression remains, however, that these are exceptions and that even those kabbalists, theosophic and ecstatic alike, who composed works structured around some clear literary frame were aware, like Abulafia, that their words and works would be reconfigured in their reception.

To the kabbalists, it can be presumed, the linguistic expression captured the divine reality and was not thought of as a subjective expression of one individual's religious imagination. Taking this one step further and filtered through the basic assumption of linguistic structuralism, that a necessary gap must exist between the signifier and the signified. The kabbalists' theory of language and their predilection to avoid the first person in describing the ontology of the world Above, necessitates us to reconsider phenomenologically the presumed gap between meaning derived by the reader and the intended meaning of the author, at least from the perspective of the kabbalists themselves.

The implications of this idea to editorial practice in Kabbalah scholarship are great. If modern scholarship wished to extend and imitate the presumptions of the authors and copyists of the Middle Ages in removing the author from the method of presentation, then the work would stand on its own as an independent statement of divine reality. Such has been the appreciation of the relationship between language and myth in much of Kabbalah scholarship, that the text directly captures or conveys the immediate reality of the object of experience.[156] In such treatments of textual traditions, a series of texts are brought together to reconstruct or present a *mythologoumena*, such that each literary expression offers a particular take or moment in dealing with the mythic or imagined reality on the part of the mystic. A review of how this is achieved in the many works of scholars over the last few decades would take us

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[156] See the formulation of Yehuda Liebes, 'Judaism and Myth', *Dimui* 14 (1997), pp. 6-15. Reprinted in his *God's Story*. Liebes writes of writing that directly or simply describes divine events. In the following I will explore some possible implications for editorial practice even if Liebes does not discuss this subject.

too far afield. For the present purposes, a comparison of this attitude toward text with a passage from Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work Art' would be helpful.

> The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things and their looks to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the God has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself. The same holds for the linguistic work. In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. *The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people's saying so that now every living word fights the battle: and puts up for decision what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave* (cf. Heraclitus, Fragment 53)...[157]

The passage is telling in that it captures the epistemic status of language in the text. The linguistic work is not perceived as a metaphoric instruction about an abstract concept beyond the particulars described. Rather, quite similar to the collapse of the signifier and the signified in the widespread kabbalistic tradition that equates the divine name with the Torah and the divine being, Wittgenstein offers an appreciation of Greek tragedy that directly and in an unmediated fashion captures, represents and in its internal dynamics is the interaction of the gods in battle and in their hierarchical relationship with humanity, a *historia divina*.[158] Applying such a concept to the study of kabbalistic literature,

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[157] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927), to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, New York 1978, edited with general introduction and introductions to each section, David Farrell Krell, London and Henley, p. 170 (emphasis added). A different translation, which conveys this idea to a lesser extent appears in his *Off the Beaten Track*, edited and translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge 1950, pp. 21-22. I would like to express my deep thanks to Michael Schneider for sharing this reference with me in a discussion about the nature of myth and mystical literature.

[158] Following Fishbane's term in his *Biblical Myth*, p. 134. On this formulations see the reflections of Jan Assman, 'Myth as historia divina and historia sacra', *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination – Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, ed. D. Green and L. Lieber, Oxford and New York 2009, pp. 13-24.

which I argue has been in play in the field for many years, the principles of editorial practice are compromised such that textual differences are subsumed within the myth that is presented. Textual variation within the writings of a figure, within manuscript witness or even within a corpus and tradition can thus be seen to reflect the subjective reactions and interpretive tradition of the events the authors held to have transpired as such. In other words, intertextual analysis does not serve as the means of adjudicating difficult readings in manuscripts. At issue is the motivating force for understanding and reconstructing the text, from the expression of an author or literary cultural product to a text that represents a myth.

Such a method would not apply when the author is clearly present, such as the few mystical diaries of the kabbalists, or structured works in which the kabbalist inserts himself, as a personality, into the work. The best example of a stemmatic reconstruction of the surviving witnesses where no one manuscript is complete or presented as an entire record of the best text, is Amos Goldreich's edition of *Me'irat 'Einayim*. As reviewed by Malachi Beit-Arié,[159] Karl Lachmann's method of establishing the family tree of manuscript transmission based on scribal errors, best served this particular project. The genealogy of the manuscripts was produced by tracing a record of their contamination. Greetham summarizes the method best when he writes:

> The system of family resemblances and descent that constitutes the rationale of Lachmannian genealogy has, as we shall see later, a number of conceptual and procedural problems that call its logic into question; but the idea that documents can be arranged in an historical series, with each being theoretically capable of being placed in a family tree or *stemma,* is a perfectly natural outgrowth of the general assumptions of German *Altertumswissenschaft.* The particular enabling device that Lachmann and the genealogists used was *error,* to chart the downward dissemination through history of a text as its copying accumulated its stock of erroneous readings. Thus, a manuscript containing a particular error would be placed lower in the family tree than one which contained a putative authorial reading in the same instance – an arrangement of evidence that rested on the persuasion that authors are correct and original,

[159] Amos Goldreich, '*Sefer Me'irat Einayim* by R. Isaac of Acre: A Critical Edition, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981 (printed in facsimile by the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984). Reviewed by M. Bet Arié in *Qiryat Sefer* 59 (1984), pp. 599-602 [Hebrew].

whereas copyists are sloppy and derivative. Again, there are problems behind this assumption, which will be explored later.[160]

There are of course texts that defy reconstruction or the use of authorial intent, such as strings of magical names and other letter permutations, which were often corrupted in their repeated transcription. Examples of such appear in the Hekhalot literature. Against this argument are cases in which a modern editor can reconstruct such a text by deciphering the method that produced the strings of letters. So, even if every copyist had reproduced a corrupted text that made no sense, the editor would be well in his or her right to present the intended text, and not necessarily from the author's intent, based upon the formula which manipulated the letters of the biblical text. An example of such is the combination of letters based upon verses from Psalms, the Song of Songs and *Shi'ur Qomah* in R. Moses ben Eleazar's *Commentary to Shi'ur Qomah*. In preparing my forthcoming edition, I was forced to abandon in this section of the edition any reliance on the text copied in the various manuscripts and reconstruct the *correct text*, offering my own corrected version by reapplying the principles of letter permutations based upon the canonical texts, whose versions are well-established.

In a very important debate, Yehuda Liebes responded to an argument offered by Jonah Fraenkel concerning a specific locution in *Massekhet Ḥagiga* that appears only in late manuscripts and the printed editions. Frankel's contention was that the line was interpolated from Hekhalot literature and was not original to the Talmudic text.[161] At issue here is what belongs in a text, namely the limits of ideology and its effect on textual editing. Liebes responded on contextual grounds, interpreting the text on literary and ideational grounds, and dismissing the need to present evidence from early manuscripts, even if that were ideal. While the matter was subsequently resolved in a recent study,[162] the importance of the debate rests on the question of the necessity of certain philological and paleographic criteria to reconstruct the original or early

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[160] Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, pp. 67-68.

[161] For a similar debate concerning the possible interpolation of a tradition from the Hekhalot literature into the Talmudic text of Tractate Berachot see Ephraim Urbach, 'The Traditions about Merkabah Mysticism in the Tannaitic Period', *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1967, p. 23 [Hebrew].

[162] Bernard Septimus, 'Metatron's Sin: The Complexity of Language and Versions', *Leshonenu* 69 (2007), pp. 291-300 [Hebrew].

form of a text, suggesting here that even evidence preserved in late witnesses might alone be sufficient to reconstruct the best text and early meaning of the written tradition.[163]

We may now turn to the differences in editorial re/constructions of kabbalistic texts by university scholars and traditional publishers. Take for example the study and presentation of a circle of texts, some of which were anonymously written. Such compilations, as for example in Scholem's edition of short textual units in his articles on the Early Kabbalah, presented passages from R. Ezra and R. Azriel but also other unattributed material,[164] making a new construction of the sources of a 'circle' that does not exist in any manuscript. To be sure, there are important codices that preserve partial arrangements of what was presumably the original notebooks of these kabbalists, but as a rule, the earliest arrangements were deconstructed and regrouped in new patterns that reflect the later interests as chapters in the reception history of earlier materials. In all, scholarship's attempt to reconstruct the past, excised these sources from secondary anthologies and created a new (intertextual) context that may not have existed in the various texts' histories.

My aim here is not to discredit the efforts and constructive yield of scholarly identifications of texts, their authors and the similarity between texts that offer much to research on medieval Jewish esotericism prior to the emergence of the Kabbalah and the first generations of kabbalists, and whose activity has been defined under the construct of the Early Kabbalah. Indeed, a brief review of the last century will show that German Pietism was reimaged many times, from the early form of Kabbalah, Abraham Epstein's 'Ashkenazi Kabbalah',[165] to Scholem's delineation of it as a 'major trend' in Jewish mysticism, in which he nevertheless mixed together various circles of that time and place, to Joseph

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[163] Jona Fraenkel, *The Aggadic Narrative: Harmony of Form and Content*, Tel Aviv 2001, pp. 340-345 [Hebrew]; Yehuda Liebes, *Elisha's Sin: The Four Who Entered Pardes and the Character of Talmudic Mysticism*, revised and expanded second edition, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 157-160 [Hebrew].

[164] Gershom Scholem, 'New Fragments from the Writings of R. Azriel Gerona', *A. Gulak and S. Klein Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem 1942, pp. 201-222 [Hebrew]; idel, 'A New Document Concerning the History of the Early Kabbalah', *Sefer Bialik*, Tel Aviv 1934, pp. 141-162 [Hebrew].

[165] Abraham Epstein, 'On the Origins of Ashkenazi Kabbalah', *Ha-Ḥoqer* 2 (1892), pp. 1-11, 37-48 [Hebrew].

Dan's separating out the Special Cherub Circle from the Qalonimide interest in the Divine Glory, and on to more recent subdivisions of the authors of the 'Secret of the *Egoz*' texts (Abrams), and R. Neḥemiah ben Shelomo, where each of the latter two were once identified as part of the main body of texts produced by the singular school.[166]

This situation is rarely repeated in traditional editions that seek to reprint classics as works that have already been canonized in the history of the printing of Hebrew books and gained acceptance amongst a Jewish readership. Recent years however, have been marked by anthologies of texts in traditional editions, which do not attempt to restore an original literary setting, but rather seek to present a work that knowingly never existed, amounting to the book that the modern author wished the author would have written, or repackaging the various works of a particular author such as Cordovero to present an anthology volume of passages on a particular subject.[167] This phenomenon has an interesting history which began in the Middle Ages, in manuscript form, and continued on through pre-modern times, whereby citations were culled from works to produce works that the author never intended to create, as well as breaking apart existing works and appending these materials to more famous works.[168]

Sometimes though, the two communities of editors share common goals and

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166 Joseph Dan, 'A Re-evaluation of the "Ashkenazi Kabbalah"', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6:3-4 = *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Dan, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 125-139 [Hebrew]; idem, *The Unique Cherub' Circle*; Abrams, 'A History of the Unique Cherub'.

167 See for example *Sefer Galut ha-Shekhina*, an anthology of texts from the works of Moshe Cordovero, edited by Shmuel Yudaiqon, Bnei Beraq 2001.

168 See for example the *Commentary to the Torah* by R. Moses Cordovero, appended to the end of each pericope of the Torah in his commentary to the zoharic corpus, *Or Yaqar*. See Scholem's description of Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 75 in his catalog, *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, pp. 91-92 [Hebrew]. I have heard of plans for a traditional edition to be issued which would present these sections in print as Cordovero's *Commentary to the Torah*. Compare to the publication of his '*Commentary to Sefer Yeṣira*', (Jerusalem 1989), extracted from *Or Yaqar* (vol. 17, Jerusalem 1989) as well as his Sermon on Angels, published by Reuven Margalioth in the first edition of *Malakhei Elyon*, Jerusalem 1945, but removed from some subsequent reprints. See also the discussion of Eleazar of Worms' *Sefer ha-Remazim* in Simḥa Emanuel's edition of Eleazar's Passover Sermon: *Rabbi Elazar Vormsensis – Oratio ad Pascam*, Jerusalem 2006, p. 2 [Hebrew].

methods. A critical edition of Joseph Gikatilla's *Ginat Egoz* was prepared by Yeshivat Ahavat Shalom, headed by R. Mordechai Aṭiyah. When I asked him why he had prepared a critical edition and adopted academic methods of manuscript variants he told a story of how the first edition, which was issued many years ago in a facsimile edition,[169] was studied in the yeshiva with little success. The readings of the text were so poor that creative and strained interpretations were needed to make sense of the work. Breaking with their norms of study, he turned toward manuscripts and realized that a better text exempted them from the previous methods of extracting meaning from the printed edition. As he explicitly stated to me, the preparation of an edition served as the commentary, offering a clear meaning through the text itself.

Having said this, there is no necessary opposition between manuscript and print. Some manuscripts were indeed copied in a sloppy fashion or by scribes who obviously did not understand what they were reading. Examples of such include Ms. London, The British Library, Margolioth 752 and Vatican Urb. 110, and this despite their importance.[170] What is interesting here is when the author's intention is overridden by the manuscript evidence, or rather, when the author's intention becomes irrelevant. The most important observation that can be offered here are those moments when scholarship has created its own texts by constructing new literary forms, synthesizing textual versions into a new amalgam that does not exist anywhere in its transmission history, presuming an original that never existed or advancing one particular version of a text, or an aspect of a series of texts, which presumes to voice the author's intention when the history of the text's editing is lost by this effort.

An example of such overzealousness is Tishby's edition of Azriel's re-writing of R. Ezra's *Commentary to the Aggadot*. Tishby was interested in the then-unique manuscript of the younger colleague of R. Ezra, R. Azriel, who wove a Neoplatonic layer into the existing text. R. Ezra's text was thus subsumed yet again, this time by a twentieth-century editor, who saw R. Ezra as a means for correcting the latter's text. Authorial intent was all but lost in Tishby's edition as the reader had little means of knowing whether any particular line, locution or word was the literary product of R. Ezra or R. Azriel, where available variant readings to R. Azriel's text were provided from manuscripts of R. Ezra's version.

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169 Facsimile edition of *Ginat Egoz*, Hanau 1615 (Jerusalem 1969).

170 So for example אחוזת עינים instead of אחיזת עינים is recorded in Ms. London, The British Library 752 (Margolioth). See Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, p. 65. I would like to thank Moshe Idel for pointing out this example to me.

The reader could track some of the differences where noted and map out where there was a parallel text, an original under layer, to R. Azriel's text. The reader could not reconstruct from Tishby's edition what R. Ezra's text looked like, namely to use the edition to read R. Ezra. Authorial intent became obscured in this edition for both 'authors', as R. Ezra was lost within R. Azriel's reworking and without the earlier text for comparison, R. Azriel's work as such could be at best appreciated as the final intent of R. Ezra's authorship. What is needed, no doubt, for an appreciation of R. Ezra, and for a separate appreciation of R. Azriel and the relationship between the two texts, was a layered edition of the manuscript witnesses, separately and in a synoptic edition. In short, as precise and helpful as Tishby's edition was in its time, a new edition is necessary to present R. Ezra and in so doing appreciate what changes R. Azriel made to the text he possessed. My initial research into the manuscripts of R. Ezra's version of the *Commentary to the Aggadot* shows that it may have been revised by R. Ezra prior to R. Azriel's reworking of the text, making the situation much more complex. Of course it is possible that the various manuscripts capture the stages in the development of the thought of R. Ezra, the various stages in the development of his work, the later editing of it by another, or any combination of the above, where the development of the thought and work is the most complicated and interesting of the possibilities.

I return here to his presumably older contemporary, the nephew of his teacher, R. Asher ben David, whose writings exist in short, medium and long versions with the same questions remaining unresolved in scholarship. Today, my impression is that R. Asher wrote separate treatises and revised them at a later time and only then were the fuller versions included into a larger frame of a book, which was probably expanded upon by students or later editors. More work is need on this all-important book, the first free-form work composed for a wide audience.[171]

A related problem here are the appearance of works copied within what is presumably a separate work of the same author. Examples of such include the transmission history of Moses de León's *Commentary to the Merkavah* and *Sefer Mishkan ha-'Edut* and Ezra of Gerona's Commentary to the

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[171] On the early influence of R. Asher's writings see Gerrit Bos and Eric Pellow, '*Ma'amar Rabbi Barzillai*: A Commentary on the Ten Sefirot of Rabbi Barzillai of Gerona', *Sefunot* 7 [22] (1999), pp. 366-377 [Hebrew]. For a recent study which explores the thought of R. Asher see Fishbane, 'The Speech of Being'.

Commandments which and copies within Commentary to the Song of Songs.[172]

Scholarship is plagued by open-ended questions, which in the history of the field have been approached with rather narrow methodological interests, either of the work or its author, with dynamism of the text between the two being obscured by the very lens that studies it. Indeed, some figures clearly moved from one system of thought to another, producing works as markers of their intellectual movement. The most famous of these from the thirteenth century include R. Moses de León and R. Joseph Gikatilla, although other examples could be mentioned from later times, including those that wrote within various genres and for very different purposes and audiences, such as R. Moses Cordovero or R. Ḥayyim Vital. An extreme solution to explain the difference in writing was offered most recently by Hartley Lachter in a study on the works of Gikatilla.[173] Lachter claimed that from the early activity of this kabbalist, as he left the tutelage of R. Abraham Abulafia and composed works of philosophically inspired linguistic mysticism he was already trained in a theosophic perspective of the divine to which he adhered as his own belief system, but nevertheless wrote from the linguistic perspective alone in order to establish a multi-year program of writing that would gradually accompany his philosophically inclined audience over to the theosophic Kabbalah. Lachter's contention is therefore that Gikatilla as author – undoubtedly in the Foucauldian sense of the term, as he who is responsible for producing literature that will cause change in a community of his readership – hid within his writings his deeper convictions for the sake of the effect they would instill. Only when his corpus of writings is viewed as a whole, and interpreted retroactively through the key offered in the later writings, can we appreciate the plan and thinking that he formulated in his earliest writings and which divulge his consistent thought patterns throughout

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[172] See the introduction to Farber-Ginat, *Moses de León's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*. On R. Ezra see Georges Vajda, *Le commentaire d'Ezra de Gérone sur le Cantique des cantiques*, Paris 1969; Jacob Travis, 'Kabbalistic Foundations of Jewish Spiritual Practice'; Reuven David Gershon, *Sefer Ṭa'amei ha-Miṣwot le-rabbenu ezra Mi-Gerona zs"l*, Cleveland Heights 2004. Of note is Recanati's reference to the *Commentary to the Commandments* as part of the *Commentary to the Song of Songs*, indicating a very early date to this state of the manuscripts. See Recanati's *Rationale of the Commandments*, ed. S. Lieberman, London 1962, p. 11.

[173] Hartley Lachter, 'Kabbalah, Philosophy, and the Jewish-Christian Debate: Reconsidering the Early Works of Joseph Gikatilla', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 16 (2008), pp. 1-58.

the various years of literary activity. The dynamism of his intellectual life is thus flattened across the growth of his literary product as the program of study needed for a reading audience.

6. *Authorial Intention and Textual Idealism*

The meeting of authorial intent and textual idealism is based on a presumption of a single personality who produces a unified work that reflects a uniform system of thought. In other words, when taking each to their logical extreme, the reader or critic expects to find consistency in the form and content of a work which reflects back on the thought of an author who with forethought executed a literary program that forwarded a set of ideas. Complexity, internal development and even a dialectical presentation within a work can be appreciated to a point, as long as there is not a rupture in the organizing principle of the text as a work. It could be argued that the starting point of such an inquiry is the cognitive experience of the reader who imposes expectations on the work by fashioning the text through acts of interpretation. This method is important for testing the literary integrity of a work as recorded in a single form in manuscript or print. Whereas a writer might revise or edit his work leaving behind numerous texts or versions of what is apparently stages in the teleological development of a work, a later reader, copyist or editor can also redefine a work through interpretation editing or some other re/presentation that alters the format and definition of the text as a particular work. Authorial intention and textual idealism meet when only what is perceived as the 'final' version of a work is recognized as the authentic composition, fulfilling the literary plan and agenda of the author and so giving independence and authority to a specific text.

A fine example of such an inquiry are the studies on *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*. Beginning with David Neumark, Gershom Scholem, Isaiah Tishby, Georges Vajda and continuing on through more recent studies by Efraim Gottlieb and Avraham Elqayam,[174] this book has been subject to analysis by different methodologies. These studies progressed along a line of thought,

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[174] I will cite here studies of the last two scholars who discuss and reference all the relevant scholarship which preceded them: Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*; Avraham Elqayam, 'Inquiries into Reuven Ṣarfati's Commentary to *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*', M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Between Referentialism and Performativism'; idem, 'On the Archetonic Structure of *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*'.

reflective of the development of methodologies in the field, from a placement of the work and its ideas in the history of Kabbalah and a cataloging of its printing history, commentaries and influence, to an exploration of stages in the work's construction. That is, the most recent stage of research, eloquently argued in great detail by Avraham Elqayam, tests the degree to which the literary structure of the book correlates with the progression or inconsistency of ideas that he analyzed. In the first of his published articles, Elqayam described two strands of thinking on the question of symbolism, referentialism and performatism. In a second article, he interrogates the structure of the book, after a comparison of the two printings and manuscript evidence, to conclude that the author composed the first half of the book at a different time and from a different theoretical understanding than the second half. The differences in the ideas, indeed the approach of the different literary sections, were expressed in an unstable or inconsistent 'archetechtonic' structure seen in the naming of its defined sections and their order. He thus speaks of the associative connection between some of the chapters and the thin thematic links that can be surmised from what he calls the 'final editing' of the author.

> It is no longer possible to conceive of *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* in its entirety as a complete and unified work. Alternatively, I suggest that *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* contains two foci, thematic and formal, which can be defined separately and which contradict one another. The first is manifest in the [literary] forms of 'chapters' and in the second, the thematic approach. It interprets Theosophic Kabbalah according to mythic and theurgic-magical introductions. Alternatively and in opposition to it, the second focus expresses the form in subdivisions [*lishkot*] and in the thematic approach it seeks to interpret the theosophic Kabbalah in light of philosophical introductions based on Maimonides.
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> In my view, the various observation that I have amassed here lead – albeit not in any necessary way, but with a high degree of likelihood – to the conclusion that *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* contains at least two different works. The works were written by a single author (and I have no reason to doubt this) and apparently in different periods, and were ultimately joined together, following a clumsy editing [effort] to a single book which is called *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*.[175]

Elqayam concludes that the first section was written later, but still considers the possibility that the author shifted his beliefs from a mythic theurgic-magical

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[175] Idem, 'On the Archetonic Structure of *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*', p. 303.

stance for understanding Kabbalah to a philosophical and logical-rationalistic stance, although not abruptly in the course of his writing, but gradually, so that the lines of change are somewhat blurred. The dichotomy he identifies is no longer in question following his analysis, but only the degree and nature of internal change as sharp or fluid.

While I have no reason to doubt Elqayam's conclusions, following his impressive analysis of the text, I wish to place the method and conclusions within a type of analysis within the field. I note that the unity or uniform character of the author was preserved, while his contradictory views according to different periods of his thought and writing were duly cataloged. Similarly, divergent modes of writing, in content and form, were attributed to these same periods in the author's life. In all, the personhood and outer literary frame of the book remained intact and the volatility and instability within it was explained according to the periods within the life of the author. Again, Elqayam's assessment may indeed be correct in this case, but results of this type, or at least presented in this fashion, interrogate the text as a means of learning about the author's intellectual life.

In such cases, I wonder to what extent authorial intent *over-determines* the results of the textual analysis. Put differently, what are the implications of research that grounds the understanding of the work? If indeed the author wrote in two different periods of his intellectual life and at a third period edited these products together, what would this imply for a modern editor? Should authorial intent be subdivided to respect the integrity of each authorial product, breaking down the personality of the author into three virtual authors? If so, the final intent, namely the last editing, should not guide the modern scholar, but rather an edition could be constructed that would present each of the literary products. A third section of the edition could then explain the harmonizing efforts of the additional text that served as the connective tissue that afforded the author the possibility of integrating his writings into a single work at a later time. Alternatively, as would be consistent with the present state of research, only scholarly analysis in the form of articles deconstructs the final or received form of the text, allowing scholarly editing to replicate and legitimate the final edition found in manuscripts and print.

Jochanan Wijnhoven faced a similar situation when he edited Moses' de León's *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, composed in 1290 and first printed in Basel 1608

under the title *Nefesh ha-Ḥakhamah*.[176] In the introduction, de León describes his literary plan for the book which will include five chapters. The sixth chapter is included in all the manuscripts and the printed edition, and some of the manuscripts formally call it the sixth chapter. Wijnhoven concluded that the sixth chapter was indeed written by de León and included it in his critical edition. Nevertheless, he decided to omit other materials that appear after the sixth chapter in many manuscripts and the printed edition. This additional material was added to the printed edition from Gikatilla and others, including various *sodot* and other *miscellanea* that break down the literary form or plan under any assessment. Again we must ask what is the purpose of *scholarly* editing? Is it to restore the author's first (complete) execution of his literary plan, his final product, or the 'received' and commonly known form of the text as transmitted in manuscript and print.

As we see from Wijnhoven's example and made explicit in his later article, 'The Relationship of Two Works of R. Moses de León to the *Book of the Zohar*', his motivation was prompted by the agenda of the field to philologically ground a comparison of the works of Moses de León to the *Zohar*, in order to test or further confirm, at that time, Scholem's conclusion that de León was the sole author of the *Zohar* who continued to promote his masterpiece by propagating its ideas with more popular or easily accessible works in Hebrew to which he signed his name. Wijnhoven, therefore, included in his edition, prepared as a master's thesis, of de León's *Maskiyot Kesef*, these discussions, and ignored in his thesis and his article the *miscellanea* printed at the end of *Nefesh ha-Hakhamah*, which were nevertheless important to the printers and other students of these texts who read them together in manuscript and print. Wijnhoven's edition replaced the printed edition for some of the goals of scholarship, a point that is not true for other text studies.

As mentioned briefly in chapter three, *Tiqqunei Zohar* was apparently *intended* to comprise 70 chapters or *tiqqunim*. Additional chapters were added and the manuscripts and printed editions reflect an inclusive decision to receive and canonize all related materials. I doubt whether in this case, of a central work, or better a text, by an unnamed 'author', scholarship would seek to establish the 'original' 70 *tiqqunim* and excise the material deemed extraneous,

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[176] Jochanan Wijnhoven, '*Sefer ha-Mishkal*: Text and Study', Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University 1964. see also his article 'The Relationship of Two Works of R. Moses de León to the *Book of the Zohar*', *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Papers*, volume II, Jerusalem 1968, pp. 313-315 [Hebrew].

if such a concept of the originally intended structure even existed or can be maintained as a guiding principle. The most basic work has yet to be done on what is arguably the most influential and most often printed kabbalistic book.

In a footnote in his monograph on *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Pinchas Giller noted four families of manuscripts, with variations in the inclusion and exclusion of certain materials, their ordering, the numbered division of the sections and even shorter versions of *tiqqunim* well-known for their length.[177] In all, what is clear is that scholarship knows only that the literary identity, authorship, transmission history and mapping of the various editings or arrangements of *Tiqqunei Zohar* have yet to be investigated. While scholarship to date has largely sufficed with the more popular printed editions of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, and almost exclusively that of Reuven Margolioth, this cannot form the basis of serious scholarship into the group of texts known by this name. Curiously, the traditional community has subsequently produced popular editions that return to the Constantinople edition and thus eclipse that of Margolioth, even when scholarship continues to sanctify what was most popular in the past generation.[178] A very important first step for academic scholarship would be to investigate (separately) the manuscript and printing histories, as well as the editorial decisions made in the Mantua and Cremona editions which incorporated extensive passages from *Tiqqunei Zohar* into 'the *'Book of the Zohar'* they produced. *Tiqqunei Zohar* further needs to be investigated within the larger context and compared to all the documents produced by the same figure, especially *Ra'aya Meheimna* and all the possibilities of intertextual readings and the ways in which these texts were intended or later placed in relation to the *Zohar* as a book or other construction of the existing zoharic texts.

Zoharic texts are indeed a specific case of textual scholarship in the field of Jewish mysticism. The zoharic corpus is the most important literary body for Kabbalah research and is arguably the least understood text or work in terms of its identity, origin and composition and transmission history. It is for this reason that I believe that more strict presumptions about its literary character should be imposed upon editorial practice and are dependent, whether or not stated, on scholarly questions in the field of research. This literary method of editorial practice which presumes to understand the identity of the work, however, gives scholarship a false sense of security in having produced the

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[177] Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 131-132, n. 9.

[178] See the vocalized and punctuated edition of Jerusalem 1993.

authoritative texts of the authoritative authors that form the basis of the history of Jewish mysticism. Intentionalist editing in such cases subverts the material *as it was transmitted and transformed* in the actual history of kabbalistic texts, even by the authors who may have edited the texts of other kabbalists, their own unstructured texts and even added material to their own 'completed' works.

My point is that in the aim of restoring the original, and not necessarily the historical original or Urtext relative to significantly later forms of a work, scholarship has artificially imposed its sense of origin on the author's own construction(s) of his work. All this is to say that intentionalist editing has its limits within the bounds of medieval literature, and that kabbalistic literature in particular is fraught with countless examples, including its main texts, of works that were under constant revision or were formed as works in the later period of the author's life or its reception by others. Once again, a major distinction must be drawn between anonymous works and those written by well-known kabbalists of the Middle Ages. As I have suggested, a different hermeneutic should be in place for anonymous works, and an even more complex one for pseudepigraphic ones, but not one that eliminates the dynamics involved in considering authorial intent, which is rarely, if ever, monolithic.

Before leaving this question, it would be helpful to compare the state of kabbalistic literature to that of rabbinic literature. Midrashic collections and the Talmud are appreciated as edited anthologies and even as documents that present a statement and should be approached initially as a whole, and only then may the scholar with great care tackle an individual tradition and assess its attributions if any, literary context and meaning. No serious scholar of rabbinic literature would presume the consistency of authorial intent from a specific tradition through the textual unit, its editing on a page (the *sugya*), and the chapter or tractate in which it is found. Important here, however, is the relationship between editorial practice and hermeneutics, using the surviving manuscripts to help navigate the stages of editing and assess the possible meaning from a more accurate and contextualized reading of the textual versions. As Yaakov Sussman has written, much of the painstaking work on texts has been misplaced: 'Critics of early [rabbinic] literature work very hard checking the tittle of every *Yod* of every surviving manuscript witness in order to establish the "original" textual version without ever asking themselves what it is exactly that they are looking for and wish to recover'.[179]

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[179] Ya'aqov Sussman, 'Oral Torah Understood Literally: The Power of the Tittle of the [Letter] Yod', *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of*

As adopted by scholars of rabbinic literature of antique and medieval rabbinic literature, including kabbalistic manuscripts, textual idealism informs a standard from which all methods are formed. Texts as works, which became printed books, are presumed to exist in manuscripts, and philological skills are utilized to 'restore' their full state even if they never existed as such. A fine example of this is Joseph Karo's mystical diary, *Maggid Meisharim*, which the 'author' apparently composed in numerous notebooks, not necessarily ordered or designed to be part of a book, even if a part was preserved and published as such. Hence Werblowsky writes in his monograph about Karo:

> Somehow, we must assume, part of the diary got into circulation, the contents were copied and recopied, and the leaves arranged in different orders. The three main types that emerged may, as far as our knowledge goes, conveniently be labeled the New York type (Group A), the Oxford type (Group B), and the M.M. type (Group C), the latter being characterized by the arrangement in *parashiyyoth* as in the printed editions and MS. Sassoon. The surmise expressed in one of the rabbinic approbations to the first edition that Karo's notes were 'hidden in the treasuries of the pious disciples of the *gaon*' and that finally, in the words of Isaiah Hurwitz, 'we were vouchsafed these papers' seems to get as near to the truth of the matter as is possible in the circumstances. Considering the fact that a large portion of our printed *M.M.* was revealed in a considerably short space of time, it is a fair guess that only a fraction of Karo's notes survived. Unless we assume that the *Maggid's* visits were rare and irregular – and there is every reason to assume that they were not – the diary must have recorded the experiences and heavenly intimations of some fifty years, i.e. of his whole lifetime.[180]

R. David Piqaso faithfully copied Karo's manuscript which was recorded chronologically as a diary recording his revelations from the Maggid upon receiving them. The great disseminator of Safedian sources, R. Jacob Ṣemaḥ copied this version in 1625, the apparent source of the relatively uniform family of manuscripts known today. R. Shmuel Garmizan added comments and corrections to the manuscript and testifies that this order, arranged according

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Professor Ephraim E. Urbach, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal, Jerusalem 2005,vol. 1, p. 212 [Hebrew].

[180] R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic*, Oxford 1962/Philadelphia 1980; p. 36; see further the appendices to the edition. See also the reviews by J. Dan in *Tarbiz* 33 (1964), pp. 89-95 and D. Tamar in *Qiryat Sefer* 40 (1965), pp. 65-71, esp. pp. 65-66.

to the pericopes of the Torah, is the correct one of those available in his day.[181] The proliferation of this version outside of Safed can be attributed to R. Menaḥem Azariah of Fano who visited Safed in order to retrieve kabbalistic material for study in Italy. Parenthetically, I wish to add, that the role of these two figures in shaping one of the most prolific periods of Jewish mystical literature requires special study.

Karo apparently did not intend to publish his diary, hiding the knowledge of its existence from even his sons and writing in coded language to obscure its comprehension. The author's intent for its publication and dissemination, as distinct from his intent of meaning in composing a text, is directly related to the question of its form, as there is more than a gap in this instance between the original form of the transcribed text as a diary and its reorganization as a commentary to the Torah in later manuscript copyings and the printed formats. The diary format, moreover, cannot be fully recovered even by backtracking to some chronological order, as much of the dates have been removed and the extant material is but a fraction of what Karo composed. We have therefore a situation of a very personal text in every sense of the term, a dialogue with a power on High, as a discursive account of mystical revelations of an individual, recorded for personal use and whose text was disconfigured long before a part of it was repackaged in an unintended form and for an unintended readership. A unique feature of the transmission history of the diary in manuscript and its early printings is its division into two parts, joined together in the third printing. It goes without saying that the printer of *Maggid Meisharim* felt that, or wished his readership to be impressed with, the 'completion' of a work and restoration of a literary structure, even if given its history we know that this joining of two parts of the reorganized fragments is substantively inconsequential to the question of literary form and the author's intentions about the nature of the text(s) that were produced, as a defined work never existed.[182]

As ground breaking as Werblowsky's work was in its day (over forty years ago; and it should be said that the 1996 Hebrew translation of *Joseph Karo:*

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[181] See the comments of Meir Benayahu on p. 403 of his *Yosef Beḥiri: Maran Rabbi Yosef Qaro*, Jerusalem 1991. The manuscript contains only the first half of the printed material through the pericopes *Meṣora*.

[182] See R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, Philadelphia 1980, pp. 24-37, where he explains the complexities and corruptions of the textual evidence. See further Meir Benayahu, *Yosef Beḥiri*, pp. 395-396 [Hebrew].

Lawyer and Mystic offers little new material), it did not sort out all of the editorial questions and offer a plan for a new edition. New materials have been uncovered and this work should be re-edited in various ways.[183]

It is fascinating to note that in the Middle Ages and on through early modern times, major personalities were seen or presumed to have written works, even if the material did not lend itself to such a conclusion. The same editors and students of these texts were also part of a cultural and textual practice of not respecting the literary boundaries of works that had been set by their authors. Modern scholarship has mirrored these conflicting tendencies presumably with different agendas and assumptions in mind. It would be inaccurate to completely disassociate one from the other as scholars have been influenced and even replicated the moves of the kabbalists. What is important for the aims of scholarship today is to identify the implications for interpretation that ensue from these choices. In other words, what are the implications for the understanding of a text if there is no author? If the literary boundaries of a text are dissolved, as many have presumed in the case of the Hekhalot literature, then is the author and even the construct of the anonymous author also lost? Can there be an author without a book or a book without an author? If not, then have we lost a guiding device for conferring meaning and authority and maybe even historically placing any such meaning within the history of ideas? I think not. The field of Kabbalah research needs to open itself up to multiple forms of interpretation and develop the printed tools and editions that reflect such multivocality. To date, scholars in the field vigorously compete to demonstrate and present the fruits of their research as the cutting edge of the discipline and specific area of study.

7. *Uncovering the Author's Personality – Text as the Object of Study: Localized Hermeneutics of Kabbalah Research*

In the specific case of Kabbalah scholarship, as a field that is uniquely textual in its transmission history, as well as in the content of its traditions, we may ask different questions about where meaning is to be found and the appropriate

[183] Yehudah Leib Keliras, '*Sefer ha-Maggid* or the Maran Beit Yosef', *Tsefunot* 2:2 (1990), pp. 79-86 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Halakhic Issues in *Maggid Meisharim* of the Maran Beit Yosef', *Tsefunot* 2:4 (1990), pp. 23-31; 3:1 (1991), pp. 25-33 [Hebrew]. I should add that a bilingual edition, Aramaic and Hebrew, in two columns has recently been issued, demonstrating the new life and reading audiences that this work enjoys. See the edition of Joseph ben Isaac ha-Kohen, Jerusalem 2007.

means of uncovering that meaning. Stated more sharply, we might ask if the object of study is always the text in the scholarship of Jewish mysticism? In order to approach this question, it is appropriate to return momentarily to the origins of Kabbalah scholarship. Scholem relied heavily on the philological tools of the European tradition of academic scholarship, further presuming that the critical distance achieved in reading an ancient text could not be preserved when learning orally from living kabbalists. In Scholem's anecdote, which he included as the introduction to his essay on Kabbalah and myth,[184] he couched the quandary as the insistence of the kabbalist teacher that candidates not ask any questions.[185] Later in his life, Scholem admitted that he was actually referring to himself when conveying this story. My sense is that if not an exaggeration of his meeting with kabbalists at the beginning of his career, the emphasis on this comment amidst all the differences in learning between the kabbalistic yeshivot and the university amounts to an intentionally veiled rhetorical device by Scholem, which served to justify, for himself and for his readership, the foregone conclusion that the scholar is best served by approaching the static text of the past *alone* in the act of reading. This is not to say that Scholem was insensitive to the experiential component of the kabbalists, nor to the texts he lived with his entire adult life (though he commented on his failure to achieve some form of illumination through the practice of scholarship).[186] Rather, I understand Scholem's comment to be the self-legitimizing definition of the solitary intellectual life of the scholar outside of the traditional learning of the kabbalistic world and the encounter with the written word by the academic on paper, such that the contribution of a living voice, however legitimate or fruitful in other contexts, is an interference in the path of the scholar.[187]

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[184] Scholem, 'Kabbalah and Myth', pp. 87-117.

[185] Boaz Huss, 'Ask No Questions: Gershom Scholem and the Study of Contemporary Jewish Mysticism', *Modern Judaism* 25 (2005), pp. 141-158.

[186] See the discussion in Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 12.

[187] Compare to the characterization of Scholem's methodologies and a sample of recent works published in Jerusalem in the review by Boaz Huss, 'A New Age in Research of Jewish Mysticism', *Theory and Criticism* 27 (2005), pp. 246-253 [Hebrew]. Huss' *Zohar* monograph, it should be noted, marks a major departure from previous scholarly methods in that he undertook a cultural reception of the *Zohar*, documenting a history of ideas of reading communities. It is to his credit that he went beyond the horizon of the previous generations. This feature was unfortunately missed by Yehuda Liebes in his

Scholem clearly sought ideological or cultural distance as the methodological guard of proper criticism. His comment that he (whimsically, or perhaps at best, wishingly) viewed himself as the transmigrated soul of the Christian kabbalist, Johannes Reuchlin, in this context, is telling of the desired distance Scholem demanded of his idealized image of himself as the preeminent scholar of the field.[188] This self-image offered no necessary contradiction to Scholem in his life-long quest to revitalize Jewish culture with the return to Jewish mysticism through its academic study. Scholem's path was one of serious scholarship that rarely, if ever, made compromises to what his readership needed or expected of him. Scholem produced editions, essays and monographs that could not always be digested by those untrained in the field. To be sure, despite this historically contextualized appreciation, it should be noted that Scholem never joined such figures as Agnon, Bialik and Tishby in the *kinnus* movement which published anthologies of sources so that wider audiences could read classic sources such as midrash and *Zohar*.[189] Scholem's

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review of Huss' book, delivered at the Ben Zvi Institute, March 27th, 2008 and printed in the supplement of *Meqor Rishon*, May 5th 2008 [Hebrew]. Liebes valorizes research on the *Zohar* that is undertaken from an empathy with the next, as opposed to a distanced appreciation of others' views, each of equal importance to researcher, and identified by him as a postmodernist approach. Liebes terms this type of research legitimate, but relegates it to social and historical interests outside of the humanities. In my view, Huss' study can be seen as a symptom of the growth and development of the field of Jewish mysticism which has taken on new interests and methods.

[188] Gershom Scholem, 'Die Erforschung der Kabbala, von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart', *Vortag gehalten anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Reuchlin-Preises der Stadt Pforzheim*, 10. Sept. 1969, p. 1, Pforzheim 1969; reprinted in *Judaica: Studien zur jüdischen Mystik*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, III, pp. 247-264 (p. 247), and translated in Hebrew in: Gershom Scholem, *Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Tel Aviv 1986, vol. 2, pp. 309-320 (p. 309). See the discussion of David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, Cambridge and London 1979, p. 31; Saverio Campanini, 'Some Notes on Gershom Scholem and Christian Kabbalah', *Gershom Scholem (1897-1982): In Memoriam*, ed. Joseph Dan, Jerusalem 2007, volume 2 [=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 20], p. *14.

[189] One noted exception is Scholem's selections from the *Zohar* in German translation which he published with Schocken in Berlin 1936: *Die Geheimnisse der Torah: ein Kapitel aus dem Sohar*. This would not warrant Scholem's inclusion in the *kinnus* project, for inasmuch as the volume appeared as well in other languages it never

popularity and the powerful and enduring impact of his writings took place despite his methods, not because of them.

It is important to dwell here a moment on the literary forms encouraged by these different scholars, in editorial practice and for their methodological goals, which served their interests and intended audiences. Tishby's *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, now published in English translation as *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, is joined by Bialik's *Sefer ha-Aggadah* (*Book of Legends*)[190] in culling by topic selections from Jewish classics for wider consumption. Tishby's book was nonetheless a more academic project, with detailed introductions that advanced scholarship on major subjects of zoharic Kabbalah. In contrast to *Sefer ha-Aggadah*, Tishby's project traversed greater ground in popularizing generally inaccessible texts, as the *Zohar* is largely composed in Aramaic and was now presented in a highly readable Hebrew translation prepared by Fischel Lachover. Midrash, as a literary form, was produced in small textual units, and often anthologized around the literary frame of Scripture. While Bialik reconfigured these anthologies to produce his own selection for modern consumption, he was aware that the traditional and historical literary form was incidental or in some way preserved. Tishby's project, by contrast, deconstructed the literary forms of the printed *Zohar*, grouped them by the subjects that interested his thematic mapping and offered new titles to these passages. In a remarkable letter, Bialik wrote to Benjamin Lewin about his multi-volume collection of the responsa of Geonim. Bialik was of course pleased about the publication of rabbinic documents from manuscript, but strongly criticized Lewin for reorganizing the material according to the form of the Talmud, presumably so that it would be more amenable to study in the traditional world.[191] I present an extensive passage to give a flavour of the seriousness of the matter as felt by Bialik and the harsh tone with which he chastised Lewin:

> In our day, it is important to see the words of the Geonim as a whole, as they are, the words of each Gaon on their own, gathered together in a proper order

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included the original texts, nor a Hebrew translation.

[190] *Sefer ha-Aggadah*, Odessa in 1908-11; see now: Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik and Yehudah H. Rawnitzky, *Book of Legends / Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. William G, Braude, New York 1992.

[191] Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, 'Letter to B. Lewin', *Iggerot Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik (1924-27)*, ed. F. Lachover, vol. 3, Tel Aviv 1938, p. 190 [Hebrew]. My thanks to Zeev Gries for this reference.

> in one place. Such a collection [*kinnus*] would be beneficial in providing as full a picture as possible of the personality of each Gaon from various perspectives, content and style. Instead, what have you done? You evaluated each Gaon by dismembering his limbs, scattering his bones and ashes across the surface of the sea of the Talmud. To what may this be compared? To someone who removed a thread from the Tractate and says, here is something for the weave of your garment. Are these [still] threads which comprise a weave? What remains of the character of each Gaon and his full stature after such a great scattering, that you have added to the previous scattering. Your intention was to make it easy for rabbis and [their] students and you abandoned the methods of scholarship and its proper demands. The sorrow will be even greater in our view since so few work in this field, and especially [if we consider] the capable ones. And this work of collecting [*kinnus*] the words of the Geonim and presenting them [*sidduram*] will not be done again [*lo te-'aseh pa'amiim*] and you have thus become the person who obstructs the path of those who come after you for a very long time. There is no [good] fortune for Israel, and also not for Jewish scholarship [*ḥokhmat yisrael*].

Again, in appreciating the early history of modern scholarship, what concerns us is whether the object and means of study is solely textual, and what precisely is meant by the term textual in such a determination. From a wide array of interests, recent criticism has reconsidered scholarship's sole reliance on the written word as espoused by Scholem. Moshe Idel has forwarded new perspectives that shift our attention from a history of ideas that is learned from text as text, to a phenomenology of the experiential use of the mystically interpreted rituals of Jewish life. Accordingly, the text expresses and invites the rabbinic practitioner to engage the divine in theurgic practices that affect change Above as well as in the kabbalist and the world below. Thus, the scholar is asked to focus on the uses of the text, its expression of the mystical life as practiced in these medieval societies as well as the prescription for the experiential activity for its readership. Consolidating these principles, the composition and study of the kabbalistic text serves to affect the divine no less than it records the ongoing forms of practice and experience that already take place. This reorientation in appreciating the kabbalistic text amounts to a very different hermeneutic stance regarding what the text represents and how it should be read. These are the basic epistemological questions of the field and in the following, I will attempt to outline the theoretical assumptions of editorial practice in the field of Jewish mysticism.

An appreciation of theory in the study of kabbalistic texts, both manuscripts and printed editions, affords the opportunity to isolate the hermeneutics that

are in play in the scholarship of Jewish mysticism. While the goal of scholarship is to uncover and voice the meanings of the religious phenomena in their historical contexts, not all of the meaning adduced from the scholarly engagement with the texts coincides with what the kabbalists might have been able to voice themselves. This is not a critique of scholarship as much as an opportunity to isolate the theoretical and methodological lenses that are unique to academics. Reversing this focus away from the scholarly community, we might ask how the kabbalists wrote and read the books versus how scholars interpret them.

Scholarly editing, within and without of Jewish studies, has traditionally been driven by authorial intent. This method, known as intentionalist editing, has been shunned in recent years due to its negative construction, namely that it seeks to peel away the layers of corruption and recovers what the editor deems to be the original or most appropriate reading based on his or her understanding of what represents the text that emerged in the original context. A vicious circle is thus created, one that devalues the history of a text's transmission and reception, and presumes to have certainty in distinguishing between the original and later versions.

Outside of Jewish studies, or more precisely, outside of Kabbalah research, textual scholarship has developed an appreciation of what Tanselle has called 'the corporeal reality of literary works'. Filtered through the medium of time and documents that are not just part of a work's transmission history, but which alter the text and incorporate the changes and contributions of others, the physicality of textual witnesses take the study of the original in a different direction and with new methodologies. As Tanselle writes:

> A work, at each point in its life, is an ineluctable entity, which one can admire or deplore but cannot alter without becoming a collaborator with its creator (or creators); a reproduction is an approximation, forever open to question and always tempting one to remedial action. Equating a reproduction with the work it aims to copy is incoherent, for an interest in works is a historical interest, and copies are the products of later historical moments. A reproduction may of course be regarded as a work in its own right, but the historical focus has then shifted. Artifacts can be viewed both as works in themselves and as evidence for reconstructing other works, but this dual possibility in no way lessens the conceptual gap between the two historical approaches to artifacts.[192]

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[192] G. Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*. Philadelphia 1992, p. 14.

Tanselle reflects on the written medium as that which refracts and transmits an idea, expressing it discursively on paper. He thus compares writing and copying to musical performances which similarly offer renderings of an original (intention) and should thus be seen as approximations. This move re-evaluates variations produced within the continuum of a work's transmission history so that not all alterations should be seen as revisions or taking part in the production of a different work. For Tanselle, a textual artifact deserves our respect if for no other reason than it has survived.[193] In his extensive treatment of this question, Tanselle recasts the links of transmission, and textual criticism, as efforts to reconstruct a work, recreating the work as it were, however imperfectly, from some original intention, the expression of an idea.

This view relativizes the textual variation that is found within a work's transmission history and thus extends greater meaning and value to all sources as being significant moments of its performance, as responses to some original intent or concrete expression, which take place in history, but which are not in this argument, contextualized as the work's (reception) history. At least for the purposes of textual scholarship and editorial practice in medieval Jewish mysticism, where scholars sift through copies of copies, and where manuscripts have been shown to include marginalia and countless revisions and interpolations as part of the preserved text, it would be better to define the transmission history itself as performance.[194] The author may still be preserved as the initial or final intention of an individual who offered a literary expression of a work in his lifetime, but in the absence of a successful reconstruction of such, and the overwhelming weight, quantitatively and qualitatively, of reader responses in the rich history of the text's use, the important question for scholarship is shifted away from a dichotomy between the lost original and the value of its later witnesses, to the manuscripts themselves as the site of textual discussion which amounts to viewing the work as the object of study.

To further address this question within the localized hermeneutics of the field, I turn to a mystical idea found in a late midrash, but which served many kabbalists and modern scholars in understanding the function of the written word. This text, *Midrash Konen*, asks where the Torah was prior to creation?[195]

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[193] Ibid, p. 20.

[194] Compare to Mark Saperstein, 'The Sermon as Oral Performance', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality & Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 248-277.

[195] *Midrash Konen*, printed in Y. Eisenstein, *Oṣar ha-Midrashim*, New York 1927, p.

The question was prompted by an interpretation to the opening passage of the ancient midrashic collection, *Bereshit Rabba*, which describes the Torah as the blueprint from which God works to create the world, that is, as an artisan or architect who (visually) consults the discursive expression of divine Wisdom, already presented in Proverbs in the feminine personification as God's partner. Although *Midrash Konen* formulates the question as a literal and mythic reading of the earlier tradition, it constructs its argument around the assumptions it chooses to adopt, namely, that a work exists when it is a text that is presented in a written form on a physical medium. What is thus denied is the ideal text, an abstract conception, memorization or intention in the mind of the author, even when in this case the author (and reader) is divine. The later implications for this idea include the identity of God with the Torah, and the Torah as the omnisignifier, recast as the longest name of God, the string of letters that forms the sole case which defies de Saussure's necessary gap between signifier and signified. In the kabbalistic embellishment of the concretization of the discursive Torah, the signified collapses into the signifier so that to learn and know the Torah is tantamount to intimate contact, or union, with God.

I intentionally indulge myself in this apparent digression as a means of demonstrating the small gap that exists between the localized hermeneutics of kabbalistic textual traditions and the material culture of textual production and reproduction of texts and works, and works as texts, within the transmission and scholastic history of medieval Kabbalah. Moreover, the move taken by *Midrash Konen* collapses the distance between God as author and reader and the text written out in an external and physical site which is gazed upon as the other.[196] In other words, the idea of He who intends and renders meaning in

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253. See also Moshe Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah in Hekhalot Literature and Its Metamorphoses in Kabbalah', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981), p. 45 [Hebrew]; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 30-31, 54.

[196] The text of *Midrash Konen* affixes the biblical text on God's arm through a series of associations that end with black fire and white fire connected to the reference in Deut. 33:2 to the right and fire, '*me-yimino eish datlamo*'. Later sources in Jewish mysticism clearly the divine arm as the material site of the biblical text's inscription (see for example *Sodei Razaya*, ed. Aharon Eisenbach, *Sifrei ha-Rav Eleazar mi-Germaiza Ba'al Ha-Roqeaḥ*, Jerusalem 2004, vol. 1, p. 22), even if later Kabbalists reinterpreted this understanding as a euphemism for the phallic organ of (pro-)creativity (*The Early Kabbalah*, introduced by Joseph Dan, foreword by Moshe Idel, translated by Ronald C.

applying the blueprint of divine wisdom to the act of creation is transformed into God's study of His own divine and textualized Self. The move is one of critical resistance to the earlier tradition that externalized the Torah from God, making it the textual Other and in effect offering a metaphysical and epistemological basis for the gap between the signifier and that which is signified. While this gap would be recognized later by the kabbalists who would identify the Torah as the singular, long name of God, equating God with both, *Midrash Konen* is more concrete in transferring the material site of the written Torah to God's skin, so that He studies Himself when He reads.

We have here, to be sure, the basis of the Jewish mystical tradition about the textual condition.[197] By transferring the text from external object to the body of God, *Midrash Konen* asserts a realist position, namely that the Torah as text is not constructed by its author, but is identified with His being, in this case the divinity. The midrash itself states its intent to destabilize the idea that all texts must be found, and so transmitted, on a concrete medium. While the divine body substitutes as an alternative concrete form, it is nevertheless removed from the created world, and the human intervention and corruption of this unique work, the Torah. When Nahmanides, as a kabbalist, later reformulates the tradition of the Torah as God's name and God Himself, the ideal Torah emerges as the omnisignifier that transcends the textual condition, which humans can at best record faithfully on their material media and read as the constructed text and narrative of the revealed word. The import of this idea is that there is a strong affinity between the approach to text in the minds and editorial practice of medieval kabbalists and the methodology that I propose for modern textual scholarship of these documents. That is to say, the death of the author was embraced for different reasons in kabbalistic literary culture, even if by way of very different assumptions, because these mystical adepts were intent on learning the secrets of the Torah as the linguistic medium through which they would gain access to the divinity, itself constituted textually.

In kabbalistic study, the production and alteration of the very texts that discursively mediate the ideas about the written Torah reinscribe the linguistic

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Kiener, New York and Mahwah 1986, p. 73). See further, Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 54; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 543 n. 420.

[197] See George Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*, Philadelphia 1989, pp. 64-66. The phrase is featured most prominently in Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition*, Princeton 1991. See also the discussion and review of the scholarly positions of these and others in D.C. Greetham, 'Textual Scholarship', p. 104.

formulation into a chain of documents that construct the material culture of kabbalistic study and transmission. Written documents never fully captured what began as an esoteric oral culture, but they also were never intended to supplant orality as a means of transmission, concealment and interaction between the kabbalists. Even as Kabbalah emerged in various configurations, with each circle and period espousing a different relationship to literary production and the relative emphases on esotericism and transmission, we can *always* speak of the interface between the written and the oral.[198] Kabbalists were not only careful proofreaders and textual critics, engaged in every category of textual scholarship prior to the modern period and the rise of academic methodologies, they were also active participants in shaping the text in all stages of the life of kabbalistic writings. The discursive medium was not, as many have claimed in the philosophy of mysticism, the later literary record of experiences that defied linguistic expression or were phenomenally prior to linguistic constructions. Writing for the kabbalists was the first part of the textual process which involved the initial writer's later revisions, and numerous other contributors, who are more commonly termed as students, scribes, redactors and commentators of the text.

The kabbalistic textual process allowed for the dialogical interaction of the kabbalists to evolve across the pages and versions of their texts. The affinity of kabbalistic textuality to Bakhtinian literary criticism is duly noted here in the sense that kabbalists share a particular language such that glosses and commentaries[199] can arguably be seen as intertextual continuations of the act of writing that are in close dialogue with the initial 'authorship'. By extending the construct of work to include the later textual moments, we might appropriate here, with some significant modifications, Scholem's concept of the Torah as 'a living organism'[200] for the kabbalists, which might better approach the sense of the dynamic text that I am arguing.

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[198] Following the formulation of Jack Goody in his monograph, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*, Cambridge 1987.

[199] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin and London 1981.

[200] See especially Gershom Scholem, 'The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism', *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, translated by R. Manheim, New York 1965, pp. 5-31.

8. Choosing a Method of Editorial Practice

There is no one ideal method for editing texts and kabbalistic texts are no exception. The editor must evaluate the materials available and clearly define the goals of research for choosing a methodology most appropriate for the aims of the edition and every edition is constructed to achieve a certain goal. In this sense, textual scholarship does not diverge from the expected norms of the history of ideas, thematic and interpretive studies of literature. In all, experience and nuanced approaches enrich the choices made by the scholar, who must choose from his or her toolbox of theories, methods and interpretive strategies in order to yield a sound result that offers a particular contribution. So there will be no misunderstanding, let me state that my point is anything but the relativization of methodology, liberating any individual scholar from the need to justify a methodological choice. On the contrary, there are clear standards, and in our day, nearly a century after Scholem's foundational research into kabbalistic manuscripts and the ideas he extrapolated from them, many lessons have been learned; mistakes should not be repeated *and* justified under the banner of individual freedom and choice.

In the following, I will attempt to describe the narrowing of options available to scholars of different areas of Jewish studies and to depict the editorial methods most appropriate for the specific nature of kabbalistic texts, their ideas and transmission histories. Much has been learned about the production of Jewish manuscript copies of Hebrew works and various studies have been published in the last two decades that illuminate their techniques, the processes of transmission and the dynamics that account for the various phenomena observed in the texts that have survived.[201] Jewish studies and editorial practice of Jewish literature are heavily indebted to the advances made by editorial practice in the study of ancient Greek, philosophical, Christian and classical texts.[202] Additional advances have been made in the study of medieval

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[201] See Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology: Tentative Typology of Technical Practices Employed in Hebrew Dated Medieval Manuscripts*, Jerusalem 1981; idem, *The Making of the Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies in Paleography and Codicology*, Jerusalem 1993; On the dynamics of editing and book production see especially Ya'aqov Spiegel, *Chapters in the History of the Jewish Book: Scholars and their Annotations*, Ramat Gan 1996 (second edition, 2005) [Hebrew], idem, *Chapters in the History of the Jewish Book: Writing and Transmission*, Ramat Gan 2005 [Hebrew].

[202] D.C. Greetham, *An Introduction to Textual Scholarship*, New York and London 1994. Note that a chapter the volume, *Scholarly Editing – A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C.

literature and its relationship to the invention of printing, particularly the works of Shakespeare, which address that group of circumstances related to authorial intent, performance, and a particularly complex situation of the relationship between versions in manuscript and print.[203] Editing methods of texts from modern times offer less to the study of medieval Kabbalah in that they often focus on the relationship between the surviving text of the author's manuscript (preserving some stage of the work in its development), the printer's text and the first few editions, which may have included some of the author's corrections.[204] Rarely has an autograph of medieval kabbalistic manuscript survived; manuscript witnesses are often scattered across various regions and centuries. Kabbalistic manuscripts thus do not share a common orthography, and differences between accidentals and substantives serve as far less of a guide of choosing one of the many manuscripts produced in a work's later transmission history.

The methods of editorial practice for kabbalistic manuscripts, including the manuscript witnesses of ancient Jewish mystical literature (many of which were produced in the Middle Ages), are nevertheless very different from those employed in the study of rabbinic literature, at least when comparing the methods proposed here against those traditionally used in the academy over the last few generations in determining the 'correct' reading of the Talmud as an already-edited document.[205] This is to say, that on the whole, Rabbinic texts are

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Greetham, New York 1995, lacks a chapter on (medieval) Jewish literature.

[203] Michael Warren, 'Textual Problems, Editorial Assertions in Editions of Shakespeare', *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, Chicago and London 1985, pp. 23-37; Ernest A. Honigmann, 'Shakespeare as a Reviser', *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, Chicago and London 1985, pp. 1-22. One might compare the changes entered into the text of Shakespeare during the performance of the plays, that is their use, implementation and reception by others, to the study, redaction and interpolation of comments by later readers of kabbalistic texts. On this see Paul Werstin, 'The Science of Editing', *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy, Malden, Mass.; Oxford and Carlton, Australia 2007, pp. 109-127, Leah S. Marcus, 'Editing Shakespeare in a Postmodern Age', Ibid., pp. 128-144.

[204] Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, Chicago 1983; Charlottesville 1992.

[205] Dov Zlotnick, 'The Methodology of Professor Saul Lieberman in Determining the Correct Reading of a Text', *Saul Lieberman (1898-1983), Talmudic Scholar*, ed. M. Lubetski, Lewiston 2002, pp. 4-11.

often edited in order to reproduce the text of the edited document that became stabilized in antiquity out of the process that transformed oral traditions into a written record, only to be corrupted by later copyists and uses of the work, while any earlier versions were often lost and so devalued by the later readership including much of modern scholarship. Kabbalistic manuscripts, however, often preserve the literary form(s) of a work that existed *prior* to the editing of the document that was printed. These recensional differences aside, one can say that even on the level of the wording of the text in the various manuscript witnesses, kabbalistic manuscripts, more so than Talmudic manuscripts, show greater instability that cannot be attributed to the more traditional senses of corruption caused by copyists within its transmission history. With all the obvious problems of offering a generalization, I would nevertheless suggest that medieval kabbalistic texts, more so than other forms of rabbinic literature, particularly from antiquity, display greater multiplicity of their textual states and therefore lend themselves more readily to the complex methodologies of multiple editions that layer or include various readings of a work as text at the expense of the presumption of the 'correct' reading.

Much has been written about the meaning and aims of critical editing and what can be qualified as 'critical'.[206] Few in the field of Jewish mysticism have received proper training in manuscript research and editorial practice. Even though Karl Lachmann's stemmatics have been learned generally and applied by very few, my sense is that the most readable script of the witness that contains the largest frame of the work is often selected. Many scholars prefer to follow a particular copy-text and emend the readings from another witness or from their own sense of how the text should read, constructing an eclectic edition. These choices unfortunately are often based upon expediency, the first readily available source which might have been selected because it is found in the regional library, was copied in the script with which the editor is most familiar or that in a visit to the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, it was the collection from which obtaining advanced written permission was not required.

Very few kabbalistic texts have been edited critically by members of the academy. As has been argued in this volume, all too often the efforts have been aimed at publishing 'the work' and so the best-text method has been used with impunity. In fact, so great is the need for editions of kabbalistic texts that many

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[206] Jerome McGann, 'What is Critical Editing', *The Textual Condition*, Princeton 1991, pp. 48-68.

scholars seem to believe that it is sufficient and even better if such projects were undertaken by the traditional community so that *any* form and quality of the text be issued so as to relieve academics from what is seen as a burden, one that distracts them from the higher calling of their theoretical and historical pursuits. Such a dichotomy between text and theory is an anathema to the scholarly aspirations of the field, despite its pervasiveness. For better or worse, some scholars even imitate these editorial practices as a way of expediting a textual project that will culminate in theoretical analysis.

Non-critical methods of producing a text for publication continue much of the practices of medieval scribes who integrated the texts of the manuscripts at their disposal into a composite that removed the oddities, apparent mistakes of transmission and lack of uniformity in the style, all according to their best understanding of the sources. Even though such scribes and printers were learned in the textual traditions of the texts they were fashioning anew, their methods were not critical in that they did not adhere to a particular goal rooted in either an appreciation of the history of a work and its transmission, nor a responsibility to place before the reader careful notation as to the appearance of the data that was before them when they began their work. To be sure, medieval scribes and printers often did work with a concept of an original text, an idealistic conception of a 'work' and could appreciate differences in style and identify corruptions to the text. All this they certainly shared, and were arguably better at the task, than their modern academic successors.

In response to uncritical copying and synthesizing of texts, many scholars believe that it is best to produce a diplomatic edition that faithfully re-presents all the data recorded in a particular manuscript witness, either by photographic reproduction or careful transcription. In order to present information from various manuscript witnesses, the 'best-text' or copy-text method chooses the single manuscript as the base text of the proposed edition, and only very necessary corrections and emendations are entered into the text, with all such changes being duly noted.[207] Indeed, eclectic editions have been defended as necessary in presenting the textual 'archetype' for a work whose original

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[207] Walter Greg, 'The Rationale of the Copy Text', *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950), pp. 19-36; Fredson Bowers, 'Greg's "Rationale of Copy-Text" Revisited', *Studies in Bibliography* 31 (1978), pp. 90-161; idem, 'Notes on Theory and Practice in Editing Texts', *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography*, ed. P. Davidson, Cambridge 1992, pp. 244-257.

version cannot be accurately reproduced.[208] The problems of such a presumption have been discussed above, even if in defense of such a methodology one could argue that it serves a certain purpose and that the editor and reader understand that the edition contains a text that does not exist in any manuscript and may never have existed in the final form presented. A stemmatic or genealogical method does not seek to choose from among the surviving manuscripts, but uses the available witnesses as the prism through which the work can be reconstructed. In this third method, the witnesses are used to reflect back on how the work was transmitted and corrupted so that the manuscripts are compared to appreciate their relationships to one another and from that understanding recompose the work from parts or layers (of that work) that can be recovered between them. Finally, the eclectic method allows the modern editor to pick and choose from all the manuscript data the best textual version that he or she wishes to present as the restoration of the work in its specific form, allowing decisions to be made by the editor for any particular word or phrase.[209] Nevertheless, a clear distinction should be drawn between a diplomatic or eclectic edition and a scholarly edition that does not use a copy-text.[210]

As outlined in various sections of this study, scholars are generally divided into two methodological camps. The first camp consists of those scholars who seek to remove contamination and edit what is ultimately the work they see to be hiding behind the various manuscripts. The second camp focuses on exactitude in transcribing a particular witness with all its unique features and accidentals. While many have offered compromises to the two extremes, the philosophical question rests, I believe, in the expectations of the audience, or rather, in the identification of the author with the intended or imagined audience of readers, who use the edition for specific purposes, often defined by

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[208] See Emanuel Tov, 'Hebrew Scripture Editions: Philosophy and Praxis', *From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech*, ed. F. García Martínez, A. Steudel, E. Tigchelaar, Leiden-Boston 2006, p. 304.

[209] George Thomas Tanselle, 'Greg's Theory of Copy-Text and the Editing of American Literature', *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975), pp. 167-229 (rpt. in Tanselle, *Selected Studies in Bibliography*, Charlottesville 1979 and idem, *Textual Criticism Since Greg: A Chronicle 1950-1985*, Charlottesville 1987, pp. 1-64).

[210] George Thomas, 'Editing without a Copy Text', *Studies in Bibliography* 47 (1994), pp. 1-24; Richard Bucci, 'Tanselle's Editing without a Copy Editing'. *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003-2004), pp. 1-44.

the cultural norms of that community. Editions of the Talmud are a case in point, where the full gamut exists, from precise transcriptions, electronic databases, and editions that seek to replace known editions based on earlier electronic texts.[211] In the case of rabbinic literature, editions produced within the academy cannot ignore the greater context of a traditional community that has and continues to study the same texts in editions that compete, practically if not formally, with the efforts of academic scholars. I believe this fact has to affect the mentality of the editors when considering when to amend a poor or impossible reading and 'intervene' for the sake of the audience. This is thus a major difference with the considerations of editors of Jewish mystical literature, who with the strong exception of the *Zohar* and Lurianic works, deal with texts that are often long forgotten and will be read almost exclusively by members of the academy.

Chaim Milikovsky has discussed these methods and their application in the study and editing of rabbinic literature in his article, 'The Search for the "Original Text"'.[212] He rejects the views of his colleagues who believe that a modern editor cannot peel away the medieval corruptions and editing and must therefore present the texts of particular witnesses without critical editing. He also disagreed with those who believe that since different editings or recensions exist of a particular rabbinic work, the scholar cannot choose between them or integrate their readings in a uniform text. At the heart of Milikowsky's interest is the definition of the object of study as the textual formulation of rabbinic traditions as they were composed in antiquity. He thus argues against the best-text method, as it is based upon a witness that represents one scribal tradition which necessarily distances the editor from the lost original or ancient version. He seeks to rehabilitate the notion of an ideal textual version, a text that does not exist in any single manuscript. Citing Tarrant, he voices this criticism of contemporary editorial practices: 'Instead of seeing manuscripts as embodiments or versions of the text, the classical editor regards them as

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[211] See Shlomo Naeh, 'Review of *Talmud Yerushalmi According to Ms. Or. 4270 (Scal. 3) of the Leiden University Library, with Restorations and Corrections, Introduction by Yaacov Sussman*, Jerusalem 2001', *Tarbiz* 71 (2001), pp. 569-603 [Hebrew].

[212] Chaim Milikowsky, 'The Search for the "Original Text": An Inquiry into the Text and Editing of *Seder Olam* and *Leviticus Rabba*', *Studies in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature in Memory of Tirzah Lifshitz*, ed. M. Bar-Asher et al, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 349-383 [Hebrew].

imperfect carriers of an entity that is wholly independent from them and far superior to them in value'.[213]

Milikowsky's complaint is that scholars of rabbinic literature have lost sight of their responsibility to the reader in providing a readable edition of what is thought to be the ancient original and instead have substituted for this goal studies about the transmission history of the textual witnesses. Milikowsky's claim is that the business of critical editing is to sift through surviving data and make decisions, and if not, then the editor has no business producing an edition. As he writes, 'After all, it is the editor, having spent so much more time with the text than anyone else, who must be considered the person most competent to decide which variant is the most original reading that can be recovered from the extant documents. And to conclude, I would even suggest that any editor who does not feel that he can accept this responsibility should refrain from editing critically any text'.[214] Indeed, synoptic and line editions provide the raw data that serves scholars and students of texts without the need to bring critical skills to bear on textual witnesses. Milikowsky's claim is that editions that present a main text, regardless of the method or critical apparatus that accompanies it, should be aimed at presenting before the reader a scholarly impression, in fact a decision, about what pre-dates the later corruptions and changes in its transmission history.

This theory is not appropriate though for all forms of Jewish literature, particularly medieval kabbalistic manuscripts. Whatever necessary or conditioned limitations may exist for restoring the original text from manuscript witnesses, an idealistic conception of a work negates an appreciation of a text as an ongoing work, whether that be revisions made by the authors, or the changing identity of an anthology as an edited work that underwent various recensional revisions. Moreover, as I have argued throughout the chapters of this book, some literary phenomena are best understood *along the continuum of the changes, interpolations, and permutations of a text, as the text grew organically over time*, thereby appreciating its identity precisely as its growth and modifications, as in the parable of the 'Ship of Theseus'.[215] Certain kabbalists and far too many modern

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[213] R. J. Tarrant, 'Classical Latin Literature', *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, New York 1995, p. 96 cited by Milikowsky, Ibid., p. 362 n. 36.

[214] *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. C. Bakhos, Leiden-Boston 2006, p. 102.

[215] See Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, p. 189.

scholars have reified texts as static entities, whereas the full manuscript histories demonstrate that kabbalists viewed and treated texts as dynamic structures, whose inner logic produces textual variations and even substantively different texts that spin out from them. Kabbalah is here distinguished from rabbinic literature as a process that produced the first, full or received text (and was used by students and kabbalists in other circles), whose later revised forms continued to influence communities of readers throughout the history of Kabbalah.

The same could be said of rabbinic literature, but the fields of rabbinic and kabbalistic literature part ways based on the goals and aims of these disciplines. Rabbinic literature is viewed as the editorial product that concludes a period in which the rabbis, as a social and intellectual class of traditional figures, produced and exchanged oral traditions that were codified in anthologies and edited transcriptions of their aphorisms and teachings. The works or collections that amount to rabbinic literature were edited in a processes that can be studied, and their stages charted much like any other literature from Antiquity. The difference from kabbalistic literature, which similarly emerged to a certain degree from orality, is that kabbalistic manuscripts have survived from the times of the kabbalists, some even autograph manuscripts, so that the evolution of the text takes on a different quality of meaning than a collection from Antiquity. This difference pales in comparison to an additional difference, that *the object of study in Kabbalah is not necessarily the texts*. Now it may very well be that each field suffers from ideological and theological presuppositions that will be shed in future years. However, according to the way the fields have been formed and continue to operate, Kabbalah studies, including those of Scholem, Idel, Liebes and Wolfson, and each for different reasons, are understood to study the experience and metaphysical reality that is captured in kabbalistic writings. And despite my earlier disclaimer about extra-textual sources and objects of study, my interest in the present study is to afford a more central place for the material sites of Jewish mystical texts in order to advance a new theory of kabbalistic textuality as the basis of editorial practice.

In this spirit, I would like to propose a division of methodologies based upon the culturally specific methods of editing amongst the Jewish mystics in Ashkenaz and Spain. Ashkenazi figures more enthusiastically broke with set forms of texts, editing their own works and the texts of others, with a free hand, changing the language and form of any given work as they pleased. Spanish works by comparison were for the most part internally structured, even if many short and some longer works composed in Spain were rewritten in a new light.

These generalizations notwithstanding, Ashkenazi writing, at least in the esoteric realm, runs in the face of what it means to produce a book, as the term has been understood in modern times. Writing for them was an act of recording, inscribing and producing one of many literary renderings of a living, oral tradition, decidedly not affixed within a specific or reified linguistic structure.[216] It would seem therefore that in order to appreciate the versions of a given text as they were produced and transmitted, an act of medieval editing no doubt, modern scholarship must edit these versions employing a methodology that is appropriate, indeed respectful, of the medieval editing. We must therefore consider what it would mean to properly edit an Ashkenazi text, specifically one that participates in the Jewish mystical tradition, and is found in varying forms and literary contexts.[217] Conversely, it is important to imagine what a Spanish editing of an Ashkenazi work would look like, imposing literary conventions or forms that were not natural to their thinking and scribal norms.[218] There is no doubt that outside of the more formal question of

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[216] On this dynamic, see Jesse Gellrich, 'The Argument of the Book: Medieval Writing and Modern Theory', *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology and Fiction*, Ithaca and London 1985, pp. 29-50. On p. 39 Gellrich offers that writing inscribes a new mythology, that can be appreciated in our context if we translate the mythology into the transcription of an oral esotericism about the Torah in various textual efforts: 'Writing is not conceived of an invention superimposed on things; it is perceived "within a natue or a natural law, crated or not, but first thought within an eternal presence. Comprehended, therefore within a totality, and enveloped in a volume or a book". Such a mode of "writing" is not *écriture*, but a system of a supernatural knowledge determined by the preexistent assumption of the unity and totality – the eternal presence – of meaning. The metaphor writing is the language of a mythology, and the idea of the Book, like myth, is preoccupied with the oneness and continuity that it conceives of as natural'. On the tension between writing and producing a book in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, see especially page 31.

[217] The only edition that respects the various versions, layering them and charting their reception through Spanish Kabbalah is the volume I edited with Asi Farber-Ginat: *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar of Worms*.

[218] Of note here is the annual *Yerushatenu*, [*Our Heritage: Annual for the Teachings of the Sages of Ashkenaz, Their Way of Life and Their Customs*], three volumes to date, 2007-2009. The publication emerged I believe out of the ironic result that many ethnic groups and other interests have all sponsored institutes and publications such that the cultural group perceived to be dominant, Ashkenaz, had yet to produce a platform for the publication of its early sources. I can testify to the same

editorial practice, the greater part of scholarship over the last century has read Ashkenazi esotericism from a Spanish mindset, seeking the doctrines forwarded in these documents, conceived of as works composed by authors. Ashkenazi esotericism, more so than their Spanish contemporaries, encouraged intertextual interpretation, cutting their own explanations short with such statements as 'I cannot explain this matter further', and in practice, expounding more fully on the same issue in a lengthier treatment in a different version found elsewhere.[219] The question here is the status of the text, intended meaning, and the (veiled) presence of the esoteric author behind his words and the structure of the work.

When considering the symbolic nature of the text – as for example in such cases as the *Zohar*, which sees the Torah as the mirror to the divine world – various assumptions of editing ensue.[220] The kabbalistic text can thus be appreciated ontologically, that the words are the signifiers and signified of the divine world, sanctifying the text as divine in consort with the kabbalistic view of the torah itself. How is this manifest textually in the history of manuscripts? What *siglia* are particular to kabbalistic manuscripts as unique attributes of the signifying process of meaning within scribal tradition of kabbalistic texts that were effaced or overlooked by modern technology and the academic, critical edition? How should the modern editor best re-present these forms of the text in editorial practice? Examples of such unique features, best termed *kabbalistic paratext*, are the scribal notations, usually three dots placed above the middle of a word, indicating that the biblical or rabbinic phrase was intended by the author, or so the context is appreciated by the scribe, as a theosophic referent to an ontological grade of the divine. Other manuscripts, particularly from the group of texts referred to as the *'Iyyun Circle*, as well as writings from the earlier generations in Castile, highlight divine names and the names of angels so that they dominate the page at first glance.[221] Other features commonly

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difficulties in the academic setting, when I sought support for the publication of Judah the Pious' *Sefer Gematriyot* or the works R. Asher ben David, where institutions were most excited until they learned that the works emerged from France and Germany.

[219] See the appendix to my article, 'The *Shekhinah* Prays before God', pp. 526-532, which traces the development of such techniques and phrases from Ashkenaz to Spain.

[220] Compare to Scholem's expression of a 'symbolic transparency in his essay, 'Kabbalah and Myth', *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, p. 94.

[221] I would like to acknowledge Menahem Kallus for a conversation on this matter concerning the *'Iyyun* writings. Suffice it to say that anyone acquainted with the works

found in kabbalistic manuscripts are special forms of transcription of the divine name, such as three *yod*s in a triangular form to which some kabbalists offered various interpretations.[222] From manuscript to print, some of these words and markings were incorporated into the flow of the text, demoted as it were from the signifying place above a term as the theosophic referent to a parenthetical comment following the text in the line.[223] Special methodological problems arise regarding these notations, even in the manuscript traditions. R. David ben Yehuda he-Hasid would annotate his own works with interlinear identifications of the sefirotic referents, but as a secondary act of authorship after first completing the text. Since some of his notations seem superfluous, the modern editor must consider whether to edit the final intent of the 'author', who can be considered as complex through the two acts of inscription.[224] A thorough

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from *'Iyyun* circle that focus on the term *'aR'aRYet'a* (see Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, p. 101 n. 201) will recall that the name is often copied in the manuscripts in larger letters, occupying two lines of text and jumps out at the reader. These characteristics are often lost in modern editions. Similarly in the works of Jacob ha-Kohen, angelic names are coded by orthographic irregularities that symbolically structure the work.

[222] For the greater background of scribal practice and the participation of kabbalistic manuscripts with features found in other Hebrew manuscripts of the middle ages, see Lauterbach, Jacob. 'Substitutes for the Tetragrammaton', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 2 (1931), pp. 39-67; Israel Yavin, 'On the Writing of the Name אלהים in Hebrew Manuscripts', *'Alei Sefer* 11 (1984), pp. 37-56 [Hebrew].

[223] See for example the Joseph ben Solomon's Commentary to *Sefer Yeṣira*, Mantua 1562 and all subsequent editions. Compare to the interlinear annotations in Ms. Vatican 291, fols. 53b-150a; Ms. New York, JTSA 1577, fols. 1a-76a; Moscow 521, fols. 1-46a.

[224] On the conclusion that R. David is the author of the interlinear comments and the later notations, see Amos Goldreich, 'Rabbi David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*', pp. 74-78 [Hebrew]. Yuval de Malach has commented to me that only some manuscripts of R. David's *Or Zaur'a* include the interlinear ascriptions. The recently published edition by Bentsion Cohen is based on a manuscript that lacks these sefirotic references. While I believe it would have been better to select a manuscript that included the referents as the base text of such an edition, I am also aware that there might be two authorial versions of 'the work' *Or Zaru'a* and that copied may have been made before and after R. David added the sefirotic names. Indeed this accords well with examples of the 'open book' discussed by TaShma and it should be apparent that a more complex method of editorial practice is in order to present the various forms to the reader without necessarily privileging one over the other.

investigation of kabbalistic paratext would certainly enhance the study of Jewish mystical manuscripts, including a parallel investigation of Hebrew magical manuscripts.

9. *Editorial Practice in the Field of Jewish Mysticism*

The scholar of Jewish Mysticism must grapple with manuscript witnesses spanning over a millennium. Aside from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest esoteric documents studied by scholars emerged from the Cairo Geniza,[225] which include fragments of the Hekhalot literature and magical material. Manuscript material from the German Pietists and early kabbalists has survived from the thirteenth century and on through the Early Modern period. Even after the advent of the printing press and its popularity in later kabbalistic circles, notably in Hasidism, not all materials were printed and the same phenomena associated with scribal transmission found in earlier times mark these documents.

To a large extent, editorial practice in the field of Jewish mysticism finds its place within the larger framework of textual research. As mentioned above, kabbalistic literature in particular is unique in that it often claims to offer a partial written record of what should only be transmitted orally, or which accompanies an oral tradition. The written record of the Jewish mystical tradition, as a specific form of rabbinic culture, forms a stronger case of change in its transmission history than other forms of Jewish literature, whether that be by the hand of the scribe, student or later editor of the material. This is due to the fact that the historically layered sources that constitute the growing library of Jewish esotericism were constantly in use and were refashioned during and through their later use. Here, we can distinguish between medieval copyings and editings that may be compared to ancient fragments not subject to this process, as in the case of the Hekhalot, and those medieval works which most certainly underwent stages of revision and only the later recension or recensions have survived, as is the case with the *Bahir* and possibly the *Zohar*. In the case of *Sefer Yeṣira*, it is clear that the ancient, as well as medieval witnesses, reflect varying degrees of intervention and redaction. The multiple

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[225] On the self awareness of a library, or at least a survey of available items see Miriam Frankel, 'Lists from the Geniza as a Source for Social and Cultural History of the Jews in the Mediterranean Area, *Te'udah* 15 = *A Century of Geniza Research*, ed. M. Friedman, Tel Aviv 1999, pp. 333-349 [Hebrew].

versions can be accounted for by the fact that the text was never truly adopted by any one discourse until it was adopted by the medieval kabbalists as a founding text of theosophical speculation. In all, mystical texts moved from multiple versions of texts to edited or accepted works with overall stability. Of note are the apparently late or final redactions by one author (or student of the author), such as the text of *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, the multiple versions of significantly different length by one author or school, such as the *Book of Unity* by R. Asher ben David, and the various *sodot* of R. Jacob ha-Kohen which his anonymous student edited into the *Book of Illumination*.[226]

We know very little about how kabbalistic works were produced, particularly in the incipient period of the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. The earliest testimony of the kabbalists allows us to divide the (literary) phenomena into a number of categories. The most significant observation is perhaps that of R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen who described the early Provençal figures as those who pursue esoteric fragments.[227] We also know of notebooks of the first kabbalists that included 'chapter headings' or short comments, which should not be confused with short oral traditions recorded in the name of the earliest theosophic masters such as R. Abraham ben David and R. Jacob ha-Nazir. Scholem's history of the Kabbalah, that is the narrative of its founding figures, as distinct from its origins in the causal sense, has long since been reevaluated. The transference of mystical activity from the oral to the written did not first take place amongst the first known kabbalists in Provence. Despite the near complete omission of the German Pietists from

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[226] This phenomenon can be compared to the multiple editions of these and other works printed in medieval and modern times, sparked either by the competition between printing houses, each realizing two editions in separate printing houses as in the cases of *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (Ferara 1557 and Mantua 1558) or the *Zohar* (Cremona 1558 and Mantua 15588-60), or by modern editors who saw the need to re-edit their own works with different audiences in mind, such as the various volumes on *Iggeret ha-Qodesh* with and without a lengthy introduction or Hebrew text. See Mopsik. *Lettre sur la sainteté* (1986; 1994). For the many variations and titles to the work in manuscript and earlier printings see Scholem, 'Is Nahmanides the Author of *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*'; Daniel Abrams, 'Review of: Le Secret du mariage de David et Bethsabée, Texte hébreu introduction, traduction et notes de Charles Mopsik, éditions de l'Éclat, Combas 1994', *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 278-282.

[227] See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 41 who translates the passage as 'the rabbis of Provence, who went in pursuit of every kind of secret science, the possessors of a higher knowledge' רבני פרובינסיא הרודפים אחר כל מיני חכמות הרשומות יודעי דעת עליון.

Scholem's magnum opus, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, it was within the (various) circles of the German esotericists that the first mystical documents were composed. Moreover, with intention, the leading literary figure of German Pietism, R. Eleazar of Worms, was gradually building a library of written esoteric lore. Hence, if scholarship can place aside the uniqueness of theosophic speculation about the sexualized order of the ten *sefirot* as the sin qua non of mystical activity in the Middle Ages, we find that German Pietism marks the break with orality.[228]

We should nevertheless appreciate the complexity of the literary activity, self-awareness and expressed tensions within the authorial personality of R. Eleazar of Worms, who expresses, ambivalence, guilt, and sorrow over the historical position within which he finds himself and because of which he feels compelled to preserve in writing what he had received orally. No monolithic picture emerges here, and a comparison to Maimonides' casting of his own secrets of the philosophic tradition he was re/creating is most appropriate here as he similarly casts himself as the last living figure to know the secrets once known in the ancient past.[229] But R. Eleazar of Worms' did have teachers who apparently wrote in the esoteric realm, and he had students who transmitted his secrets orally during his lifetime and afterwards, and he knew of competing circles who were producing esoteric literature. Reading his self-reflective statements about authorship with suspicion, I sense his relief that the previous generation has past away which affords him the opportunity to release his strong drive to write. This argument does not expose his true intentions but reveals his inner conflict. R. Eleazar wrote numerous documents, texts, works and compendia, some in multiple versions. He had a literary program and defied it as well.[230]

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[228] Abrams, 'The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism'.

[229] See Alexander Altmann, 'Maimonides' Attitude toward Jewish Mysticism', *Studies in Jewish Thought: An Anthology of German Jewish Scholarship*, ed. A. Jospe, Detroit, 1981, pp. 200-219; Moshe Idel, 'Maimonides and the Kabbalah', *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. I. Twersky, Cambridge, Mass. 1990, pp. 31-81; Elliot Wolfson, 'Beneath the Wings of the Great Eagle: Maimonides and Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah', *Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) – His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. Görge K. Hasselhoff and Otfried Fraisse, Würzburg 2004, pp. 209-237; Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*, pp. 60-68.

[230] Note for example the various versions of his commentary to Ezekiel's chariot,

The literary emergence of medieval Jewish esotericism cannot therefore be attributed to the kabbalists nor can it simply be pushed back to the German Pietists, or their main literary figure, as the cause of the move from orality to literacy. It would also be an error to identify the rise of textuality in medieval Europe as the necessary or sufficient cause of such literary production.[231] We know that in the first few generations, books were not created as such, but were retroactively invented as such through editing and redaction by some figures at a later time amidst emerging expectations that structured works be written to produce a kabbalistic library. Amidst the general trend of transforming the means and energy of transmission from orality to literacy, including the transcription, after a number of generations, of what was restricted to oral instruction, we note the imposition of literary categories on existing materials that defy such a literary program. The earliest attempt to define a kabbalistic library is arguably the polemical comment of R. Meir ben Simeon of Narbonne, who grouped them together with the *Bahir*, the Hekhalot texts, *Sefer Yeṣira* and the kabbalistic commentary to the Song of Songs, presumably referring to the work of R. Ezra of Gerona. His comment is not indicative of the self-perception of the kabbalists as to what constitutes Kabbalah or Jewish esotericism, but rather an identification of those works that fueled a phenomenon to which R. Meir was strongly opposed. Indeed, he narrowly shaped the definition of the phenomenon by not mentioning the respected rabbinic leadership in Provence by name. Curiously, he could not, or chose not, to characterize the common denominator that amounted to the heresy he identified and wished to oppose. In substance, he rallied against the *Bahir*, but offered examples from the traditions known from the school of R. Abraham ben David (and R. Jacob the Nazarite), without citing traditions from the *Bahir*, at least in the form that we know from the surviving manuscripts. He thereby sectioned off the 'heresy' of multiple and temporally specific intentions of prayer and listed books that were dear to the kabbalists.

Kabbalistic books as lengthy works with a recognizable literary structure, emerged shortly thereafter, and I wonder to what extent the production of these books was part of an organized effort by the early kabbalists to construct a

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one of the three topics mention in *Mishna Ḥagiga*: Abrams and Farber-Ginat, *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar of Worms*.

[231] See the argument of Talya Fishman, 'Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer and the Textualization of Rabbinic Culture in Medieval Northern Europe', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 313-331.

kabbalistic library that would identify their mystical and esoteric lives and thought as a phenomenon that was expressed in literature? Were they proposing a common definition of themselves as kabbalists, and if so, were they aware of this? Was the formation and invention of written materials as books, including those texts that became books through their later reception and redaction, part of the concerted effort to textually legitimize Kabbalah as such? The answer is surely complex, with competing factors present even within the particular effort of a single figure. What is clear from the examples presented in this study is that the kabbalistic tendency to avoid literary structure, and interpret piecemeal sources and themes in this fashion, thereby preserving or imitating the basic unit of the orally transmitted unit, flourished throughout the early and later stages of kabbalistic literary activity. Alongside this behavior of compilation, authors, students and editors of the texts, were also breaking down texts that were invented as books, such that both vectors of literary construction and de-construction can be identified.

It would be an error to think that this form of textual instability marks the Early Kabbalah as the birth pangs of the formation of an emerging system of thought, editing and production of a literary corpus. I would not want to minimize the role of the emergence of Kabbalah as a literary culture and the suppression or even sublimation of oral transmission into the medium of literary expression by individuals who acted outside of a social circle or without the guidance and supervision of a master in esoteric matters. The later kabbalists did not usually demonstrate much historical awareness as to their position in history, as they did to the inception of a literary phenomenon and the relative break with orality. The major trends of Jewish mysticism, as Scholem aptly termed the symbolic and literary corpora that emerged in different regions and periods of Jewish history, were often sparked by powerful luminaries who established a base of leadership through oral instruction. Skipping forward to one of these latest trends, Hasidism, we see that the movement that quantitatively produced the most impressive library of mystical literature, that is, books by authors, began its career with amorphous collections of aphorisms by the founding father of Hasidism, which were edited, revised and supplemented with additional sayings by the first two generations of students and followers.

The challenge, therefore, for Kabbalah scholarship is to recognize these processes and retain the critical distance that affords an appreciation of these books, without succumbing to the mythically invested allure of participating in the furtherance of constructing books out the raw literary data. I am not only

offering a warning against participating in the medieval practice of sculpting books out of manuscript materials, but also against turning one's focus exclusively to the actual library of books produced by the kabbalists as such. Such a division might be necessary for certain formal inquiries, but all this literature in its form and formlessness is what constitutes Kabbalah, that is, beyond literary strictures. What is important, however, is to understand how philological methods can best present the texts in modern editions for the declared aims of such work. Most editions in the field sorted through witnesses to present either an eclectic text informed by the best manuscripts, or presented the single best witness, noting variations, corruptions and corrections in the accompanying variants to the critical edition. In critiquing these methods, I note the ideologically based presumptions about the nature of the work, the witnesses and the intended function of the edition which biases the choices in preparing these editions.

Textual scholarship in the field of Jewish mysticism has evolved dramatically over the past eighty years since the first dissertation was completed in the university setting.[232] Nevertheless, the pre-history of modern, academic scholarship into kabbalistic manuscripts is clearly heralded by the towering master of Jewish bibliography, Moritz Steinschneider.[233] The study of kabbalistic manuscripts was seen thereafter to have been championed by Gershom Scholem who similarly visited the great libraries of Europe, publishing texts, bibliographic notes and a detailed catalog of the kabbalistic manuscripts in the Jewish National and University Library. Scholem's earliest work with texts was an attempt to ground himself and the fledgling field in a basic knowledge of the originating texts.[234] Those celebrated classics and canonical works, whose pseudepigraphic character hounded the new discipline

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[232] Emile Schrijver, 'Hebrew Scribes and Modern Scholars: Medieval Hebrew Manuscript Research and its Bibliographical Tools', *From Narbonne to Regensburg: Studies in Medieval Hebrew Texts*, ed. N. A. van Uchelen and I.E. Zwiep, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 102-129.

[233] See Charles Manekin, 'Steinschneider's "Decent Burial": A Reappraisal', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 239-251. See also his study which has great implications for the greater project, which is the topic of the present study: 'Steinschneider's "Die hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters": From Reference Work to Digitalized Database', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000), pp. 141-159.

[234] See above, chapter 1, p. 29.

with suspicions and tensions with the traditional community, which felt threatened by challenges to historical assumptions, and from rationalist historians, who were all-to-eager to discredit kabbalistic works as forgeries. As Scholem navigated his research between these poles, he identified numerous works, figures and circles, producing the basic history of Jewish mysticism, which has guided scholarship to this day.

Nevertheless, Scholem was the product of his time and the methodologies then in circulation across various disciplines. As noted in various studies, Scholem's research was grounded in a German, romantic, Hegelian view of history and a historicist ideology, which amongst other goals, sought to integrate an intellectual history of Jewish mysticism within a social history of Jewish life in general. Moreover, Scholem's early research, displays an idealism about the works whose authors he sought to identify and place within the social circles of kabbalists who shared the quality and character of Jewish mystical thought prevalent at any particular time and place. So for example, Scholem's first book, *Das Buch Bahir*, presented an annotated translation of the earliest known kabbalistic work, based on a Munich manuscript dated 1298, but whose text he 'corrected', or rather freely modified, based on better readings from other sources. The object of his study in this case was the work that lay behind the textual witness. It is not so surprising therefore that Scholem never issued an edition of the Hebrew text of this founding work, even though he continued to work on its interpretation through various expansions of his history of the *Origins of the Kabbalah*.

Similarly, we can note Scholem's early work on the *Zohar*, which accepted the integrity and literary boundaries of the *Book of the Zohar*, even amidst an identification of its various literary strata. Scholem sought to place the doctrines of the *Zohar* within the timeline of kabbalistic works in Castile and identify the author and personality, who was, according to this conclusion, solely responsible for the production of this work. Scholem is the most celebrated representative of those who advanced these methodologies, and countless more examples from the forties through the present day could be cited to demonstrate the methodological assumptions and limitations of research into manuscript texts.

More recent textual scholarship has opened up the field to complex appreciations of authorship, transmission, reception history, phenomenology and intention of meaning, far beyond what was possible given the intellectual norms that date back to the nineteenth century. Of particular importance is an appreciation of a manuscript as a cultural *artifact* of what was received,

studied, and imag(in)ed in the eyes of the person or persons who copied, studied and reworked it with glosses and additional notes and changes. Earlier methods surveyed the various manuscript copies of a work as appropriate records of the work and cataloged them for their accuracy and place within a stemma of copies, which could be constructed by tracking the layers of error that were gradually introduced into the work over time.

The future of textual scholarship of Kabbalah rests in adopting methodologies already developed in other disciplines outside of Jewish studies, which have been applied only recently in a number of studies. No longer can a scholar photocopy the few pages of a work, found in a particular manuscript, and discard all others as being of a lesser quality to the chosen base text. Manuscripts (also) should be studied in their entirety, as codices that are telling of what was transmitted and made available at a certain time and place. The constellation of works from different authors is telling of a textual community of readers and the later life of works and ideas as formative factors in the religious and intellectual world of complex circles of learning.

Research of the last two decades has demonstrated the linear progression and formation of theosophical doctrines that was established in earlier studies. The most important building blocks to be dislodged from this edifice of kabbalistic historiography was the composition and early reception of the *Book Bahir*. In my 1994 volume on the *Bahir*, I showed that Scholem's proofs for the citation of the *Bahir* by the first kabbalists in Provence, were enthusiastic and optimistic at best. Even if these early kabbalists knew of the *Bahir*, they didn't cite it or use it comfortably as a canonical source as did their students in Gerona. We thus learn that the Provençal kabbalists drew on separate sources for their intellectual and literary esoteric thought. Moshe Idel has similarly exposed the early-established bias to integrate the various kabbalists who lived in Gerona into a homogenous 'circle'. We now appreciate Nahmanides as a towering figure who did not draw directly from R. Isaac the Blind as did his neighbors in Gerona. Even within Provence, recent scholarship has sought to break down the hegemony of 'the circle' as the monolithic fact which types the activity of a generation or geographic community.

Since the appearance of Moshe Idel's *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, the study of Kabbalah has learned to test the production of new ideas and works against the backdrop of social history and not as its necessary by-product.[235] It

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[235] On Moshe Idel's methodology and specifically his concept of history and phenomenology see Daniel Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism'.

can no longer be assumed, as Scholem argued, that the kabbalists constructed their literary and mythical reflections of their mystical experiences as reactions to the social or political events of the material world. Rather, following Idel's deliberate reframing of methodology, kabbalists and texts traversed territories and intellectual boundaries due to the accidents of history. The reception of Spanish Kabbalah outside of Spain therefore may have ben produced by no specific interest in the material, but by the opportunity of transference provided by the travels of Abraham Abulafia, the expulsion of Nahmanides following the Barcelona disputation, or the expulsion of the Jews from Spain itself. On a smaller scale, we can appreciate the tremendous importance of kabbalists who wandered, intentionally collecting materials from different types of Jewish esotericists, such as R. Isaac and R. Jacob ha-Kohen, R. Menaḥem Recanati, R. Isaac of Acre, and to an extent, R. Joseph Gikatilla.

My interest is not to highlight the wanderings of kabbalists and the books and ideas they carried with them as the main cause of change in the intellectual history of Kabbalah. While these figures certainly played a major role, the movement of texts, by whatever means, and as transmitted in writing, afforded new opportunities for these works to evolve, as their readers and copyists lent them new meanings and at times aggressively intervened in the language of the sources, recasting the phrasing and 'work', in their own image. While these small but extremely important differences become a philological headache for the editor who seeks to establish the 'correct' text of the original, they become a gold mine for appreciating the way kabbalists read and received the written ideas of their colleagues. Early manuscripts and those which bear colophons that provide names, places and dates thus offer a wealth of information which establish who transferred what sources to whom and when. Unfortunately, only about 14 dated Hebrew manuscripts of Kabbalah from the end of the thirteenth century are known to exist. The main point is to recognize that scribal reproduction and transmission do not constitute a separate history from the redaction and formation of the intellectual product of the schools that created and reshaped the texts

Kabbalistic centers often began with a new vision of texts or the heavens as inspired by a central charismatic leader. We can name such figures as R. Abraham ben David (and his son, R. Isaac the Blind), Nahmanides, Isaac Luria and Israel Baal Shem Ṭov as salient examples of charismatic figures who

transmitted their teachings orally, leaving little behind in writing.[236] When reading the 'books' attributed to them, we often find collections of aphorisms or short traditions arranged somewhat randomly in anthologies prepared by a second- or third-generation student of that circle. These editors often included extraneous material, reworked versions of what they heard, remembered or decided to render of their teacher's traditions. They often inserted additional commentary presented as part of the same collection of primary texts.

The editorial problems are tremendous in such cases, as the question must be asked, what is the work within this text that is to be edited? Does the editor wish to identify and present only those traditions that were spoken by the teacher and recorded as faithfully as possible on paper? Alternatively, it could be said that the anthologies of sayings were *authored* by the students as notebooks of traditions from the circle and which intentionally included their alterations and commentary and so should be edited as such. In other words, the early figurehead is not the author of the text or work, but rather his students are the late amalgam that was transmitted as an anthology. Here authorial intent, understood as the intention of the author, cannot guide the modern editor as it is the compiler, anthologizer and student, sometimes all distinct persons, who shaped the literary form and even the content of the document in question.

The printing history of kabbalistic texts and works is instructive on this point and should not only be viewed as later attempts to reorganize, for cultural purposes, the authentic or 'original' works that were produced in earlier times. Whereas the printing of the *Zohar* is a fine example of how modern scholarship has all too often presumed that the last form was informed by the original construction of the text as a work, such that other printings are not necessarily seen as important statements of the diverse and developing history of a text as a work. Printing history and the transmission history of a text in manuscript speaks to the life of a text as a work and as (part of) a literary tradition. Most

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[236] On R. Abraham ben David and his kabbalistic writings see, Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquièrs: A Twelfth Century Talmudist*, Cambridge 1962; Idel, 'Prayer in Provençal Kabbalah'; idem, 'Intention in Prayer in the Beginning of Kabbalah'. On Nahmanides, see above, chapter 3. On R. Isaac Luria, see my analysis of the passage attributed to him (printed in *Liqquṭei Shas le-ha-Ari*, Livorno 1798, fol. 33c) in Abrams, *The Female Body of God*, pp. 138-139. See further the discussion in Ronit Meroz, 'Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 70-71 [Hebrew].

important here is the appreciation of later constellations of textual materials as the kabbalistic *ordering of knowledge*. Take for example the history of *Yalqut Reuveni*, which anthologized short passages from a host of kabbalistic works, by then canonical in various senses. The first edition published in Prague 1660 was arranged as a lexicon of entries ordered alphabetically by subject headings. The later edition printed in Wilmersdorf 1681 expanded the collection of passages and reordered them according to the frame of the Pentateuch, telling of the interpretive lens that arranged the collection of sources for greater ritual and pedagogic use in the community of its readership.

Numerous other examples could be offered concerning the need to transform a text into a work, or to re-organize a work as a commentary to the Torah by appropriating the literary frame of the Pentateuch as the guiding editorial frame (e.g. *Sefer Ḥaredim* or *Maggid Mesharim*).[237] More interesting perhaps are the literary frames that serve ritual purposes and which represented parts of known works of Jewish mystical literature for (canonical) consumption in ritual contexts. Examples of such are prayer books, that under Sabbatean influence, included sections of *Sefer Yeṣira*, or *Ḥoq le-Yisrael* which includes passages from the *Zohar*. Academic scholarship has for the most part dismissed these and other reformulations of literary forms as the object of study, largely because it sees as its aim the liberation, or better, the redemption of the original form for the sake of its intended scholarly audience. The exception which proves the rule is the *Synopsis* of the Hekhalot texts which, against the grain of such a scholarly convention, boldly sought to *preserve* the rather amorphous macroforms, barely being cognizant in such a pursuit of the chapter divisions and literary structure that was preserved or imposed on the textual material by the medieval transmitters of the manuscripts. In all, structure informs meaning and necessarily privileges one textual tradition over another in such cases.

For the traditional community, printing histories are rarely discarded, but are augmented with new material or updated to adopt the additional materials uniquely found in competing editions. The salient example of this phenomenon is the Amsterdam 1715 printing of the *Zohar*, which offered appendices of materials found uniquely in the Cremona 1558 edition, preserving the textual

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[237] On *Sefer Ḥaredim* see Mordechai Pachter, 'The Life and Personality of Eleazar Azikri in Light of his Mystical Diary *Sefer Ḥaredim*', *Shalem* 3 (1981), pp. 127-147 [Hebrew] and see the edition of *Sefer Haredim 'al ha-Torah*, Jerusalem 2003; On *Maggid Mesharim* see above, p. 532.

organization and pagination of the Mantua edition (1558-1560). What was not attempted therefore was a true integration of the two earliest printings, restoring, as it were, the 'original' work that resides behind and between the edited versions.

In many cases, such as those from the circles of R. Judah the Pious or R. Israel Baal Shem Ṭov, textual traditions appear in several configurations in different anthologies, some lacking titles and a clear literary form. In these cases, it is often the later copyist, or as Zeev Gries has shown, the editor and printer who transformed the manuscript into a book, lending it the definitive form and title it needed to achieve such an identity.[238] Early Hasidic literature is a specific case of kabbalistic literature, with some bodies of traditions consisting of short independent units that do not necessarily conform to the literary structure of a larger work by a single author.[239] This problem reverts back to the question of how to edit the Hekhalot literature, in which shorter textual traditions and literary frames exist in certain manuscripts. In the case of the Baal Shem Ṭov, particularly the collectanea-become-works of the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz[240] and those of Ḥayyim Ḥaika,[241] there is a particularly complex situation. As discussed briefly by Gries in his work on the edition of *Ṣeva'at ha-Ribash*, earlier scholarship had suggested that manuscripts of the Maggid's works were created and disseminated only after the publication of competing works of a similar character by Jacob Joseph of Polonoy.[242] While this

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[238] Zeev Gries, 'Toward the Image of the Managing Editor for Jewish Printing Houses at the End of the Middle Ages: Those who Work Behind the Scenes', *Newsletter of the Israel Academy of Sciences* 11 (1992), pp. 7-11 [Hebrew].

[239] For a methodologically sophisticated attempt at dealing with such a work, see Joseph Weiss, 'The Authorship and Literary Unity of the *Darkhei Yesharim*', *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, Oxford 1994, pp. 170-182.

[240] See most recently the introduction to the edition of *Liqquṭei 'Amarim*, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 59-79, which details the various printed editions of the traditions of the Maggid and the manuscripts which he used to produce a new volume.

[241] See Joseph Weiss, 'Contemplation as Self-Abandonment in the Writings of Ḥayyim Ḥaika of Amdura', *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, Oxford 1994, pp. 142-154.

[242] Gedalyahu Nigal, 'R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy and His Works', *Studies in Hasidism: Collected Studies*, Jerusalem 1999, vol. 1, pp. 25-79 [Hebrew]; Zeev Gries, '*Ṣava'at ha-Ribash* and Early Hasidic Conduct Literature', M.A. thesis, Jerusalem 1976 [Hebrew]; idem, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae) – Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Hasidism*, Jerusalem 1989, pp. 292-313 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Editing of

suggestion seems remote considering the existence of early manuscripts that combine the two, it raises interesting questions for editorial practice. Were these compendia produced with the competition of traditions and authority in mind? And were the texts altered in this vein? If so is it the task of the modern editor to respect those choices and even highlight them or sift through such a layer and present the traditions of the Baal Shem Ṭov as they were spoken, or even initially understood by the various students prior to the stage of editorial presentation in the age of printing.

What is clear is that Hasidic anthologies were not created solely to preserve the past but to reconfigure aspects of surviving narratives in order to retell religious experiences and provide written material that would further promote a traditional culture. For the construction of history, that is, the identification of Hasidism as a movement, the resistance and polemics that arose following the publication of *Ṣeva'at ha-Ribash*, prompted by the dissemination of a collection bearing this title, marks the emergence of Hasidism as such.[243] There exists therefore a noticeable gap between the thought of the man conceived of as the 'founder of Hasidism', the edited work which emerged from his sayings and the reception of the published work that bears his name with the strong title presenting it as his ethical will.[244] It might thus be helpful to reconsider in the present context the often-cited passage from *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, which casts much light on the relationship between the written and the oral.

> There was a man who wrote down the Torah [=teaching] of the Besht that he heard from him. Once the Besht saw a demon walking and holding a book in his hand. He said to him: 'What is the book that you hold in your hand?'
> He answered him: 'This is the book that you have written'.

Ṣava'at ha-Ribash', *Qiryat Sefer* 52 (1977), pp 187-210 [Hebrew]; For more recent evidence of the first printing see Israel Ta-Shma, 'Hebrew Printing in Ostrog: Corrections and Addenda', *'Alei Sefer* 6-7 (1979), pp. 209-212 [Hebrew].

[243] Moshe Rosman, 'Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon: The Paradox of Modernization without Secularization', *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), pp. 215-224.

[244] Rosman duly notes with surprise other views, namely that the Baal Shem Tov was not a conservative figure and spawned the movement with the intent that its later opponents attributed to the Hasidim. See Haviva Pedaya's review in *Zion* 70 (2005), pp. 248-265 [Hebrew] of Immanuel Etkes's book, first published in Hebrew in 2000 and now available in English: Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic and Leader*, Hanover, N.H. 2004.

> The Besht then understood that there was a person who was writing down his torah. He gathered all his followers and asked them: 'Who among you is writing down my Torah?'
> The man admitted it and he brought the manuscript to the Besht. The Besht examined it and said: 'There is not even a single word [*dibbur*] here that is mine'.[245]

In my reading of this passage, the Besht is somewhat sarcastic, even if he nevertheless means to say that the recorded text in no way reflects his oral teaching. It is clear though from the plain sense of the passage that someone produced a written record of his oral teachings. The extreme rejection by the Besht of the recorded text as a faithful mirror of his oral lessons indicates quite profoundly that the Besht was disinterested in questions of linguistic formulation and literary interpretation, in the process that could transform his teachings into a literature. This might explain the complexity in the opening part of the passage, which doubles the efforts of transcription on behalf of both a person and a demon.

I suggest that even if we allow for a rather positivistic reading of the text, that the Besht experienced a meeting with a demon holding a book in hand, it psychologically expresses his unexpressed suspicion at the time that there members of his circle who might be capturing his lessons within the confines of

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[245] *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism*, translated and edited by D. Ben-Amos and J. Mintz, Northvale and London 1993, p. 179. For some representative discussions concerning this passage, see Gershom Scholem, 'The Historical Image of Israel Ba'al Shem Ṭov', *Molad* 18 [144-145] (1960), pp. 346-347 [Hebrew], reprinted in idem, *Explications* 1, pp. 307-308; idem, *The Lastest Phase: Essays on Hasidism by Gershom Scholem*, ed. D. Assaf and Esther Liebes, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 123-124; Meir Wunder, 'The First Decade of the Printing of Hasidic Books', *Tagim* 1 (1969), p. 32. [Hebrew]; Zeev Gries, 'Between Literature and History: An Introduction to the Discussion and Inquiry into *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, *Tura* 3 (1994), p. 153; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidisim*, pp. 146-147; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 472; idem, 'Hermeneutics in Hasidism', *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, volume II, From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, in co-operation with Michael Fishbane and Jean Louis Ska, ed. Magne Sæbø, Göttingen 2008, p. 944 [943-952]; reprinted in; *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8, 25 (2010), p. 4 [3-16]. For a discussion of this hagiographic collection of tales and a description of the hermeneutic that isolates each passage, see Karl Erich Grözinger, 'The Source Value of the Basic Recensions of *Shivḥei haBesht*', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London, Portland 1996, pp. 354-363.

the written page. And so, the story continues with him questioning, or interrogating, his followers in search of such an individual, or group of individuals who were involved in this editorial practice. This is quite an ironic twist considering the later history of Hasidism as a return to the traditions of the master, literarily reproducing the act of teaching and valorizing the permutations of traditions as each student, anthologizer and author refracted the meaning in his own image.[246] But this passage, in contradistinction to the later history of Hasidism as a movement sparked by the teachings of the Besht, rejects transcription and individual interpretation in written form.[247]

Quite tellingly, Scholem presented this passage alongside another version of the story from the writings of R. Pinḥas of Koretz wherein the Besht rejected the literary record of his teachings that were produced by a student because his intentions were not pure ('were not for the sake of heaven') and as a result he was taken over by the [demonic] 'shell'[s] and so he 'heard other matters (or: words!).[248] Note how in both versions the possessor of the book of oral teachings is associated with the demonic, either a demon or a student affected by the demonic. The passage thus states that an appropriate spiritual mindset is a necessary prerequisite for any legitimate or authoritative translation of orality into literacy. According to at least these early traditions, orality was privileged

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[246] See the introduction to R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, *Liqqutei Amarim – Tanya*, Vilna 1937, p. 6 where the disadvantage of reading from books is cited due to the possible misinterpretation of the individual. On hagiography and the retelling of accounts about Hasidic masters see Zeev Gries, 'Is the Best of the Story Its Lie? The Place of Hagiographic Literature in the History of Hasidism' *Daat* 44 (2000), pp. 85-94 [Hebrew].

[247] See the unpublished essay of Joseph Weiss, 'The Emergence of the Book in Hasidism', from the Joseph Weiss Archive in the National Library, Jerusalem (4° 1479, folder 44). Jonatan Meir and I intend to publish this essay in the near future. In this essay Weiss cites the passage from *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, writes of the resitance of even those in the circle of the Besht to producing literature.

[248] '*le-khakh nitlabsha bo qelippa ve-shama' devarim aḥerim*'. As cited in the annotated reprinting of his articles on Hasidism (op. cit., p. 123 n. 45), Scholem had used an indirect reference (*Matityahu Guttmann, Mi-Torat he-Ḥasidut I, Torat Rabbenu Pinḥas mi-Koretz*, Bilgoraj 1931, p. 14) and in pen added a reference to *Midrash Pinḥas he-Ḥadash*, Warsaw 1810, p. 9, #52. In Guttman's source the reading of the first part is *she-lo haya katuv devar eḥad*. The material from the Warsaw editing is not found in the new *Midrash Pinḥas*, Ashdod 2001, which includes many sources from various early printed editions and manuscripts.

over writing in that it kept the spirit of the teachings alive in the hearts of the followers, and hence the production of works or books was discouraged as a necessarily tainted medium.

In all, the constant return to the sayings of the master, by their retelling, in the same or different version, a new telling based on the old saying by a student and master to the next generation, and so with written transmission in all its literary forms, editing and anthologizing all become part of a process that keeps the tradition alive. This is a point that is missed by textual scholarship in the field of Jewish mysticism and its adherence to the history of ideas when it reifies the textual starting point and accepted text in order to document the later reverberations (as such). Scholarship's methodology is based on appreciating texts in their context, as they were, but as the Hasidic teachings show, they were taught as part of a process that folded unto itself, blurring the boundaries between the oral and the written and between its various versions. Note for example the passage from R. Israel of Ryzhin, the great grandson of the Maggid:

> Once, on the eve of the *Shavu'ot* festival, he was sitting at the table and did not say any Torah, neither did he speak one word; but he was crying a lot. And on the second night he also behaved this way, like the first night. Only after the blessing over the meal, did he say: Was it not that when the *Maggid*, may his memory be blessed, would say a Torah [oral teaching] at the table, his students would thereafter go to their homes and repeat amongst themselves this Torah. One would say that he heard it on one manner, and the other in a different manner, because each heard it differently. And I say that this is not out of the ordinary, because there are seventy faces to the Torah and each one of them heard the Torah of the Maggid, may his memory be blessed, according to the particular face he has that corresponds to a face of the Torah. And he said: when I look attentively into their faces, there is no need to say [a] Torah, because of 'the recognition of their faces' [metoposcopy, according to Is. 3:9] and this is sufficient for one who understands.[249]

As explicated in a different context by Moshe Idel, this passage shows the waning of what characterized the first generations, namely the multiplicity and polyvocality of a living, oral tradition. And while R. Israel's sadness is tempered by knowing each of the students as individuals, through a magical technique,

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[249] *'Irin Qaddishin Tanyyana*, Barfeld 1887, fol. 23c, as presented in Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 240. I have offered my own translation.

the point I wish to emphasize here is the acceptance in the generation of the Maggid of hermeneutic indeterminacy in its reception as part of the greater project of learning Torah. It is thus not by coincidence here that all teachings and their retellings are called Torah, as part of the ongoing transmission and intended refraction of how the Torah – as ideas, their interpretation and their reception – is used in a discourse and community that keeps on transmitting it. I return here to the statement made by Charles Mopsik:

> Kabbalah signifies tradition, reception, transmission. It is not a body of doctrine passed down since Antiquity by Jewish esoteric philosophers, just as it is not merely a corpus produced with each new conception. What is transmitted is nothing other than the power to transmit. The power to adhere to the text, the power to engender: tradition, like the body of engenderment, is the point of passage through which the invisible allows itself to be glimpsed, through which the unspeakable allows itself to be spoken, through which the flux issuing from the Infinite takes form, link by link.[250]

Kabbalah, so understood, reconfigures the meaning of writing, copying re-writing, copying and anthologizing as part of a single continuum, links in the chain of the esoteric tradition. Anthologizing is, in many cases, the last such link in the transmission of texts, their impact and reinvention. This process continues on through modern times.[251] The editing of anthologies for a modern

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[250] Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul*, p. 68 n. 23

[251] As eloquently stated in a recent monography on Buber's relationship to Hasidic literature, 'Buber expressly sought to continue Hasidism's tradition of interpretive anthologizing. Yet what was in Hasidism a retelling within a diachronic chain of transmission, where transmitter and recipient shared a common discourse, turned, by the very nature of Buber's project, into a cross-cultural synchronic transmission'. Martina Urban, *Aesthetics of Renewal: Martin Buber's Early Representation of Hasidism as Kulturkritik*, Chicago and London 2008, pp. 34-35. On the distinction between synchronic and diachronic transmission, see Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni, 'Transmitting Tradition: Orality and Textuality in Jewish Cultures', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 1-26. For a recent discussion of the use of Hasidic stories in the twentieth century, see David Jacobson, *Modern Midrash: The Retelling of Traditional Jewish Narratives By Twentieth-Century Hebrew Writers*, Albany 1987; Justin Jason Lewis, *Imagining Holiness: Classic Hasidic Tales in Modern Times*, Montreal 2009; Nicham Ross, 'A Love/Hate Relationship with Tradition: Neo Hassidic Writing at the Beginning of the 20th Century', Ph.D. Dissertation, Ben Gurion

audience was thus seen as a way of inducting the reader into the spiritual world of the past by affording interpretative access that would lead to some measure of lived experience as was once captured by the Hasidim, who appreciated retelling as reliving the act of learning or as the spiritual attachment to the teacher.[252] While I am not sure that all Hasidic anthologies were cognizant of the synchronic project of culling sources from different generations and transmitting them to the next, the point is well taken that Hasidic authors and anthologizers were working within a particular discourse. What is interesting here is the contrast between different cultural and textual projects in Early Modern and Modern Judaism.

The manuscript situation of early Hasidic anthologies is, however, reminiscent of the numerological traditions of the German Pietists, in R. Judah the Pious' school. In the introduction to the facsimile edition of Judah's *Sefer Gemaṭriyot*, I described a genre of literature of works and notebooks that contain the traditions taught by R. Judah and those close to him. Many of the traditions that can be considered discrete, defined units, because they explain a particular word or verse according to a numerical value and association, appear in different works. One can see that particular traditions were mobile, edited into different works by students of the master. The modern editor can therefore deconstruct these works and imagine a database of all the traditions which breaks apart the literary integrity and order of the works in order to view atomistically all the brief interpretations to scripture. Here is an interesting case of the medieval organization of knowledge and a suggested academic project for breaking it down into its most basic parts, which did not exist, it may be presumed, when the traditions were taught orally. Such a project does not negate the existence of the literary form that does exist in manuscript, but rather enhances the material by making its constituent parts available to

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University, 2004 [Hebrew].

[252] Urban, *Aesthetics of Renewal*, pp. 17-19. Hasidic tales form an important test case in the crossover and shared domains between genres of kabbalistic literature and other forms of writing. Glenn Dynner, 'The Hasidic Tale as a Historical Source: Historiography and Methodology', *Religion Compass* 3/4 (2009), pp. 655–675. Beyond the question of the historical veracity of these sources, or rather to what extent they can aid the historian in producing new histories of the period, the question for Kabbalah scholarship is what are the appropriate methods for reading this literature for its yield in understanding the traditions and practices of the elite in relation to more popular audiences.

different forms of inquiry, accessing each unit for its study within the larger phenomenon and genre in which it was written.

Telling is the traditional edition of *Sefer Gematriyyot*, issued based upon the facsimile edition that Israel Ta-Shma and I published. The new edition is one of the only editions from the traditional sector that acknowledges its reliance on the work of university scholars and their publications.[253] Indeed, it was the unexpressed hope of the editors that further work be done on this text. The two-volume edition was more than amply introduced and annotated with a presentation of the main text in a most readable typeface. The new editor, however, felt the need to present the text twice, first in the order in which it appears in the unique manuscript and in the second volume, reordered according to the literary frame of the Torah. One cannot deny the usefulness of such a reordering, comparable to the multi-volume index and sampling of traditions from Tosafistic literature as prepared by Jacob Gillis, or even Menaḥem Kasher's voluminous anthology of interpretations, *Torah Shelemah*, even though these projects are modern anthologies of passages from other works. I believe, however, that the second volume of *Sefer Gematriyyot* was not prepared as a tool for a more expansive investigation of Torah commentaries of this genre, but as a marketing device to meet the expectations of traditional consumers who wish to read material concerning the week's portion. As I have suggested above in the case of Nahmanides' cryptic esoteric comments to scripture, a similar synoptic comparison could be created, physically positioning all of his students' comments around his text. So too in the case of German Pietism and later in Beshtian Hasidism, similar traditions can be culled from the various sources to offer comparisons of the traditions as independent units.

The rise and acceptance of Jewish studies in the university is inextricably bound up with the social and cultural changes in the Jewish communities that support these advances. While I am aware that it may be impossible to convincingly distinguish between cause and effect, these communities receive and consume the product(s) of Jewish studies, whether directly or indirectly, and proliferate additional scholarly activity by endowing chairs and providing the young minds who benefit directly from this scholarship in the university

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[253] See the edition of Joseph Al-Ashqar's *Sefer Ṣofnat Pa'aneaḥ*, published by Orot Yahadut ha-Magreb, Lod 2009. See the earlier facsimile edition of Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 154, with introduction by Moshe Idel, Jerusalem 1991 [Hebrew].

and enter this world professionally as scholars in the field. One cannot ignore, of course, the enormous impact of Zionism and the founding of the state of Israel on the cultural context of Jewish studies throughout the world, including foremost the often subtle ideological shifts in the agendas of its sub-disciplines. The role and status of the Hebrew language comes into focus here, as the language of the sources and the spoken language of scholars who produce an tremendous number of specialized studies each year.

Throughout the Jewish world, scholars and publishers seek to make academic book accessible to a wider audience, for both cultural and economic reasons. Put positively, Jewish studies is responsive and responsible to the greater cultural context of the community that helped produce the phenomenon of Jewish studies in the university setting. In more extreme cases, this scholarship is conceived and distributed for its effect on a community outside of the scholarly discourse. The interface between the two is necessary and important, but what interests us most here, is the extent to which the self-perception of the scholar and the methodologies adopted affect the very nature of the scholarly enterprise and skew the results. Here as well we can appreciate the interface between particularist and ethnocentric subdivisions within Jewish studies, which at times fall along the lines of the cultural identity of the editors and the materials they edit. A salient example of this is the traditional periodical, *Yerushatenu*, whose aim is to publish sources and studies about early Ashkenazi texts and customs. Jacob Stahl's work, particularly his article 'A Sermon on Circumcision by a Disciple of R. Judah the Pious', which appeared in the most recent volume of this periodical, blurs the line between the editorial style and methods of university scholarship and traditional circles.[254]

10. Bibliographia Kabbalistica: *The Library of Jewish Mysticism as a Scholarly Construct*

For the kabbalists, like for other readerships in the Jewish world, the advent of printing intensified the demand for decisions about a canon, or more precisely, their library of Jewish esotericism. Unique to the kabbalistic world was the particular restriction on the dissemination of its esoteric lore. Printing violated this convention by the mere existence of multiple copies of identical presentations of kabbalistic books. Certainly, the students and copyists of kabbalistic texts were aware that their own handwritten copies of such texts

[254] *Yerushatenu* 4 (2010), pp. 39-62 [Hebrew].

were codices that contained anthologies of kabbalistic works that were studied by others in circles elsewhere. The esoteric culture of manuscript transmission persisted even after the rise of printing and made the interface between the oral and the written, not to mention the handwritten and the printed, even more complex. Printing, nevertheless, demanded a new type of decision to be made by the kabbalists in consort with printers and a wider rabbinic authority.

The first polemics concerning the publication of the *Zohar* in the sixteenth century are well documented.[255] The appearance of the kabbalistic book was more than a cultural event that compelled the kabbalists to take a stand on the outer face of esotericism and their collective responsibility to the material and the uneducated audience who would read these works. The printed kabbalistic book became for some a cessation of the freedom to intervene as aggressive readers who rewrote the texts, even if this took place most often only to a small degree of the text's transformation. The major threat, however, was the loss of control over its dissemination, the control of authorship being a separate issue. Certainly, there are numerous handwritten comments in the margins of kabbalistic books, but the authors of these glosses knew that they commented on this copy alone and that other identical copies circulated without their additions. Moreover, the printing of books made these works classics, organizing knowledge and privileging certain works at the expense of others.

Most interesting, from my point of view, is the formative impulse brought about by printing and the self-conscious effort to produce a canon of literature based upon the definitions and assumptions of how to construct works from texts and transform them into books. To state my claim at the outset, many kabbalistic books were fashioned, and even *invented* by the printers beginning in the sixteenth century. The printing of books was seductive to the sixteenth-century kabbalists and printers who wielded their imaginations with a heavy hand, presenting and creating the canon of books, most prominently *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, the [*Sefer ha-*]*Zohar*, *Sefer Yeṣira*, *'Arzei Levanon*, *Liqquṭei Shikhekha u-fea*, and many more. From here it is appropriate to ask to what degree modern scholarship has adopted the assumptions of their

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[255] Isaiah Tishby, 'The Controversy About the *Zohar* in Sixteenth-Century Italy', *Perqaim* 1 (1968), pp. 131-182 [Hebrew]; Joseph Hacker, 'A New Epistle on the Publication of the *Zohar* in Italy', *MASSU'OT: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 120-130 [Hebrew]. On the authority, sanctification and canonization of the *'Book of the Zohar'*, see Huss, *Like the Radiance*, esp. pp. 140-178.

kabbalistic predecessors and to what extent a different myth or narrative about literature has supplemented or supplanted those of the past?

The textual study of Kabbalah as the bibliographical assessment of all that was written, copied and published by the Jewish mystics in order to produce a history of ideas for an academic discourse within the humanities is undoubtedly artificial to the phenomenon of Kabbalah, namely, to the minds, intentions and self-perceptions of the kabbalists. To state the obvious, the works of the Jewish mystics from antiquity through the present and the numerous works produced by the kabbalists were never physically consolidated in any one place as a private or public library, nor were they ever mapped out by them virtually in a historical or bibliographic survey.[256] One could argue here if there ever was any form of consensus as what would or could have constituted their library from their own perspective? Might scholarship be imposing their own categories of Jewish esotericism, mysticism or Kabbalah upon the kabbalists which they would not even recognize or with which they would strongly disagree in various ways. Certainly most kabbalists would include the rabbinic corpus as part of their library as they saw themselves as medieval rabbinic figures, not to mention the acceptance by most all of the pseudepigraphic claims of certain works such as the *Bahir* and the *Zohar* to that ancient layer of rabbinic literature. Moreover, the kabbalists were aware that little in their literature offers accounts of prophetic or mystical experience, and did not offer such categorization of their books. Obviously they would not recognize the modern academic discourse on this question.

Much work has been done recently to attack the unity of the library of 'Jewish mysticism' as such through a destabilizing of the term 'mysticism'.[257] I

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[256] The classic study for emulation by Kabbalah scholarship on the questions of the organization of literature, its reading communities and the methods of distribution is that of Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Stanford 1994.

[257] Philip Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, London and New York 2006; Boaz Huss, 'Mysticism versus Philosophy in Kabbalistic Literature', *Micrologus* 9 (2001), pp. 125-135; idem, 'The Mystification of Kabbalah and the Myth of Jewish Mysticism', *Pe'amim* 110 (2007), pp. 9-30 [Hebrew]; Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, Tübingen 2008, pp. 1-33, 353-355. For further discussion on mysticism in Qumran see Elliot Wolfson, 'Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions From Qumran', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1994): 187-204; idem, 'Seven Mysteries of Knowledge:

find it obvious that since the term is not found in the Hebrew works under discussion it would be senseless to apply it as a uniform and unifying category. Equally untenable, however, is the dismissal of the construct as a meaningful tool for engaging texts within the academy. What unifies Jewish mysticism is not however a characteristic that can be identified within texts and the traditional phenomena described in them but in the textual chains that link together, even if by their ideational and literary reception history, the works that would become the object of study in the various historical layers of Jewish mystical activity.

Gershom Scholem's meticulous efforts over many decades to acquire a copy of every printed kabbalistic work and arrange them chronologically and thematically on the shelves of one collection realizes a deep myth of scholarship, that it reconstructs the order of the past and displays before the scholar the whole gamut of literary phenomena that were admittedly known only in part to the different geographically situated centers of Kabbalah study.[258] In short, kabbalistic literature as 'the library of Kabbalah' is a construction of scholars that serves academic research.[259] Of course, modern

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Qumran E/sotericism Reconsidered', *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, edited H. Najman, Leiden 2003, pp. 173-213. It can be said that from antiquity and on through the most recent activity, scholarship is wrestling with the definition of Jewish mysticism. For some representative studies of 'twentieth century Jewish mysticism' see: Jonathan Garb, 'Kabbalah in the Late 20th Century', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, Detroit 2007, vol. 11, pp. 677-681; idem, *The Chosen Will Become Herds Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah*, New Haven 2009. See also the review of the Hebrew version of this volume by Zvi Mark in *Kabbalah* 17 (2007). Finally see Jonatan Meir, 'The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed: On the Opposition to the "Followers" of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag and the Dissemination of Esoteric Literature', *Kabbalah* 16 (2007), pp. 151-258 [Hebrew]. I would add that the different questions are raised as part of what is presented as a uniform discussion. There is, however, a noted difference between trying to define mysticism (philosophically and within the context of religious studies), and an attempt to define the literary boundaries of what collectively has been inducted into the library of Jewish esotericism, a particularly textual question.

[258] On Scholem's library see Joseph Dan's introduction to the printed catalog of the collection (*The Library of Gershom Scholem on Jewish Mysticism – Catalogue*, Jerusalem 1999, vol. 1, pp. 13-25 [Hebrew]); reprinted in his collection of studies, *On Gershom Scholem: Twelve Studies*, Jerusalem 2010, pp. 18-34 [Hebrew].

[259] On the early history of book production in manuscript form and the evolution of

scholarship is enriched from the benefit of hindsight and it is nonsensical to evaluate and critique a medieval kabbalist for lacking the historical perspective of a modern observer. My point, however, is that the medieval kabbalists were not interested in the history of ideas nor in a comparison between esoteric systems of thought. The questions scholarship asks are legitimate from within the academic enterprise, even as many of them would fail the test of answering the interests and categories that resonate with the kabbalists. Indeed, scholarship is most comfortable when it theorizes ideas, events and interactions that are recognized even in part by those who produced and lived by them.

Perhaps more so than other groups of rabbinic figures in medieval times, the kabbalists read and preserved the layers of traditions that collectively formed the library of Jewish esotericism, their view of the works that explored the inner meaning of the written and oral traditions. Functionally, it can be said that the kabbalists ultimately acknowledged the distinct symbolic systems and specialized discourses of the library of Jewish esotericism, when they wrote commentaries to early bodies of literature and absorbed earlier terms and symbols into their new works, often citing earlier texts as authoritative or canonical sources, and imparting their new interpretation to them that replaced their original intention. Alongside this phenomenon, much literature became obsolete by later kabbalists or was intentionally excluded. The comment by Ḥayyim Vital in the beginning of his *Eṣ Ḥayyim* is a case in point, where he privileges the inspired tradition of Isaac Luria over the earlier history of Kabbalah, discounting all but Nahmanides. The comment is more rhetorical than substantive in that Vital, like Cordovero before him, was learned in a wealth of written traditions that were available to him, but it speaks to his self-understanding.

Kabbalists enjoyed mapping out theoretical and practical systems.[260] Their literary tendency was quite often totalizing. In the theoretical venue such works as *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut,* Ibn Gabbai's *'Avodat ha-Qodesh* and Cordovero's

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the modern library see the following sample studies published in an imported volume of collected studies on the subject. Malachi Beit-Arié, 'The Private Nature of Hebrew Medieval Book Production and Consumption, *Libraries and Book Collections*, ed. Y. Kaplan and M. Sluhovsky, Jerusalem 2006, pp. 91-104 [Hebrew]; Avriel Bar-Levav, 'Between Literary Awareness and the Jewish Republic of Letters', Ibid., pp. 201-224 [Hebrew].

[260] See Moshe Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah', *Daat* 50-52 (2003), pp. xxxi-lviii, and my discussion about this in Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism.

Pardes Rimmon were all encyclopedias of kabbalistic tradition that ordered the concepts of Kabbalah more than they did the existing library of kabbalistic traditions. Kabbalists also composed running commentaries to canonical texts such as the Torah, *Sefer Yeṣira* and even supercommentaries to their master's works written as commentaries to other classics. The kabbalistic overviews to religious life formed another genre, such as the voluminous commentaries to the commandments, R. Moses de León, R. Menaḥem Recanati and Joseph of Hamadan being the earliest and possibly most important representatives of such writing. What is unique for the kabbalist in writing a commentary to the legally defined practices of Jewish life, is the intent in systematically transforming the commandments into theurgically invested rites and ascribing this intent to earliest historical layers of the biblical and rabbinic system. Here pseudepigraphy and the ahistorical, or perhaps, the synchronic perspective of the kabbalists converge, which allow for the broadening of the base of sources that the kabbalist can absorb. On the whole, however, kabbalists were focused on their own view of reality, even if it were comprised of components from other systems that they had learned from studying other works.

I note that a literary history of Kabbalah has not yet been attempted.[261] This would entail a description of the literary forms and conventions of Jewish mystical literature, including more detailed mappings of how the ideas and specific placement of the kabbalistic authors serve as indicators of how they sought to react and alter the norms of known works. Perhaps it was not until the eighteenth-century work, *Shem ha-Gedolim* by R. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai (Ḥida), that a cataloging of kabbalistic works was undertaken, but again as part of a larger appraisal of Jewish works in general. Gershom Scholem began to collect, report and construct the first (complete) library of Kabbalah, which would include editions and studies about everything related to Jewish mysticism, from *Sefer Yeṣira* through the most recently published studies. This library was first established virtually with the publication of *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, a book whose importance is rarely appreciated and certainly not utilized sufficiently as a tool in modern scholarship. Scholem used this book for his own edification as well as the construction of his own enormous library,

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[261] See Daniel Abrams, 'The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar*'. Not noted in this study is the impressive survey of literature divided into genres from 1927: *Belles Lettres in Hebrew (Original and Translated) from R. Moses Hayyim Luzzato to the Present Day (1729-1926): A Listing of Books in the National Library*, Jerusalem 1927 [Hebrew].

which he was building in his home.[262] Upon his death the library was moved as an independent entity to the building of the Jewish National Library and University Library, where its curators make sure to update the collection with new editions of texts, scholarly volumes and offprints of studies from around the world. I know of no other field in Jewish studies that can boast a physical collection of (nearly) every item related to its subject matter and available in open stacks to its scholars and students.

But here I would like to dwell on the meaning and importance of the phenomenon of a library of kabbalistic literature. It is often presumed that Scholem amassed the kabbalistic books that belong to such a library or subject matter, when it can be argued, with little effort, that it was Scholem who formally and substantively created these constructs though his historical writing and bibliographic studies. Put bluntly, *Scholem reconstructed a collection that never was*. Empirically, we can state that *such a kabbalistic library never existed in order to be reconstituted* by Scholem or any other collector. It might be too strong to suggest that the collection – indeed based upon the idea of the gathering together of dispersed items – participates in a Zionist ideology of the ingathering of the exiles, whereby a principle of belonging organizes and unites phenomena that emerged as independent entities, both geographically and historically.[263] Certainly, Scholem's own thinking and biography reflect this presumption, as captured most poignantly in the title of his autobiography, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, in that Scholem cataloged and collected kabbalistic books in Berlin and moved to Jerusalem where he continued his work and amassed an ever greater collection which survives today.[264] To be sure, Scholem's library includes many books that were

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[262] Beit-Arié, 'Gershom Scholem as Bibliophile'.

[263] On Scholem's efforts to bring Jewish books from post-Holocaust Europe to Israel see Evelyn Adunka, *Der Raub der Bücher: Über verschwinden und Bibliotheken in der NS-Zeit und ihre Restitution nach 1945*, Wien 2002, pp. 192-197; Dov Schidorsky, *Burning Scrolls and Flying Letters: A History of Book Collections and Libraries in Mandatory Palestine and of Book Salvaging Efforts in Europe after the Holocaust*, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 244-254, 346-397 [Hebrew]; Noam Zadoff, 'Reise in die Vergangenheit, Entwurf einer neuen Zukunft: Gershom Scholem Reise nach Deutschland im Jahre 1946', *Münchner Beiträge zur jüdische Geschichte und Kultur* 2 (2007), pp. 67-80.

[264] Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, tr. Harry Zohn, New York 1980.

of interest only to him and many books have been added to the collection, which he might not have purchased were he to be alive today. The instability of the construct that defines the Scholem Library as the library of the field, exposes the questions that can and should be raised about the history and definition of kabbalistic literature and the scholarship of Jewish mysticism, particularly with respect to formal bibliographies. I add that these questions also involve institutional, political, and cultural issues that are not always guised in the understanding and written expressions about the virtual and physical entities of the kabbalistic library.

It is here that is appropriate to turn to the two-volume catalog of the Scholem Library, published by the National Library and edited by Joseph Dan and Esther Liebes. The catalog is a milestone in that since Gershom Scholem's 1930 volume, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, no volume has laid out a bibliographic appreciation of the printed materials of the primary and secondary sources of Jewish mysticism.[265] And although the catalog is a helpful contribution, a proper appreciation of what it contains and the parameters of the Scholem Library as a collection of editions and scholarship is warranted in order to better position the attempt relative the extant materials.

Scholem's library was transferred to the Jewish National and University Library upon his death and, with the passing of his wife, years later, all of his paper were moved into a separate archive in the manuscript department there. (At first the Scholem Library, as its designation indicates, was an independent collection, housed in the building of the National Library of Israel, but was not formally integrated into its organization, budget and catalog. This division has subsequently been dissolved with the redefinition of the National Library). And so, for historical and formal reasons, Scholem's collection had been split into his books and papers with only the former being termed the Scholem Library. This collection of books is housed in two rooms, basically following a division between primary and secondary sources. The division is artificial and reflects the space allotted to the library in the building. The order of the books on the shelf, which is largely replicated in the Jewish studies reading room going back to the days when Scholem was head librarian of the National Library, reflects the original order that Scholem gave to the books in his house. It begins with *Sefer Yeṣira* and continues on through Hasidism and modern scholarship and literature. New acquisitions have been integrated into these shelves, receiving a

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[265] See George Thomas Tanselle, *Bibliographical Analysis: A Historical* Introduction, Cambridge 2009.

decimal point so as not to disturb the original order. It is thus possible to acquire a general but skewed impression of what was the original collection, and this is certainly not readily evident or accessible through the catalog. Indeed, the bibliographic knowledge amassed up to a certain date, and the order given to it by the founder of the field is basically lost to later generations. Rare items were removed from their place on the shelf and are now housed in barrister bookcases in the main room. Especially rare items and books that were otherwise not owned by the National Library were removed and transferred to the rare book collection. Manuscripts acquired by Scholem and manuscripts he produced as copies of older manuscripts or rare books that he could photograph were transferred to the manuscript collection of the National Library of Israel and are not designated as part of his archive. Moreover, the photographs of manuscripts, which Scholem duly annotated in ink as was his custom, have been divided rather randomly between enclosed shelves in the Scholem Library and the shelves of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (without any notation of their origin). Finally, the various notes and slips of papers that he left within his various books were removed from the volumes, even if they are numbered according to their source, and collected in two uncataloged boxes now found in the archives two floors beneath the Scholem Library.

In stark contrast to these various sources, the published catalog of the Scholem Library provides neither a definition of the collection of manuscripts and books which served the founding father of the field until his death, nor the full range of materials that have become the field of Jewish mysticism in the years following his passing. The catalog is a *selection* of printed materials rearranged by subject. That is to say, the catalog is unfortunately not a shelf list that could have offered a virtual tour (on paper) of the library for the reader of the catalog. The items were reordered in the catalog according the editors' decisions of historical and thematic categories, omitting numerous items that presumably reflect Scholem's own interests and which are not justifiable as contributing to a kabbalistic library or the modern needs of the field. Accordingly, Scholem's rich holdings in medieval Jewish philosophy, amongst many other subjects, were omitted. The implied criticism of this drawback is highlighted by recent scholarly contributions that have rehabilitated the history of ideas of Jewish thought to show the development of traditions across the bodies of Jewish philosophical literature and Jewish esotericism, including the

Early Kabbalah.[266] The choices made for the printed catalog thus reveal the fissures in the history and disagreements between scholars about what is and is not considered Kabbalah.

The arrangement of his books in his library, demonstrate that Scholem understood his collecting to be divided into a library of the books of Kabbalah and those volumes belonging to other subjects and modern scholarship that he needed to interpret these sources. Regarding the first part, I submit that Scholem worked with a construct of a Kabbalah library that historically never existed as a collection of material books.[267] The printed catalog, by contrast, combined the two parts and then limited their presentation. The unstated premise of the published catalog of his collection, a 'map' that defies the actual 'territory' he covered, sought to reign in his actual collection and present a more limited grouping of books according to history and themes, including items published after his death, but here too, the catalog replaces one literary fiction with another, incurring heavy costs of information that is lost to the reader.

The online catalog of the Scholem Library became the only true inventory of what exists on its shelves. The catalog, even more so than the collection itself, has become a dynamic entity in that collected studies volumes, obtained years ago, are indexed for those articles related to Jewish mysticism that are contained in them. I fear that the Scholem Library, as a separate collection in its own physical space, may one day be dispersed, and so dissolved, into the general holdings of the National Library, reflecting the meta-narrative of the newly defined structure (and organization) of books and belief that technology and virtual presentations can successfully replace this unique resource. The first step toward this move, if even not so intended at the planning stage, was the integration of the on-line catalog of the Scholem Library into the new, general database and framework of the Jewish National and University Library. One might argue that the reorganization of the Scholem Library betrays a

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[266] Adam Afterman, 'Intimate Conjunction with God: The Concept of "*Devekut*" in the Early Kabbalah (Provence and Catalonia)', Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008 [Hebrew].

[267] The library is in fact a living organism, a term he would have certainly appreciated, in that unique items from the collections of Rivka Schatz and Isaiah Tishby have been added to the Scholem Library, making it a library of Kabbalah scholarship more than anything else. Scholars await the cataloging of Tishby's archives in the manuscript department of the National Library so that they may use those materials in their research.

Foucauldian stamp of power on the collections with an official statement about what is or should be important.[268]

The Jewish National Library has begun a project of scanning important and commonly requested rare books and making them available digitally and without charge on line in DJVU format. Such a wonderful service democratizes Jewish studies in that it makes rare materials, in both senses of the term, available to all, regardless of geographic location or the ability to visit the library in the hours in which it remains open. The lead in digitalization of Hebrew books is being taken on by the traditional community primarily in New York, most notably hebrewbooks.org and Habad's related site on the web (chabadlibrary.org). An impressive index of hundreds of relevant titles of works in Jewish mysticism can be found in a page within the *halachabrura* web site.[269] It is only a matter of time, I trust, before the National Library of Israel realizes its potential and begins the catch-up work to compete with larger data bases and become the world's leader in the free dissemination of Hebrew books from its rich holdings. With prejudice, I state that this should be the imperative of the National Library, its mandate and *raison d'être*, to reach out beyond the borders of its current constructs, ideologies, and the physical restrictions of its

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[268] In the printed catalog each book was assigned a number to organize the entries. The numbers bear no relationship to numbers written on the spines of each volume in order to maintain the self-order in the library and catalog the volumes for the library's data base. It is therefore quite telling that in the copy of the printed catalog in Scholem Library the actual shelf numbers were added in pencil over the new numbering, which serve the volume alone. I note as well that volumes added to the collection since it first arrived in the National Library received a decimal point so that the volume would be placed between two books. In most cases, therefore, the whole numbers therefore offer an indication of what was original to Scholem's collecting. It is unfortunate that the library, especially in the printed catalog, was viewed and treated synchronically, as a statement of the field outside of time and the history of its collecting. For further studies about the library see Malachi Beit-Arié, 'Gershom Scholem as Bibliophile'; Avriel Bar-Levav, 'The Catalogue of the Scholem Library: A Major Contribution to the Study of Jewish Mysticism', *Jewish Studies* 39 (1999), pp. 201-209 [Hebrew]; idem, 'On the Absence of a Book from a Library: Gershom Scholem and the *Shulhan Arukh*', *Zutot* 6 (2009), pp. 71-73. Classic Jewish works were readily available to Scholem and their presence or absence in his collection is in my view of limited importance. More curious, considering Scholem's interests and the type of research that he championed, is the absence of *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James Robinson, Leiden 1977.

[269] http://www.halachabrura.org/library/library6.htm.

current and future building(s). Such practices would thus free it from the nearly exclusive complex it has of conserving (*its*) resources, and protecting and preserving its books *from* its readers instead of *for* its readers, who are all too often seen as customers whose value is seemingly measured by their willingness to pay fees for paper reproductions.

The digital revolution is both a blessing and a curse to the future of the book, not to mention the appreciation of its past and the ontology of material books in the present. Much has been written about the status of the printed book in the technological age and I will not repeat the debate here.[270] For our purposes, namely the history and potential of a library of kabbalistic literature, technology offers a unique opportunity of offering all of its resources to all members of the field. The vast majority of the Scholem Library, indeed nearly all of the items that are not easily accessible in libraries around the world are over a century old and in the public domain. All the items printed before 1900 in these two rooms of the collection could thus, with a modest investment, be digitalized and made available for all to read. The project I am thus suggesting would resemble that undertaken by "Google Books" in offering free access to all materials related to Jewish mysticism, beginning with the Scholem Library, and in time this digital project could embrace the character of a library that lacks physical shelves and become a dynamic platform for research and the growing collection of related resources.

11. Scholem's Letter to Bialik Revisited: New Editions and the Future of the Field

The State of the Field, 1925

Scholem operated on many levels of research, bibliographic, textual and historical inquires all fed into each other, without necessarily privileging one over the other, even if it appears that he was especially interested in producing a historical survey and analysis. Scholem worked on all simultaneously as one

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[270] For a couple of recent representative studies see John B. Thompson, *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*, Cambridge 2005; Jeff Gomez, *Print is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age*, London-New York-Melbourne-Hong Kong 2008. See also Eliezer Segal, 'Digital Discipleship: Using the Internet for the Teaching of Jewish Thought', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, volume two, pp. 359-373.

fed into the other and enriched his overall findings. When Scholem answered Bialik's question as to the state of the field and his goals, Scholem answered: 'To date, nothing has been done in the academic research of Kabbalah'.[271] After enumerating many complex historical questions, he added:

> However, all of these matters can not be researched and resolved until the sources themselves are well investigated: in the esoteric books from Geonic times and in the books of the first kabbalists. It is impossible to reach an understanding about the formation of the Kabbalah and its later development, as long as seventy percent of all the important texts are in manuscript form, scattered in manuscript collections around the world. *I am certain that there is no hope or foundation for Kabbalah research until these manuscripts are investigated.* The most important of them (and indeed there are many!) must be published in annotated critical editions, and scholarship must extract and decipher the truth about the development of the Kabbalah and its inception [...] No one knows what we can expect [to find] in the books of the kabbalists if we would begin to delve into them from faith and not by the decision of some demon's will. How is it possible, for example to speak of the *Zohar* without stammering, as long as no one has gazed upon even a single manuscript that exists outside of Germany!! How can one speak of the development of kabbalistic terminology (the very ground and foundation of all of the Kabbalah), if it is impossible to ascertain from the printed works alone, when a particular term appeared fro the first time, and matters of this kind. One should know that what has been printed and what has not been printed, was not the result of their importance, but by a matter of chance. That is, these were random events and we must correct the incidental damage that has been done.[272]

In another article, Scholem echoed this formulation and spoke of the unique position he was in as a scholar in Jerusalem in the first decades after the founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

> In actual fact, such undertakings can at present be carried out only in Jerusalem. Only here can modern research meet with the remnants of the Kabbala which are still in existence. Only here can be found those original sources without which all work in this field would have to remain barren and yielding. Three or four public libraries at Jerusalem contain not only well nigh

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[271] Scholem, 'Letter to H. N. Bialik', p. 59 [Hebrew]. As cited earlier, *Gershom Scholem, Judaica 6,* contains a German translation and much annotation concerning published scholarship.

[272] Scholem, Ibid., p. 60.

> the entire Kabbalist literature which was printed in the course of generations and scattered far and wide; in addition, a great store of manuscripts and photographs of Kabbalistic manuscripts are to be found. They have been amassed for many years and the collections are still in process of growth from year to year. These unpublished sources are of great importance for any investigation of the Kabbala. There are very few Kabbalist books dating back prior to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain which have been printed; so any attempt to determine the development of the Kabbala during that early period merely on the basis of the printed material is quite impossible. Though the extensive manuscript literature of the early Kabbalists may not have been preserved in its entirety, far more of it is extant that we at first imagined. No doubt many things in the early history of the Kabbala must remain unsolved until the end of time; yet we have reason to hope that from what has survived of those early beginnings of Kabbala, we shall succeed in reconstructing the origins of Jewish mysticism and in determining its various manifestations and mutations.[273]

Scholem clearly identifies the redemptive (possibly even, messianic) character of Kabbalah scholarship in publishing otherwise lost texts and reconstructing a picture of its past and writing its history. Note that Scholem marks Jerusalem as the site where he can still encounter the last remnants of the Kabbalah, but as is made clear from the context, he is referring to books, not people. Scholem's main corrective is to focus attention on the riches to be found in unpublished manuscripts, gradually being collected in Jerusalem, and that an insufficient and even skewed picture is obtained from a reliance on printed sources alone.

It may be unpopular to state that in many ways the field of Jewish mysticism remains in much the same state it was when Scholem listed the main texts that needed to be edited in critical editions if the field were to progress. Certainly, many editions have been issued in the last half century by scholars in the academy and numerous editions have been issued by the traditional community. Nevertheless, given the present state of the textual grounding of the field, relative to other fields, and relative to what exists in manuscript form, the field is in a miserable state. All the main classics need to be re-edited based on the methodological problems discussed in this volume and countless unknown texts remain in manuscripts and have been read, at best, by two three

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[273] Gershom Scholem, 'Kabbala at the Hebrew University', *The Reconstructionist* 3 (no. 10), (1937), p. 12.

or four scholars. With a few noted exceptions, *the field as a whole has abandoned the textual premises embraced by Scholem*, such that specialists, from doctoral students through full professors, do not master the history of printing of the works of the field, or even visit the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts on a regular basis, if at all, to read the raw materials of the field. Dare I say that degrees are awarded regularly without any manuscript training demonstrated in dissertations or for the sake of acquiring the skills needed to such work in future years. The common rationale and self-justification is the valorization of theory and history as the sin qua non of the academy, turning to the traditional world as the new producers of editions. According to this logic, it is a relative waste of time for scholars to invest their efforts in decoding and analyzing manuscript sources.

Scholem began his letter to Bialik with a statement of his personal quest which he set out to accomplish as an individual. As he proclaimed at the outset, he would not be able to complete his mission, alone, but would not refrain from doing what he could in his lifetime and would thus ground the future efforts of others. In the following, I will present Scholem's listing of projects and then revisit these texts and projects with an expanded list of what can be envisioned for the future generations of scholarship. Scholem divided his projects into three historical categories, ancient Jewish mysticism prior to the development of Jewish esotericism in Europe, the Golden Age of Jewish mysticism in Germany, France and Spain from the period just prior to the emergence of the Kabbalah and on through the Expulsion, and the manuscripts and terminology of the *Zohar*.

Scholem describes his meager efforts, hindered by the eruption of World War Two to read manuscripts widely in the great libraries of Europe. He thus speaks of a scholar's duty, for the seriousness of the profession to be acquainted with the texts of all forms, and not necessarily just the classics that have been, or will be, published. Having listed these great collections and described a small collection of photocopies he amassed, he then lists the major works which await publication: 1. *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim*; 2. Thirteenth-Century Commentaries to *Sefer Yeṣira*; 3. The Works of R. Azriel of Gerona; 4. The Works of R. Isaac of Acre; 5. The Works of R. Abraham Abulafia; 6. The Works of R. Moses de León; 7. Shem Ṭov Ibn Gaon's *Sefer Baddei ha-Aron*; 8. The Works of R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid; 9. R. Ṭodros Abulafia's *Sha'ar ha-Razim* 10. The oldest passages of the [first] kabbalists, recorded in numerous medieval manuscripts. It is not by coincidence that Scholem listed precisely ten projects, corresponding to the sefirotic theosophy. And so, Scholem adds additional items without numbering

them, such as R. Judah ben Yaqar's *Commentary to the Prayers*. In the third category, Scholem calls for a study of the manuscripts of the *Zohar* and all early citations from it. Such a massive project, he writes, would require a team of people, and could not be accomplished by a single scholar. He adds that a study of the zoharic corpus should be accompanied by a *Thesaurus Codicum Kabbalisticorum*, parallel to the volume prepared for the study of Greek astrological texts.

Many texts have been published since this list was first conceived, some in critical editions and some in facsimiles or traditional publishers who used a single manuscript or uncritically synthesized various versions. While one might be tempted to say that Scholem's vision for the field has been fulfilled, a healthy dose of criticism is in order here. First, we must separate out Scholem's interests in 1925 from his later program of study and vision of the field, as well as the path the field has taken since his passing, with the discovery of new texts and an emphasis on projects and topics not considered at that time. As should be clear from the list of texts and Scholem's introductory statements in the letter, Kabbalah scholarship was initially obsessed with the question of origins. The basic questions of the field concerned the historical outline of its major trends, specifically the possibility which had to be considered seriously that the pseudepigraphic texts of the Middle Ages indeed emerged from sources that were composed in antiquity in Palestine and Babylonia. This 'problem' as Scholem would later term it in *Origins of the Kabbalah*, was reproduced or overlapped with what Scholem saw as the mysterious and sudden eruption of Kabbalah as gnostic myth within the centers and discourses of Rabbinic culture. On both counts, therefore Scholem, as the embodiment of the field, needed to first investigate the origins of the *Book Bahir* and the *Zohar* to ground the historical study of Jewish mysticism. I therefore argue that the list of texts above was constructed to further this goal by issuing those works that would contextualize the emergence of these two classics.[274]

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[274] For a revision of Scholem's thesis about the relationship between Kabbalah and Gnosticism, see Idel, 'Rabbinism Versus Kabbalism; idem, 'Subversive Catalysts: Gnosticism and Messianism in Gershom Scholem's View of Jewish Mysticism', *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. D. Myers and D. Ruderman, New Haven 1998, pp. 39-76. On the continuity between rabbinic literature and Kabbalah, particularly on the question of myth see Liebes, '"*De natura dei*"; Daniel Abrams, 'Chapters from an Emotional and Sexual Biography of God: Reflections on God's Attributes in the Bible, Midrash and Kabbalah', *Kabbalah* 6 (2001), pp. 263-286

Scholem's other interest, and we might suggest this as an overreading of his multi-faceted program, was to use the history and textual work as the foundation for a study of the linguistic theory of Kabbalah. Scholem indeed wrote in his youth that he wanted to write such an essay, the metaphysical underpinning of Kabbalah in language, issuing one such essay late in life, 'The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala'.[275] As important as this essay is, it falls short from adequately exploring the issues involved in light of the studies and texts he realized in the course of his life. In other words, this essay was apparently based on a draft he composed earlier in his life,[276] and did not reflect the field as he had transformed it by the end of his career at the end of the twentieth century.

Kabbalistic Genres, Major Trends and Subspecialties of the Study of Jewish Mysticism

Scholarship of Jewish mysticism has become overspecialized, by which I mean, that numerous scholars today are proficient in only one period, or chapter of the major trends of Jewish mysticism. Texts are read in the vacuum of their own immediate context and works are read as statements of the spirit of their time even though, as we have seen throughout this volume, they were refashioned and preserved in documents from later periods. Some of the major texts listed by Scholem still await publication, but more importantly, the grand surveys of manuscripts and annotated listings of genres of literature have not even been attempted. Scholem was able, at a very early age and under the historical pressures of an emerging World War and the destruction of European Jewry to prepare a listing of commentaries to the ten *sefirot* from all periods of kabbalistic literature. In the list above, he suggested a similar survey of

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[Hebrew]. For other connections between Antiquity and medieval Kabbalah see Wolfson, 'Hebraic and Hellenistic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*'. On the gradual development of ideas within medieval Europe and Jewish philosophy see Sendor, 'The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah'; Afterman, 'Intimate Conjunction with God'. Finally, the hermeneutic moves that developed from rabbinic literature through the emergence of the Kabbalah see Maurizio Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah: Interpretive Projections of the Sanctuary and Ritual*, Los Angeles 2007.

[275] Scholem, 'The Name of God'.

[276] See the comments by Moshe Idel, 'A. Abulafia G. Scholem and W. Benjamin on Language', *Jüdisches Denken in einer Welt ohne Gott: Festschrift für Stéphane Moses*, Berlin 2001, pp. 130-138.

commentaries to *Sefer Yeṣira*, and the publication of the most important ones such as that of Ibn Sahula.[277] While Scholem was able to issue a few of these, most significantly the commentaries by R. Isaac the Blind and R. Isaac of Acre, this amounts to a small contribution relative to the material that exists, and little has been done since then. Moreover, new work in manuscripts would challenge and open up the historical picture and privileged status Scholem gave to certain texts, a canon which has been accepted by later scholars. As I will present in greater detail below, a reorganization of the genres, historical issues and understanding of the social circle(s) in Kabbalah necessitates a different set of priorities for textual scholarship. In short, not only have the goals set out in the 1920s not been accomplished, but the demands of the field as it has developed, have set out goals that require a massive return of its scholars to the manuscripts to revive the field and ground its methods and findings in unpublished sources.

Even if one were to point to the serious work that has been undertaken on the most important classics of Jewish mysticism, and take comfort in the progress of the field and the continued commitment to textual work, I would offer a word of caution that newer methodologies demand that these projects be investigated once again. Namely, even those texts that have been issued over the past few decades need to be revisited in order to restore or remove the form of the texts which were imposed by the editors, and to re-present various textual versions in order to document the many layers of transmission and their reception history. These texts include such important titles as *Sefer Yeṣira*, the Hekhalot literature, and the *Book Bahir*. The *Zohar* remains the most important project and almost nothing has been published to date.

The vast majority of Ashkenazi esotericism remains in manuscript and scarcely anything has been edited to show how they reworked their texts time and again. Foremost, their works across the various circles or centers is a major signpost for the transmission, reception and adaptations of earlier materials. This includes a carefully prepared edition of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and the various texts of pietistic content.[278] The publication of other early works, including the expanded translation (or Hebrew paraphrase) of Saadia Gaon's *Book of Belief and Opinions*, would provide a textual grounding for some of their philosophic

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[277] Ms. Rome, Angelica 45 (De Capua 53), fols. 1-193.

[278] *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ: Haqdamah ve-hilkhot ḥasidut*, ed. Ely Rosenfeld, Brooklyn 1998; *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ: Hilkhot Teshuva ha-Shalem*, ed. Ely Rosenfeld, Brooklyn 2000; see also Hanna Liss, *El'azar ben Yehuda von Worms*.

speculation.[279] The editing of the esoteric works of the German Pietists have been advanced in recent years, somewhat critically, outside of the academy world, principally by Aaron Eisenbach and Jacob Stahl, who have issued editions of the works of R. Eleazar of Worms, and other related materials from those who learned with R. Judah the Pious and the Qalonimide circle.[280] Future editions that will probably be realized by these fine editors of traditional editions include the grand corpus of texts in Mss Oxford 1566 and 1567,[281] the various commentaries to the Torah based on *gematria*, such as that of R. Eleazar ha-Darshan,[282] and a new edition of R. Eleazar of Worms' *Commentary to the Prayers*, which sorts outs the different texts or recensions that were harmonized into one in Hershler's two volume edition.[283]

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[279] See Ronald Kiener, 'The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadia Gaon's "*Kitab al-Amanat Wa'l-Iʿtiqadat*"' (Hebrew Text), Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1984; idem, 'The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadiah Gaon's *Kitab al-Amanat wa'lI'tiqadat*', *AJS Review* 11 (1986), pp. 1-25. Oded Porat informed me of a different translation of the text as found for example in Ms. Munich 221, which includes *Sefer Gematriyot* of R. Eleazar ha-Darshan. The possible connection to the esoteric circles of Ashkenaz similarly needs to be clarified. I further note the neglected study of Abraham Meir Haberman, 'Building Blockas to the Study of *Sefer Yeṣira*', *Sinai* 10 (1947), pp. 3-27 [Hebrew], who copied out passages from this manuscript for comparison. See further the related studies on *Sefer Yeṣira* and its medieval commentaries in Abraham Epstein, *Mi-Qadmoniyot ha-Yehudim*, ed. A. M. Habermann, Jerusalem 1957, vol. 1, pp. 38-46, 179-225 [Hebrew].

[280] See *Sodei Ḥomesh ve-ShAR mi-Talmidei Rabbenu Yehuda he-Ḥasid, ba'al Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Jacob Stahl, Jerusalem 2009.

[281] Joseph Dan, 'The Book of Divine Glory by Rabbi Judah the Pious of Regensburg', *Studies on Jewish Manuscripts*, ed. by J. Dan and K Herrmann, Tübingen 1999, pp. 1-18.

[282] See for example Ms. Munich 221. See the description of this literary genre of Jewish mystical literature on p. 2 of my introduction to *Sefer Gematriot of R. Judah the Pious: Facsimile Edition of a Unique Manuscript*, introduced by Daniel Abrams and Israel Ta-Shma, Los Angeles 1998 [Hebrew].

[283] Hershler synthesized different recensions, using Ms. Paris, BN 772 and Ms. Oxford (Neubauer) 1204. I went through the printed edition comparing its layout and some passages to the two manuscripts I had read earlier and was thrown by the consistency superimposed on the manuscripts in the printed layout. Aharon Eisenbach has shared his thoughts with me in oral conversation and hopes to some day reissue a better edition. See for now, Gad Ḥasida, '*Hashlamot le-Ferush ha-Tefilah le-va'al ha-Roqeaḥ*', *Ṣefunot* 19 (1994), pp. 6-11; Simḥa Emanuel, 'The Polemics of the German Pietists on the Language of the Liturgy', *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Y. Sussman and D.

Still unresolved is the relationship between the various genres of literature produced within Ashkenaz esoteric circles, the Qalonimide circle being a particular example with unique features. Once again, scholarship needs to distinguish between the reception of the various documents in the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries, which defined an arguably different identification and constellation of materials than those conceived by the original figures.[284] As noted earlier, scholarship has done itself a disservice in assuming in many instances the uniformity of a corpus based upon the existence of various documents together in a single codex. The reception of the texts in such codices is thus a worthy project in itself but separate from the question of esoteric genres in Ashkenaz. Relatively untreated, also, is the reception and later life of these texts, which were absorbed by later audiences, and which spawned new writings including commentaries to their works.[285] In this regard an annotated reprinting of Naftali Hertz Treves' prayerbook, *Mala ha-'Areṣ De'ah*, Tiengen 1560, would be a major contribution, not to mention manuscript sources to the printed edition.[286]

Looming in the background of this quandary between the various genres is the interpretive question of the relationship between the pietistic practices and strictures and the speculative material concerning the divine name, *Sefer Yeṣira* and various other topics. Elsewhere, I questioned the basic distinction offered between exoteric and esoteric literature within the speculative literature of German Pietism, which was based in part upon the appreciation of their voiced methodology of scattering hints and partial references throughout their writing.[287] The role of the narrative materials has been explored,[288] but a

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Rosenthal, Jerusalem 2005, vol. 2, pp. 591-625 [Hebrew]. Simha Emanuel, 'New Fragments of Unknown Biblical Commentaries from the "European Genizah"', *'Genizat Germania' — Hebrew and Aramaic Binding: Fragments from Germany in Context*, ed. A. Lehnardt, Leiden-Boston 2010, pp. 207-215.

[284] The only such overview available is Joseph Dan, 'The Vicissitudes of the Esotericism of the German Hasidim', *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 87-99 [Hebrew].

[285] See, for example, one such study by Moshe Idel, 'An Anonymous Kabbalistic Commentary on *Shir ha-Yiḥud*', *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism; International Symposium Held in Frankfurt a.M. 1991*, ed. K. E. Grözinger and J. Dan, Berlin 1995, pp. 139-154.

[286] See Ms. Oxford-Bodleian 1930 (Opp. 498).

[287] See the appendix to my article, 'The *Shekhinah* Prays before God', pp. 526-532,

worthy project would be a mapping of the relationship between the various components of the Ashkenazi 'library'.[289]

Furthermore, it would be very important to realize a volume of all the Hekhalot passages quoted in Ashkenazi works, with an additional section that collected and analyzed their imitations of these writing styles. From such references it will be possible to reconstruct the early Ashkenazi editings of the Hekhalot materials, namely the textual quality of what they preserved and cited, as well as the inner structure and passage divisions of their canonical text prior the later editings based on these lost manuscripts, which served Schäfer's project. Similarly, a volume of the versions and interpretations of *Sefer Yeṣira*, from the beginning of Ashkenazi esotericism and through Judah Barzeloni's commentary would be a major tool. Likewise, reconstructing, instead of deconstructing, the Hekhalot texts, as they were edited and transmitted by the Ashkenazi centers would help illuminate the literary and conceptual forms of Jewish mysticism in Ashkenaz.

I imagine a volume of the works of Neḥemiah ben Shlomo, standing on the shelf next to a multi-volume set of the esoteric works of R. Eleazar of Worms and the anonymous manuscript sources from Ashkenaz.[290] A small work of

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where I trace this method from Ashkenaz to Spain. My critique of '*sifrut ha-yiḥud*' as exoteric literature, in reference to Joseph Dan's study '*Sifrut ha-Yiḥud*', *Qiryat Sefer* 41 (1966), pp. 533-544 reprinted in his *Studies in the Literature of German Pietism*, Ramat Gan 1975, pp. 72-88, can be found on pp. 520-521.

[288] Some representative studies include: Joseph Dan, 'Rabbi Judah the Pious and Caesurius of Heisterbach: Common Motifs in their Stories', *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature*, ed. J. Heinemann and D. Noy, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 18-27 [Hebrew]; Tamar Alexander-Frizer, *The Pious Sinner: Ethics and Aesthetics in the Medieval Hasidic Narrative*, Tübingen 1991; see also Jacob Elbaum, 'Three Early Ashkenazi Homilies in a Manuscript from National Library', *Qiryat Sefer* 48 (1978), pp. 340-347 [Hebrew].

[289] Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Library of Ashkenazi Sages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Qiryat Sefer* 60 (1985), pp. 298-309 [Hebrew]; see also Amos Geula, 'Lost Aggadic Works Known Only from Ashkenaz: *Midrash Abkir*, *Midrash Esfa* and *Devarim Zuta*', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006, two volumes [Hebrew].

[290] Idel has described works by Nehemiah and those he associates with his writing style and ideas as a school or circle. I would suggest that such terms are invested with certain preconceptions of the social makeup and interactions of various authors and it would be best to speak of textual traditions without reference to their authors or a textual

great importance which similarly has survived in various versions is 'The Seventy Names of Metatron'.[291] The various versions will help demonstrate the fluidity of text versions within and between the various figures and learning centers.

Many years ago Joseph Dan published a very important annotated list of the writings of the Special Cherub Circle.[292] Clearly, a volume of all these works would be a very important tool for charting the development of this trope across the textual community of disassociated individuals who wrote different texts, as well as the cross cultural influence, in both directions, between these authors and other forms of Ashkenazi esotericism. R. Shem Ṭov bar Simḥa created an anthology of works emerging from the textual community that is known for its use of the symbolism of the 'special cherub'. He included works from other circles as well, making his collection an important signpost for the reception of such works. A full and annotated edition of his anthology, now dispersed across a number of manuscripts, would greatly illuminate the re/presentation and adaptation of esoteric sources from Ashkenaz and the changes made to the texts and their meanings when placed in a new context.[293]

The study of medieval Jewish esotericism in Ashkenaz has undergone great changes in the last few generations, amounting overall to the unpacking of Scholem's condensation of various movements under the singular treatment in *Major Trends*. Not only have other circles been identified, limiting the reach

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community that participates in a certain type of writing.

[291] See Moritz Steinschneider, 'Einzelschriftten: Hebraica', *Hebräische Bibliophile* 14 (1874), pp. 6-8, 33; Naphtali Ben-Menahem, '*Sefer ha-Ḥesheq, Piṭḥei She'arim, Deyuqim ve-'Iyyunim Bibliographim*', *Ha-Ṣofe* 19 (1967), pp. 300-302; Charles Mopsik, *Le livre hébreu d'Hénoch ou livre des palais*, Lagrasse 1989, p. 362; Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, 'Die Namen Gottes und die Namen Metatrons: Zwei Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 19 (1991-92), pp. 95-168; Joseph Dan, 'The Seventy Names of Metatron', idem, *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity*, Northvale and Jerusalem 1998, volume 1, pp. 229-234; Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 302-303 n. 39; Moshe Idel, 'On Angels and Biblical Exegesis in Thirteenth-Century Ashkenaz'.

[292] Joseph Dan, 'The Literature of the Special Cherub Circle within the Movement of German Pietism', *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), pp. 349-372 [Hebrew], reprinted in his *Studies in the Literature of German Pietism*, Ramat Gan 1975, pp. 89-111 [Hebrew]. For a review of the scholarship overlooked in Dan's monograph see Daniel Abrams, 'A History of the Unique Cherub'.

[293] See especially my study, 'New Manuscripts to the "Book of Secrets"'.

and activity of the Qalonimide family of Pietists, but the very nature of the circle, and its usefulness as a construct for appreciating the scholastic activity of these esotericists has come into question. In all, Scholem and the first few generations of scholars, were mislead by the reception history of the manuscript texts composed in Ashkenaz before the advent of the Kabbalah. With the rise of theosophical texts the various works were collected in codices, apparently as the documents that were not Kabbalah, now framed according to the more explicit bias 'pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism'. Accordingly, many differences were effaced in the integrated reading they suggested. And so, despite the rather traditional scholarly history of circles that I will detail below through the bibliographic needs of future projects, I raise as criticism whether it is appropriate and constructive to speak of schools, and periods that are reified in clear terms by constructs that group figures together by time, place and genre. Moreover, just as pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism contains an obvious bias, we might wonder if the same can be said of the 'Early Kabbalah', which was anything but uniform, and which, moreover, is presented in reference to what came later, namely what it is not.

A project that I began a decade to edit the complete works of the Geronese kabbalists ago awaits completion, either by renewed effort or by a team of scholars. I envisioned three volumes of the works of R. Ezra, R. Azriel and various anonymous materials and anthologies. Such volumes will demonstrate not only the gradual development of Kabbalah in its earliest stages, but also the development of thought and language within and between the literary careers of these important figures as represented in important manuscripts. Upon issuing these volumes, it was my intention to return to Provençal Kabbalah, culling from the Geronese works every citation in the name of the Ḥasid, their teacher R. Isaac the Blind, and edit the known works and scattered textual traditions of the Provençal figures, wherever they may be found. To date, most scholars have studied the writings of R. Isaac the Blind from the edition prepared by Gershom Scholem, included as an appendix to the transcription of his 1963 lectures on Provençal Kabbalah.[294] Scholem offered a clean text based on the Cincinnati manuscript and other witnesses. A beautifully annotated edition and study of the work was issued by Meir Sendor as a dissertation at Harvard University in 1994, but unfortunately the critical edition of the Hebrew text still awaits scholarly attention.[295]

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[294] Scholem, *Ha-Qabbalah be-Provence*, Jerusalem 1963.

[295] Mark Sendor, 'The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah'. In 1958 Chaim

The esoteric texts from the circle of Nahmanides' students is in an abysmal state and nothing would rejuvenate and invite new studies on the period and this group of texts more than new editions which would be inter-related as described in chapter three of this volume. The preparation of the tools should begin with a textual study of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*. Editions of this work, which is arguably the most influential commentary after that of Rashi, has been printed countless times in editions of very poor textual quality. Nahmanides revised his *Commentary* at the end of his life, probably in Israel, and these changes, with an eye toward their relevance to his secrets 'by way of truth', need to be assessed.

All of the works related to the *'Iyyun* Circle need to be edited in a single volume. Scholem wishfully constructed a list of 32 such works (in accordance with the thirty-two paths mentioned in *Sefer Yeṣira*),[296] which has subsequently been corrected and annotated by Mark Verman in an appendix to his dissertation.[297] It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of these texts for the methodological test case it would serve in the study of Kabbalah.

Wirszubski published an analysis of the manuscripts. See his study, 'Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Commentary to the *Book of Creation* by R. Isaac the Blind', *Tarbiz* 27 (1958) pp. 257-263; reprinted in: *Gershom Scholem Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1968, pp. 131-138 [Hebrew] (and facsimiled in idem, *Between the Lines: Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah and Sabbatianism*, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 3-12).

[296] See Mark Verman, 'Classifying the Hug Ha-Iyyun', *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division C*, vol. 1, 1990, p. 58; idem, 'The Evolution of the Circle of Contemplation', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, p. 164 n. 5 regarding Scholem's intentional exaggeration as reported to him by Joseph Dan.

[297] Scholem prepared a listing of the works of the 'Iyyun Circle in his Hebrew monograph, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah*, Jerusalem 1948, pp. 255-262, but omitted from the later expansions in German, French and English. Verman reproduced the list with notes and explanations in his dissertation, *Sifrei ha-Iyyun*, Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, September 1984, but is omitted from the ensuing monograph, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, Albany 1992. The numbering of works was clearly constructed, indeed forced, by Scholem to reflect the traditional number deriving from the *Book of Creation*. See most recently the study of Giulio Busi, 'An Early Kabbalistic Commentary to *Sefer ha-'Iyyun*', *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought. Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. R. Elior and P. Schäfer 2005, pp. 97-101 [Hebrew section].

First, the *'Iyyun* texts defy a clear definition of provenance, literary forms, and periodization. Second the inter-textual dependence demands that the works be edited as a whole, a literature or corpus, highlighting the revisions, borrowing and influences in these works. Third, the implications for the history and historiography of thirteenth-century Kabbalah would be tremendous.[298]

Following the dubious volume discussed above, which amassed materials previously edited by a academic editors (Scholem and myself), a comprehensive volume of the works of R. Jacob and R. Isaac Ha-Kohen, and their common student, R. Moses of Burgos, properly edited from manuscripts and annotated, would capture the development and common features of this circle of kabbalists. The collected studies of these figures would correct the impression that they formed a single 'gnostic circle', as Scholem had argued, delineating what exactly was Isaac's myth about evil Above and tracking the development of though in the various works of the elder brother, R. Jacob, highlighting him as a major example of the Spanish reception of linguistic and numerological mysticism from Ashkenaz.

My edition of Jacob ha-Kohen's *Book of Illumination*, prepared as a doctoral thesis, is arguably the first kabbalistic book composed in Castile. As I wrote in the thesis,[299] the literary units of secrets (*sodot*) were dispersed throughout various manuscripts and were rejoined in my editorial project into a single document and organized according to the internal references. Admittedly, these references could have been added at different times and do not necessarily reflect the nature of the work as a book, but to be sure, the introduction written by R. Jacob's anonymous student informs us, without a doubt, that some book did exist for him to edit and to which he could contribute his introduction. This volume awaits publication in an appropriate format, having been pirated and reproduced without credit in a synthetic reworking of the various witnesses. The text is most important as a signpost of how Jewish

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[298] Scholem took the first steps to prepare such a project but it was never realized. The two volumes *Sifrei Qabbalat ha-Geonim*, Jerusalem 2006 makes an attempt to build a library of such works with some awareness that it represents texts from Spanish Kabbalah, but fails to collect all the works, possibly because it privileges those materials that bear the mark of pseudepigraphy.

[299] See the chapter 'The Book of Illumination as a Uniform Book', pp. 91-101. I nevertherless included in my edition Moses de León's 'Secret of the Fingers', since it was edited into the frame of the most important manuscripts. For a recent discussion on this work and other related texts see Wiener, 'The Mysteries of the Vocalization'.

esotericism was formulated in different ways in thirteenth-century Spain. Foremost, the case of R. Jacob breaks down the historical development, and geographical trajectory outlined by Gershom Scholem in his trajectory, from Ashkenaz to Provence and on to Gerona and then Castile. More significantly, though, Jacob's theosophy belongs neither to the Abulafia's Ecstatic Kabbalah nor the Theosophical Kabbalah that typifies most of Spanish Kabbalah. A decentralized intellectual map of thirteenth century Kabbalah will thus offer a different perspective on the structure and meaning of various texts.

Despite his uniqueness, R. Jacob underwent various transformations throughout his literary career. He was in contact with his brother, who gained greater fame in modern scholarship, but was apparently second to his brother in importance in their day. They each taught R. Moses of Burgos, another very important kabbalist for the ways in which he participated and diverged from what scholars have expected of a thirteenth century kabbalist. A new edition of the works of R. Moses of Burgos are in dire need for a correction to the field, since Scholem first presented them in a rather piecemeal fashion and did not expose the multiple influences of his very different teachers and the independent path he took.[300] Here I will note the highly eclectic edition I prepared of R. Moses' commentary to Ezekiel, also entitled the *Book of Illumination*. It is comprised nearly entirely from lengthy citations from R. Jacob's Commentary to Ezekiel. Both manuscripts were poor and so I integrated their texts, noting the source of each word or phrase as found in only one or both of the manuscripts.[301]

Castilian Kabbalah which has been privileged as the most important contribution to medieval Jewish esotericism due to the placement of the zoharic literature at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, and related to a circle of figures who operated there, is still in dire need of textual study. In light of nearly a century of research on the *Zohar* and the exclusive or major role R. Moses de León had in composing and/or disseminating the zoharic corpus, it is a major problem for the field (and should be viewed as such by those who have downplayed this in their research on other related subjects), that all of his works have not been issued in critical editions. Similar statements can be made, of related figures, as Scholem was well aware

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[300] See the study of his works by Miriam Shaked, 'Investigations in the Kabbalah of R. Moses of Burgos', M.A. Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1987 [Hebrew].

[301] Abrams, 'The Book of Illumination', pp. 134-141.

in 1925, such as R. Joseph Gikatilla, R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid,[302] R. Joseph Angelet,[303] R. Joseph of Hamadan,[304] R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi,[305] and R. Baḥya ben Asher,[306] to name some of the most important ones. In looking back on Scholem's construction from the perspective of recent scholarship, we should be careful not to construct the historically and geographically placed figures at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century as necessarily part of the 'circle of the Zohar', allowing room for a return to older paradigms such as Idel's otherwise neglected description of a school centered around R. Joseph of Hamadan, which could be expressed through editorial practice.[307]

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[302] Bentsion Cohen has undertaken a project to issue *'Or Zaru'a*, thus far issuing two parts of it, published as *Sod Pirqei Avot*, n.p. 2009 [Hebrew]; *Sod Hagadah shel Pesah*, n.p. 2009 [Hebrew] and now a full edition, *Or Zaru'a: Man' Attempt to Meet with His Creator*, Jerusalem 2009. The importance of an edition of *Sefer ha-Gevul* cannot be underestimated. See the early thesis of Amos Goldreich, 'Rabbi David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*'.

[303] For example, an edition of his 24 secrets (*kaf-dalet sodot*) is a major desideratum.

[304] See the discussion in Alexander Altmann, 'On the Question of the Authorship of the "Book on the Reasons for the Commandments" Attributed to Isaac Ibn Farhi', *Qiryat Sefer* 40 (1965), pp. 256-276, 405-412 [Hebrew]. An expanded edition of Meier's edition of Hamadan's *Sefer Ṭa'amei ha-Mitzwoth*, which would include the as yet unpublished negative commandments from the work would be of tremendous importance. A further comparison of versions A and B as first discussed by Altmann would further show the development and recasting of kabbalistic texts. See the listing of Hamadan's works in Gottlieb, 'Two Additional Works by R. Joseph of Shushan ha-Bira and the Identifcation of the Works in *Sefer ha-Malkhut*', *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, Tel Aviv 1976, pp. 248-256 [Hebrew]; see most recently the dissertation by Iris Felix, 'Theurgy, Magic and Mysticism in the Kabbalah of R. Joseph of Shushan', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005 [Hebrew].

[305] Georges Vajda, 'Un Chapitre de l'histoire du conflit entre la Kabbale et la philosophie: la polémique anti-intellectualiste de Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi de Catalogne', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen* age 13 (1956), pp. 45-144; Moshe Hallamish, *A Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Yoseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah*, Jerusalem 1984 [Hebrew].

[306] Ephraim Gottlieb, *Kabbalah in the Writings of Baḥya ben Asher*, Jerusalem 1970, pp. 214-215 [Hebrew].

[307] See for example the relationship between *Sefer ha-Yiḥud*, the writings of R. Joseph and Recanati: Moshe Idel, 'The *Commentary to the Ten Sefirot* and Fragments

With such texts in hand in annotated critical editions, special volumes could be issued to test the (mutual) influence of these figures on each other, the zoharic corpus and the forms of editing that went into the composition and redaction of the zoharic texts. In chapter four, I suggested the publication of facsimiles of the first printings of the *Zohar*, from Mantua and Cremona. These are currently available on line at the National Library website and I would like to thank the library for agreeing to scan at my request the Amsterdam 1715 edition, which for all purposes exhausts the important statements of editing the *Zohar* in print.[308] There are, therefore, four slightly overlapping, but clearly distinct project that future scholarship should engage as the discrete phenomena that they are, namely the manuscript transmission, the editing of the corpus by Cordovero, the organization and editing of the materials in the first printings and the history of the text within the various printed editions. A second stage of research would be advanced should these editions, for example the first printing in Cremona, whose text reveals a rougher Aramaic than the highly stylized version of Mantua, be transcribed, and reproduced in the same typeface and format, with annotations added in the margins indicating the corresponding pagination in the Mantua edition and with footnotes that record the numerous marginalia in the copies around the world that identified each homeoteleuton and textual notations. A final step would be to link digital versions of such images as hypertext for a thorough comparison for methodologies and projects not yet envisioned.[309]

Special attention should be given to figures who visited Spain, such as R. Menaḥem Recanati and R. Isaac of Acre. And even though dissertations, monographs and even critical editions of their works have been issued, major works that have been studied and read by many scholars still remain in manuscript, the same state as when Scholem wrote to Bialik. Take for example R. Isaac of Acre's diary, *Oṣar Ḥayyim,* which exists in a single major manuscript

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from the Writings of R. Joseph Hamadan', *'Alei Sefer* 6-7 (1979), pp. 74-84 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Meaning of "*Ṭa'amei Ha-'Ofot Ha-Ṭeme'im*" of R. David ben Yehuda He-Ḥasid', *'Alei Shefer, Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed., M. Hallamish, Ramat Gan 1990, pp. 11-27.

308 The Amsterdam 1719 edition of *Tiqqunei Zohar* also should be digitized.

309 See Moshe Idel, 'A Unique manuscript of an Untitled Treatise of Abraham Abulafia in Biblioteca Laurentiana Medicea', *Kabbalah* 17 (2008) 7-28 and on line http://teca.bmlonline.it/TecaViewer/index.jsp?RisIdr=TECA0000606278&keyworks=Plut.02.48 where images of the manuscript can be viewed.

in Moscow (no. 775) with some scant parallels found in various other collections.[310] In the case of Recanati full editions need to be prepared for most all of his works, aside from the recent edition of his *Commentary to the Prayers*. Special attention needs to be paid to his *Commentary to the Torah* and the *Rationale to the Commandments*, with an eye toward their interrelationships and the layers and revisions that are the stages of the works growth. Moreover, in some cases I have detected signs of the inclusion of zoharic citations within sentences composed by him, such that it seems that even as author Recanati interpolated citations within a draft of his own work and not that the work grew from a notebook of some anthology of zoharic passages.[311]

In terms of editorial practice, it would be most helpful if editions could be prepared that would highlight and index all sources that are cited according to the work and the school from which they originated. So for example, I imagine a revised edition of Goldreich's *Me'irat Einayim*, where the texts from *Qabbalat Sasportas*, *Yalqut he-Ḥakham ha-Maskil*[312] and every other named source each appear in different typeface with indices that help the reader see each textual layer that constituted the sources that served such others who visited different geographical centers and layered their works with extensive citations from different books. But let me be clear and note that this work by R. Isaac's is part of a specific genre of supercommentaries to the Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* and is positioned within the thought of a particular school. As a geographic and ideological traveler through various kabbalistic schools and systems of thought, the collected works of R. Isaac would be of special importance, with editorial practice serving the construction of a full intellectual portrait. Neglected by scholarship, for example, are the collectanea apparently prepared by R. Isaac, which would fill out a picture of his man literary

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[310] See Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, p. 78, citing Scholem's *Major Trends*, p. 394 n. 127: Ms. New York JTSA 1674, fol. 123b.

[311] See the comments of Giacomo Corazzol, *Menahem Recanati, Commentary on the Daily Prayers: Flavius Mithridates' Latin translation, the Hebrew text, and an English Version*, Torino 2008, vol. 1, pp. 29-30 where he suggests a picture of what Recanati's original manuscript might have looked like.

[312] See Goldreich's introduction to *Me'irat Einayim* concerning Ms. Chrsit Church College 198 (=Neubauer 2456) and the discussion of Eitan Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist*, Stanford 2009, p. 11.

modes and sources which he deemed significant to collect and re/present.[313]

One could add to this list the works of R. Menaḥem Ṣiyyoni, the fourteenth-century kabbalist who collected and sampled many Spanish kabbalistic sources in his works, particularly his commentary to the Torah. The similarities here outweigh the differences in that each of these works draws on sources that traveled from their original centers, geographically if not ideationally, to receive new meaning in the anthological re-presentation. So even if Recanati did not travel, but received his materials in Italy,[314] we can map out various scenarios in the first few centuries of kabbalistic activity in which traditions took on new meanings as their context reconfigured their intention.[315] We are very close here to identifying the Sephardic editing of Ashkenazi texts, or similarly the Ashkenazi editing of Spanish texts, and the potential for uncovering such biases inherited by modern editors is worthy of our consideration. Special mention should be made here of the published and unpublished work of Heidi Laura, who exposed the Spanish predilections of Gershom Scholem, Joseph Dan and others, in casting the reception of Spanish theosophic texts in fourteenth-century Ashkenaz as the influence and infiltration of the more advanced developments of Jewish mysticism. Through this lens they privileged these later forms of thought, thereby missing the ways in which these Spanish traditions were recast in the strong and independent Ashkenazi milieu which survived the emergence of Kabbalah and had something unique to say about these very sources.[316]

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[313] See the manuscripts described in Abrams, *The Book Bahir*, pp. 78-79. See also Gershom Scholem, 'R. Isaac of Acre's Commentary to the First Chapter of *Sefer Yeṣira*', *Qiryat Sefer* 31 (1955-1956), pp. 379-396 [Hebrew]; R. Isaac's literary contribution within Fenton's edition of 'Judah Ibn Malka's *Commentary to Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* with a Translation and Glosses by R. Isaac of Acre'. See further the relation of R. Isaac to R. Jacob ha-Kohen, as edited within my edition of the *Book of Illumination*, p. 339.

[314] For a discussion of this debate see Corazzol, *Menahem Recanati*, vol.1, pp. 32-34.

[315] For a related discussion see Simha Emanuel, 'The Legal Rulings of R. Menaḥem Recanati', *Annual of Jewish Law* 25 (2008), pp. 139-198 [Hebrew].

[316] Heidi Laura, 'Collected Traditions and Scattered Secrets: Eclecticism and Esotericism in the Works of the 14th Century Ashkenazi Kabbalist Menahem Ziyyoni of Cologne', *Nordisk Judaistik • Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 20 (1999), pp. 19-44; idem, 'The Ashkenazi Kabbalah of R. Menahem Ziyyoni', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Copenhagen 2005. Daniel Abrams, 'The Reception and Editing of Kabbalistic Works by Students of Jewish Esotericism in Ashkenaz After the Appearance of the Kabbalah (Collectanea of Early Works in a Leipzig Manuscript Copied in 1429)', *Kabbalah* 21 (2010), pp. 311-330 [Hebrew]. See also Ivan Marcus, 'The Sephardic Mystique', *Orim: A*

A major genre of kabbalistic literature, one that has been relatively neglected, is the 'secrets' or *sodot*, usually anonymous literary units concerning ritual practice, commandments and biblical verses. A complete cataloging of all these secrets from manuscripts would advance the understanding of Kabbalah in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries immeasurably. This genre continued on in the later centuries, with *Sefer Shushan Sodot* by R. Moses of Kiev being a fine example of its later life and reception history. Anthologies and other forms of the literary reception of Kabbalah overlap with the production of new systems in other areas. Grouping such texts together and reading them intertextually is therefore of great interest. Note the recent editions of *Sefer*

Jewish Journal at Yale 1 (1985), pp. 35-53. While not specifically speaking about the construct that informs the reading of kabbalistic literature, much recent scholarship has cast new light on the use of Ashkenazi and Sephardic mentalities or postures as constructs that inform the way scholars and historians read sources, more so than did the medieval readers. See also Gershon Cohen, 'Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sefardim', *Studies of the Leo Baeck Institute*, ed. M. Kreutzberger, New York 1967, pp. 117-158 and reprinted in his *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures*, Philadelphia 1991, pp. 271-297; Israel Ta-Shma, 'The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages'; idem, 'Addendum to My Article: "The Library of the Ashkenazi Sages'; Elisheva Carlebach, 'Between History and Hope: Jewish Messianism between Ashkenaz and Sepharad', *Third Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History, May 17, 1998*, New York 1998; idem, 'Early Modern Ashkenaz in the Writings of Jacob Katz', *The Pride of Jacob: Essays on Jacob Katz and His Work*, ed. J. Harris, Cambridge and London 2002, pp. 65-84. See further the early comments of Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'The Eastern European Era in Jewish History," *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1 (1946), pp. 86-106, esp. p. 89 where he writes, 'Sephardic literature is distinguished by a strict, logical orderliness; it is written in accordance with a clear-cut scheme, in which every detail has its assigned place. Ahskenazic writers renounce clarity for the sake of profundity, the contours of their thoughts are not very clearly marked; the thoughts, however, are direct, moving, and natural. Sephardic literature is like classical architectural Ashkenazi literature, like a painting by Rembrandt, profound and full of mystery. The former prefers the harmony of a system; the latter, the tension of dialectic. The former is sustained by a balanced solemnity; the latter, by impulsive inspiration. Frequently, in Ahskenazic literature, the form is shattered by the overflow of feeling, by passion of thought, and explosive ecstasy. Sephardic literature is like a cultivated park; Ashkenazi, like an ancient forest. The former is like a story with a beginning and an end; the latter has a beginning, but turns frequently into a tale without an end'. See the similar formulation in his book, *The Earth is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe*, New York 1949, p. 31.

ha-Bahir, Sefer ha-Peliah, Sefer ha-Qana, and *Sefer ha-Temuna.* While they are not all from the same circle and period, the collection of canonical works in traditional editions is an example of reading texts together.[317] The fourteenth century in particular is rich with texts from various regions that capture earlier moments, rework texts and present new writings. So for example, the Kabbalah in Greece is virtually uncharted territory in terms of texts and their editions.[318]

Similarly, volumes that analyze and present the works of what may be seen as alternative forms to the dominant form of zoharic Kabbalah and those received as major or central to the history of Spanish Kabbalah would be a major contribution. A volume of the complete works of Ibn Latif is long overdue, not to mention other figures who offered a philosophically orientated take on Jewish esotericism and Kabbalah. The few kabbalistic works composed in Arabic would also amount to an impressive volume and would centralize the phenomenon and language issues that are specific to this body of texts, especially the still unpublished, 'Synthesis of Philosophy and Kabbalah' by Joseph ben Abraham ibn Waqar.[319] Additional major works from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries include Elḥanan ben Abraham ibn Eskira's *Yesod 'Olam.*[320]

Works of Spanish Kabbalah just prior to the Expulsion provide a unique test case for the appreciation of literary forms and the self-assessment of Kabbalah. Although we do have editions of some major works of this period by Ibn Sabba, Ibn Gabbai and Al-Ashqar, Adrutiel's *'Avnei Zikkaron* still remains in manuscript.[321] Such texts offer a unique opportunity for evaluating the way

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[317] Three volumes, Jerusalem 1997.

[318] See Michal Kushnir-Oron, '*Sefer Ha-Peliah* and *Sefer Ha-Qanah*'; Israel Ta-Shma, 'Where Were *Sefer ha-Peliah* and *Ha-Qana* Written', *Chapters in Jewish Social History (Festschrift for Professor Jacob Katz),* Jerusalem 1980, pp. 56-63 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Toward the History of Rabbinic Literature in Green in the Fouteenth Century', *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 101-114 [Hebrew].

[319] Gershom Scholem, 'R. Joseph Ibn Waqar's Arabic Book on Kabbalah and Philosophy', *Qiryat Sefer* 20 (1943-1944), pp. 153-162 [Hebrew]; Georges Vajda, 'On R. Joseph Ibn Waqar's Commentary to *Sefer Yeṣira*', *Oṣar Yehudei Sefarad* 5 (1962), pp. 17-20 [Hebrew]; Gabrielle Séd-Rajna, 'Joseph ben Abraham Ibn Waqar's Commentary to the Prayers', *Oṣar Yehudei Sefarad* 9 (1966), pp. 11-23 [Hebrew]; Paul Fenton, *Principles of the Qabbalah / Joseph b. Abraham Ibn Waqar,* edited from Hebrew and Arabic Manuscripts, Los Angeles 2004 [Hebrew].

[320] *Sifrei Qabbalat ha-Geonim,* Jerusalem 2006, vol. 1, pp. 25-60.

[321] See Gershom Scholem, 'On *Sefer Avnei Zikkaron*', *Qiryat Sefer* 6 (1930), pp.

earlier texts and ideas were anthologized, reshaped and presented in new mappings or orderings of various kabbalistic systems. That is to say, here we can gain insight into how the kabbalists viewed themselves and produced synthetic overviews, if not the earliest critical assessments prior to the history of ideas that emerged in the modern academic study of Kabbalah. Related here of course is the towering figure, R. Moses Cordovero, who represents the last stage of Spanish Kabbalah prior to the reinterpretation of kabbalistic systems of thought by R. Isaac Luria and his school. Beracha Sack has devoted her scholarly career to Cordovero's corpus and is actively engaged in issuing the final sections of his work, *Elemah Rabbati*.[322] His voluminous commentary to the *Zohar*, *Or Yaqar* has just been completed. Much of Cordovero's corpus still awaits editing from manuscripts, including the re-editing of such classics as *Pardes Rimmon*,[323] which has yet to be seriously checked against the manuscript traditions. Similarly there are some works by R. Solomon Alqabetz, such as his *Pirqei Ḥakham* which, if published, would amount to a major contribution.[324] Other major works, which require proper editions include *Sefer ha-Meshiv* and *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*, which offer important contributions in the history of kabbalistic literature but also to ideological and polemical stances to Christianity and Islam.[325]

259-276; Ibid 7 (1931), pp. 457-465 [Hebrew] reprinted in idem, *Chapters in the History of Kabbalistic Literature*, Jerusalem 1931, pp. 69-86, 154-62 [Hebrew].

[322] See Beracha Sack, *Ma'ayan Ein Ya'aqov: The Fourth Ma'ayan from Sefer Elemah*, edited and annotated by Beracha Sack, with introductions by Shifra Asulin, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Beracha Sack, Esther Liebes, and Leah Morris, Beer Sheva 2009 [Hebrew], who edited the lengthy conclusion of the book, regarding the body of the tenth and feminine grade of the theosophy. The printed edition is cut off in the middle of the description of the ninth grade, which still awaits publication.

[323] I have had extensive discussions in the National Library of Israel, in Jerusalem, with Rabbi Uri Einhorn who is preparing a new edition of *Pardes Rimmonim* that will restore the unique terminology of Cordovero's writing and will discuss include various sections that were added in some manuscripts from other sources. See the discussion in http://imhm.blogspot.com, dated 28.6.2010.

[324] See the extensive discussion in Bracha Sack, 'The Mystical Theology of Solomon Alkabez', Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1977 [Hebrew].

[325] See Moshe Idel, 'The Attitude to Christianity in *Sefer ha-Meshiv*', *Zion* 46 (1981), pp. 77-91 [Hebrew] (English version published in *Immanuel* 12 (1981), pp. 77-95); idem, 'Notes on Medieval Jewish-Christian Polemics', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3 [4] (1984), pp. 689-698 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Neglected Works from the Author of *Sefer Kaf*

In the Renaissance, the state of textual scholarship is more abysmal. Scholarship is in desperate need of editions of (all of) the works of Yoḥanan Alemanno, with annotations that show what sources he possessed, how he worked, and the patterns of type of Kabbalah he extracted and re/presented in his anthologies.[326] Idel has published a major history of the Kabbalah in Italy and therein we find countless texts that await publication. Much important work is being done in Christian Kabbalah and the relationship of the Latin sources to the Hebrew texts. Giulio Busi and his students have issued a number of editions, and the completion of the library that served the bridge between the Hebrew and the Latin sources will provide a major contribution.

In the past few years, new manuscripts have surfaced or have been identified of R. Ḥayyim Vital's version of the 'eight gates', his major compendium of works, which presents his version of the teachings he received orally from Isaac Luria. The version which has had a tremendous impact on virtually every form of Kabbalah from the end of the sixteenth century through present times, in countless manuscripts and in print, was re-edited and re-written by his son Shmuel. The publication of the first version, *mahadurah qamah*, provides a new opportunity for evaluating how and why revisions of such a major work were conducted and what the effect of these changes have been in comparison with the meaning of Ḥayyim Vital's version. The importance of such a project cannot be over-estimated.[327] Note, however, the

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ha-Qeṭoret', *Pe'amim* 53 (1993), pp. 75-89 [Hebrew]; Moshe Hallamish, 'The Attitude Toward Christianity and Islam in *Kaf ha-Qetoret'*, *Da'at* 43 (1999), pp. 53-76 [Hebrew]. Ayreh Ne'eman is preparing an edition which should be published shortly.

[326] See the very important manuscript of Yoḥanan Alemanno see Ms. Oxford Bodleian (Neub.) 2234. See further Moshe Idel, 'The Anthropology of Yohanan Alemanno: Sources and Influences', *Topoi* 7 (1988), pp. 201-210. On questions of authorship and the positioning of some of his works in the history of Jewish literature, see Arthur Lesley, 'Giving Birth to the Hebrew Author: Two Compositions by Johanan Alemanno', *Jewish Body Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Diemling and G. Veltri, Leiden 2009, pp. 273-299.

[327] See the new editions produced by Yeshivat Ahavat Shalom, with the noted additions, and copyings by Jacob Ṣemaḥ and others: *Adam Yashar*, Jerusalem 1994; *Sefer 'Olat Tamid*, Jerusalem 1997; *Sefer ha-Derushim*, Jerusalem 1996; *Sefer ha-Kavvanot*, Jerusalem 2004; *Sefer Qehilat Ya'aqov*, Jerusalem 1992; *Sha'ar ha-Tefilah*, Jerusalem 2008. Aryeh Ne'eman is preparing an edition of *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*, which will be published by the Ben Zvi Institute. See now his thesis, 'Studies in *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*: Its Time, Place, Ideas and Messianic Mentality', M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew

resistance to presenting or replacing Shmuel's versions with that of his father, R. Ḥayyim Vital, in the new edition of *Sha'ar ha-Miṣwot*, which includes a new typeset edition of the recension by Shmuel, followed by a facsimile of the autograph manuscript of R. Ḥayyim Vital.[328]

While Safedian Kabbalah is viewed by many, even by Scholem in a number of his writings,[329] as the culmination of kabbalistic myth and literature, relatively nothing has been accomplished. Recent years have seen the delineation of the students and schools that received and interpreted in unique ways the texts and oral teachings of R. Isaac Luria, namely R. Moshe Yonah, R. Ḥayyim and R. Joseph Ibn Tabul and R. Israel Saruq.[330] This has culminated in the Joseph Avivi's magnum opus, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, a three-volume description, cataloging and history of Lurianic manuscripts and books from their composition through their geographic and chronological diffusion and influence. It is difficult to underestimate the achievement of this study and a number of years will pass before scholarship can internalize all that has been outlined in these volumes.

What is needed in the wake of this study, is a series of editions that fill in the structure provided by Joseph Avivi. Ever since Scholem's study on the authentic works of Isaac Luria, a volume of these texts has been a *desideratum* of the field.[331] Such a volume could include all passages from works of the period that

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University of Jerusalem, 2009 [Hebrew].

[328] *Sha'ar ha-Ḥamishi: Sha'ar ha-Miṣwot*, ed. Joseph Ṭevilah, Safed 2006.

[329] See the introduction to my edition of Scholem's studies: *Lurianic Kabbalah: Collected Studies by Gershom Scholem.*

[330] See for example Ronit Meroz, 'R. Israel Sarug, Student of R. Isaac Luria: A New Inquiry', *Da'at* 28 (1992), pp. 41-50 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Contrasting opinions among the Founders of Saruq's School, *Expérience, Écriture et Théologie dans le Judaïsme et les Religions du Livre*, ed. P. Fenton & R. Goetscel, Paris 2000, pp. 191-202, and a more complete bibliography I published in the volume cited in the previous note.

[331] Scholem discussed the 'Authentic Writings of the Ari', in his study printed in *Qiryat Sefer* 19 [1942] pp. 184-199), now reprinted with additional notes in his *Lurianic Kabbalah*, pp. 240-261. Compare to the very different shift in methodologies is Lawrence Fine's monograph, *Physician of the Soul: Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, which forwards the charismatic personality over the myths contained in Lurianic texts, as argued earlier, most prominently, by Isaaiah Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil the Shells in Lurianic Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1942, revised edition, Jerusalem 1984; idem, 'Gnostic Doctrines in Sixteenth Century Jewish Mysticism', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955), pp. 146-152. Fine does not adduce texts composed by

cite traditions in his name. The kernel of this project is the collection of texts and works written by R. Isaac Luria and presented alongside their later versions as edited by other kabbalists. Of particular interest, as illustrated in the case of Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*, and the later supercommentaries that highlight oral traditions from this master, is the inclusion of oral traditions in the writings of the students of R. Isaac Luria. Two comparisons can thus be made, first, the relationship between the oral teachings of this master and the variegated reception of these traditions in the writings of his students, and second, the relationship between R. Isaac Luria's authentic writings, and the oral traditions recorded in his name. Of course, even the written texts of R. Isaac Luria underwent revisions, even before the end of the sixteenth century.

A fantastic example of this is documented by Joseph Avivi in his discussion of an early manuscript of R. Isaac Luria's *Commentary to Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*, copied by R. Jacob Berab, with editorial notes by R. Menaḥem Azariah of Fano.[332] Later manuscripts contain the edited text. When viewed from a modern perspective, with all its assumptions of authorship and literary identity, R. Menaḥem Azariah displays no respect for the original text of the great master, R. Isaac Luria, who authored the *Commentary*. As evidenced in this example (see figure 5.8), R. Menaḥem Azariah 'intervenes', marking paragraph breaks, changing the language at will, inserting explanatory notes, and drawing manicules for emphasis. Instead of viewing R. Menaḥem Azariah of Fano as a literary criminal who vandalizes the 'original' text, we can gain insight into the textual culture of the period and the cross-cultural exchange between these centers of kabbalistic text study. The free hand of editing, as an act of reading (and rewriting), seems here to be a norm and, possibly, a literary duty of receiving and furthering the life of the text. As detailed by Avivi, the modified text was later included in other anthologies, and edited volumes, placing the text alongside other writings by Luria or those of his students.[333]

Isaac Luria in this volume, but writes more of the impressions and (literary) reception of his personality in the works of later figures. My thanks to Menachem Kallus for discussions on this topic.

[332] Ms. Jerusalem, Benayahu Collection 91. Avivi, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 81-83, 293. Joseph Avivi and are preparing an edition of this work from this manuscript.

[333] Avivi, Ibid., pp. 947-1009, published an edition of a version of the *Commentary* from the manuscript copied by R. Shmuel Vital, Ms. New York, Habad Library 1942.

Figure 5.8: Ms. Jerusalem, Benayahu Collection 91, fol. 28a

In all, the first and second generation students of Lurianic Kabbalah offer a wonderful opportunity for the study of the reception, redaction and transmission of kabbalistic traditions. So much more could be said here, but it is sufficient to note that there is not a single essay or volume that even lists all the kabbalistic works composed in Safed! It should be recalled that Luria's circle of students is positioned within a wider context of a renaissance in kabbalistic activity, the expansion of literary forms and pietistic tendencies which extend beyond the esoteric writings. Additional work is needed in the pietistic realm, much like the anthology provided in the English translation volume, Safedian Kabbalah.[334] The mixing of these traditions, pietistic and esoteric, come to the fore in Joseph Karo's *Shulḥan 'Arukh*. Strikingly little work has been done on this text from a kabbalistic point of view, despite major contributions about the work.[335] The interweaving of kabbalistic myths and practices into the code of Jewish law and ultimately its reception into Jewish culture outside of the kabbalistic circles, needs to be represented in terms that only editorial practice can flesh out. I suggest an edition that presents all innovative or kabbalistically driven additions to Jewish practice to be highlighted in a different font or type size. Indices could then quantitatively demonstrate to the reader, who would be able to surmise qualitatively from such a directed presentation in its study the contribution of Kabbalah to this

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334 Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom*, New York and Mahwah 1993. An annotated edition of Abraham Azualai's *Ḥesed le-Avraham* would be a major contribution showing the collection and representation of sources from prior kabbalists. See Bracha Sack, 'On the Sources to *Sefer Ḥesed le-Avraham* of R. Abraham Azulai', and the new edition proofed from an unidentified manuscript, Jerusalem 1996.

335 See Isadore Twersky, 'The *Shulḥan 'Arukh*: Enduring Code of Jewish Law', Judaism 16 (1967), pp. 141-158. Reprinted in *The Jewish Expression*, edited by Judah Goldin, New Haven 1976, pp. 322-343; Israel Ta-Shma, 'Rabbi Joseph Caro and His *Beit Yosef*: Between Spain and Germany', *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart, Jerusalem 1992, vol. 2, pp. 192-206; Rachel Elior, 'R. Joseph Karo and R. Israel Ba'al Shem Ṭov: Mystical Metamorphosis, Kabbalistic Inspiration and Spiritual Internalization', *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), pp. 671-709 [Hebrew]; Joseph Davis, 'The Reception of The *Shulḥan 'Arukh* and the Formation Of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity', *AJS Review* 26 (2002), pp. 251-276; Amnon Raz-Krakozkin, 'From Safed to Venice: The *Shulḥan Arukh* and the Censor', *Tradition, Heterodoxy and Religious Culture: Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Chanita Goodblatt & Howard Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 91-115, and the various studies he discusses.

all-important code of Jewish law and culture. As a culmination to such a project that would highlight the interface between legal and esoteric works, Schechter's famous essay on Safed needs to be reformulated.[336] In this vein, it would be extremely helpful to have a bibliographic essay that lists all the figures and works that were composed in Safed or that mark the literary renaissance of this period. Equally important are the sources that reached Safed, including the copies and commentaries that were produced there. On this point the works of R. Avraham ben Eliezer Ha-Levi are of particular importance.[337]

Sabbateanism was perhaps Scholem's most important life project, culminating in his lengthy study, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*.[338] A full and corrected edition of the work of R. Mordechai Ashkenazi, published in a partial edition by Scholem, is a *desideratum* of the field.[339] Moreover, the highly important works by Nathan of Gaza, Michael Cordozo and countless other important texts remain in manuscript.[340] Chaim Wirszubski prepared, in an unpublished typescript the initial groundwork for an edition of *Sefer ha-Beriah* of Nathan of Gaza.[341]

Even in Eastern European Hasidism where most of the literature has been printed, major projects need to be undertaken in order to show the reader (in editions) how materials were collected, anthologized and shaped into works,

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[336] Solomon Schechter, 'Safed in the Sixteenth Century: A City of Legists and Mystics', *Studies in Judaism*, Philadelphia 1908, pp. 202-285. See, however, Beracha Sack, 'The Land of Israel, The *Zohar* and the Kabbalah in Safed: A Few Comments', *Zion and Zionism among Sephardi and Oriental Jews: Proceedings of Misgav Yerushalayim's Fifth International Congress*, ed. W. Zeev Harvey, G. Hasan-Rokem, H. Saadon, A. Shiloaḥ, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 51-79 [Hebrew].

[337] See especially Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, 4° 537.

[338] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*, translated by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Princeton 1973.

[339] Idem, *The Dreams of R. Mordecai Ashkenazi, A Follower of Sabbatai Ṣevi*, Jerusalem 1938 [Hebrew].

[340] See most recently the text edited by Elliot Wolfson, 'Constructions of the *Shekhinah* in the messianic theosophy of Abraham Cardoso, with an annotated edition of *Derush ha-Shekhinah*', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 11-143 and Nissim Yosha, 'Maimonides as Ally and Opponent in the Sermons of Abraham Michael Cardozo', *Da'at* 64-66 (2009), pp. 235-253 [Hebrew].

[341] See the photocopy in the Gershom Scholem Library #5079.1 and #55012.1. See also his related study, Chaim Wirszubski, 'On Spiritual Love (From the Works of Nathan of Gaza)', *The Schocken Collection of Literature*, Tel Aviv 1941, pp. 150-166 [Hebrew].

mainly in the first few generations. Scholarship still waits for new tools, printed and electronic, which will afford the reader the ability to track oral traditions, in their various written forms, translations from Yiddish into Hebrew of countless aphorisms,[342] and highlight the later glosses that were interpolated into the texts.[343] A project of the works of the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz, Ḥayyim Ḥaika, Pinḥas of Koretz, and Jacob Joseph of Polonoy would offer such a database.[344] An important beginning would be offered by the publication of editions of manuscripts of collectanea from the first generations of Hasidism, and

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342 A very interesting debate surrounds the question of whether the Baal Shem Ṭov's sayings (and for that matter, the first generations of Hasidim) were delivered in Yiddish or Hebrew. See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Albany 1995, p. 239 n. 3; Khone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature in Poland: Historical Studies and Perspectives*, Jerusalem 1981; Yehoshua Mondshine, *Shivḥei ha-Besht: A Facsimile of a Unique Manuscript, Variant Versions and Appendices*, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 22-40; Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*; Moshe Rosman, 'The History of a Historical Source: On the Editing of *Shivḥei ha-Besht*', *Zion* 58 (1993), pp. 175-214, esp. p. 180 [Hebrew], idem, *Founder of Hasidisim*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995, pp. 138-140, 147-148, 155; Elchanan Reiner, '*Shivḥei ha-Besht*: Transmission, Edition, Printing', *Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies: Division C: Thought and Literature, Volume 2: Jewish Thought, Kabbalah and Hasidism*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 145-152 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Figure of the Besht — History Versus Legend', *Studia Judaica* 3 (1994), pp. 52-66; Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic and Leader*, Hanover, N.H. 2005, pp. 224-227; on translations from Yiddish into Hebrew in the printing of manuscripts of the sayings of R. Pinḥas of Koretz see Daniel Abrams, 'The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar*', pp. 298-299. For further methodological comments concerning historiography and notes on the future challenges to the field see David Asaf, 'Enemies – A Love Story? Research on the Interrelationship between Hasidism and Haskalah', *The Varieties of Haskalah*, ed. S. Feiner and I. Bartal, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 183-200 [Hebrew].

343 Compare the state of the field today to that described by Zeev Gries in his article published over twenty years ago: 'Hasidism: The Present State of Research and Some Desirable Priorities (Sequel)', *Numen* 34 (1987), pp. 179-213. See further Morris Faierstein, 'Hasidism: The Last Decade in Research', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 111-124.

344 While unrelated to the textual database I am suggesting as a precursor to such a project, the phenomenological interests of such studies as Haviva Pedaya, 'The Ba'al Shem Ṭov, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy and the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz: Guidelines Toward a Religious Typology', *Daat* 45 (2000), pp. 25-73 [Hebrew] offer important methodological advances in that they offer a comparison of traditions the various students of the Besht.

especially those that resemble the printed editions but contain materials, versions and orderings, which do *not* agree with the commonly viewed materials.[345] Ultimately, with the publication of a critical mass of such collections and studied within their literary contexts, the units that comprise these collections could be broken down and appreciated within a database of the larger corpus of what amounts to the literary history of how oral traditions were transcribed and transmitted over the first few centuries of Hasidic literature. Here, scholarship has much to learn from such volumes as *Ba'al Shem Ṭov 'al ha-Torah*, which although not critically oriented, culled traditions in the name of the Besht from numerous works.[346]

The project I am suggesting here is, no doubt, massive and the repetition of texts (in similar forms) across various collections needs to be handled with care, noting its earlier position and any change in meaning due to the editorial hand of the compiler. But most important here is the unique circumstances of Hasidic literature as oral teachings transmitted in Yiddish but transcribed in Hebrew for the most part in these written records. The Yiddish that remains in some manuscripts points to the authenticity or ostensibly the primary form of its public performance. The rendering of such sayings into Hebrew in parallel manuscripts thus uncovers, between the various manuscripts and printings, something of the process which transformed Hasidism as a living and popular

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[345] A number of important manuscript exist including Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel [3]8° 5198, 8° 3282, 8° 1467 and 8° 5979. See the note concerning the second manuscript in the Scholem archives, file 207. On the first manuscript see Shlomo Zucker, 'An Early Hasidic Manuscript', *Qiryat Sefer* 49 (1974), pp. 223-235 [Hebrew]; Gedalyahu Nigal, 'Note to the Article by S. Zucker, 'An An Early Hasidic Manuscript', Ibid., pp. 451-452 [Hebrew]; Abraham Rubenstein, 'Hasidism and Hasidim in Warsaw', *Sinai* 75 (1974), pp. 69-73 [Hebrew]; Gedalyahu Nigal, 'An Inquiry into an Early Hasidic Manuscript', *Research and Inquiry of Jewish Studies: Literature, Bible and Linguistics*, Haifa 1976, pp. 177-192 [Hebrew]; Zeev Gries has discussed these in his book, *Conduct Literature*, p. 152. Of tremendous importance is the new edition of traditions of Dov Baer, the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz, issued by the Shuvi Nafshi Institute: *Liqquṭei 'Amarim*, Jerusalem 2009. The relationship between all these sources needs to be revisited. Of note is that the copyist of [3]8° 5198 separated the paragraphs (according to their source?) with a dividing line.

[346] See the important discussion of Isaac Alfasi, 'Two Bibliographic Clarifications', *Qiryat Sefer* 48 (1973), pp. 659-660 [Hebrew]; Ephraim Grassburger, '*Ba'al Shem Ṭov 'al ha-Torah*', *Hekhal ha-Besht* 2 (2003), pp. 154-170 [Hebrew]. See also *Massekhet Avot 'im Perushei Rabbenu Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov*, ed. Yisrael Dvorqas, Jerusalem 1965.

culture into a textual body that circulated amongst a relatively more elite audience. But here we have an interesting paradox for editorial practice. When multiple versions of an anthology exist, and the Yiddish version appears to be a more original and accurate phrasing of the text and reflection of what the teacher cited actually said, should the editor nevertheless privilege this reading over the Hebrew which was the language and aim of the editor in producing such a collection. No one answer is necessary here as we have explored in this volume more complex methods of presentation that allow for both forms. But the unique place of Yiddish in Hasidic works (in Hebrew) nevertheless stands out as a special problem for the relationship between orality and literacy due to the fact that there is no pretension of uncovering the author, original literary form, or language of the anthology of sayings.[347] The aim of scholarship, in this case, with the tools of editorial practice, is to capture and present the processes that eventuated in literary Hasidism, which necessarily fold back upon the performance of oral teaching, transcription, translation, anthologizing and the re-editing and reshaping of individual traditions and their collections.

Similar projects from other chapters in the history of Jewish mysticism include those that would trace oral traditions cited in the names of the most important founders of kabbalistic schools, namely, R. Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, R. Isaac Luria and the Besht (with the noted exception of Abraham Abulafia, who represents a different dynamic of the relation between the oral and the written).[348] These projects could build up from volumes of the authentic writings and sayings of these figures and the reverberations and citations of them in the writings of all their students. Moreover, lacking in the field are intellectual biographies of major kabbalists, or at the least monographs

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[347] Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 47-67 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Hasidic Managing Editor as an Agent of Culture', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London, Portland 1996, pp. 141-155. In these studies and others Gries discusses the various terms and roles of the managing editor, listing their titles in Hebrew. While the profession or tasks had a formal status, my attempt has been to show the fluidity of the various tasks and show the instability of work, reconfigured as a text, from the author and on down to the printer, blurring the boundaries of the tasks and the identities of the roles of all those involved in these textual processes.

[348] See for example, Moshe Idel, 'On the Meanings of the Term "*Qabbalah*": Between Ecstatic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of the Sefirot in the Thirteenth Century', *Pe'amim* 93 (2003), pp. 39-76 [Hebrew].

devoted to explaining and interpreting the traditions of major works.[349]

The generally accepted assumption, reached by a faulty comparison with 'the Early Kabbalah', is that there is little need for manuscripts in the study of Hasidism, since print had already been invented. This assumption needs to be discarded. A catalog and survey of Hasidic manuscripts is no less a *desideratum* of the field, that is, a full bibliography all published materials of Hasidism.[350] Even in the absence of a literary history of kabbalistic texts, it would be helpful to create a citation index of the Middle Ages, namely what works were available and cited to whom. Much has been written about the printing of kabbalistic and particularly Hasidic books, with a recent emphasis on popular literature, handbooks of customs, ethical treatises and hagiography.[351] Scholarship has yet to reach a consensus on the question of

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[349] Mention should be made here of R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic*, Oxford 1962/Philadelphia 1980; Roland Goetschel, *Meir Ibn Gabbay: Le Discours de la Kabbale Espagnole*, Leuven 1981; Moshe Idel, *R. Menaḥem Recanati*; Maurizio Mottolese, *La via della qabbalah: Esegesi e mistica nel Commento alla Tora di Rabbi Baḥya ben Aser*, Bologna 2004; Joseph Dan, *R. Judah the Pious*, Jerusalem 2006 [Hebrew]; Eitan Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*; Zohar Raviv, *Decoding the Dogma within the Enigma: The Life, Works, Mystical Piety and Systematic Thought of Rabbi Moses Cordoeiro (aka Cordovero; Safed, Israel, 1522-1570)*, Saarbrücken 2008.

[350] Due to the large number of Chabad manuscripts available, a great number of Hasidic manuscripts have been mistakenly cataloged as belonging to Chabad. I note that Joseph Weiss began a card catalog of printed books of Hasidism, which I viewed many years ago in the Schocken Library in Jerusalem. See also his comments regarding the listing of books in Dubnow's *Toledot ha-Hasidut*, Tel Aviv 1930-32, vol. 3, pp. 386ff. See Joseph Weiss, 'Is the Hasidic Book "*Kethoneth Passim*" a Literary Forgery', *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1958), pp. 81-83. The article's importance should not be underestimated. Similar projects were begun by Rivka Schatz and Yoav Elstein and Ariela Krasney, 'The *Ma'aseh Buch*: Mapping the Basic Problems', pp. *Studies in Jewish Narrative: Ma'aseh Sippur Presented to Yoav Elstein*, ed. A. Lipsker and R. Kushelevsky, Ramat Gan 2006, pp. 99-118 [Hebrew].

[351] Zeev Gries, 'The Book as an Agent of Change from the Beginning of Printing until the Modern Period, *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, volume 2, ed. H. Kreisel Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 237-258 [Hebrew]; idem 'Kabbalistic Literature and its Role in Hasidism', *The Book in the Jewish World 1700-1900*, Oxford-Portland 2007, pp. 69-90. idem, 'The Role of Printing in Jerusalem in the 19th Century in the History of Printing by Jews', *Qadetra* 125 (2008), pp. 1-7 [Hebrew]. Avriel Bar-Levav, '"When I was Alive" Jewish Ethical Wills as Egodocuments', *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical*

print as a marker for the emergence of a movement. In other words, what constitutes a significant event, historically and phenomenologically, for the study of religious traditions?[352]

A similar problem exists in what is now known by the construct and name of 'Twentieth-Century Kabbalah'. The various modern figures and movements began with literary creations that were seldom published, and at times with the issuing of censored editions that concealed much of the ecstatic, unitive or antinomian tendencies of their works. Manuscripts and print thus continue to yield similar relationships in recent years as they have centuries ago. The gap between the two is telling of the sensitivities that mark the communities of readers and the power establishments that are in place.[353]

Moving on to literary form, annotated listings of the genres of kabbalistic works needs to be prepared along with revised versions of studies of this kind that have already been published such as Scholem's listing of commentaries to the ten *sefirot*, or the Hasidic story.[354] A serious appreciation of the history and types of kabbalistic poetry, in Aramaic and in Hebrew is a major *desideratum*.[355] Indeed, nothing substantive has been written on kabbalistic

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Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages, ed. R. Dekker, Rotterdam 2002, pp. 47-59.

352 On the nostalgic and rather personal authority invested in manuscript coposition and production after the invention of the printing press see Elchanan Reiner, 'The Ashkenazi Élite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book', *Polin* 10 = *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, ed. G. Hundert, London-Portland 1997, pp. 85-98.

353 See Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah*, translated by Yaffah Berkovits-Mucriano, New Haven and London 2009. See most recently Munitz, Meir. 'Rav Kook's Circle and the Editing of His Writings', Ph.D. Thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2008 [Hebrew].

354 Gedalyahu Nigal, *Lexicon of the Hasidic Story*, Jerusalem 2005 [Hebrew].

355 Peter Cole once described to me a planned project to review and present kabbalistic poetry in a special volume. See the few comments by Scholem in his volume, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, p. 77: 'Small wonder that the movement [in Safed] resulted also in the revival of religious poetry, rooted in the world of the Kabbalah ... In their works they revealed the imaginative and poetic value of kabbalistic symbolism, and many of their poems found their way intor prayer books, both of the community and of individuals'. See Joseph Weiss, 'A Contemporary Poem on the Appearance of the *Zohar*', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 8 (1957), pp. 219-221. See also the project undertaken by Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory*

aesthetics despite the tremendous contribution they offered within the history of Hebrew literature. In light of the advances in literary theory and various other related fields a fresh inquiry would be most welcome. Studies of this type would certainly advance the appreciation of this genre and kabbalistic writing in general. Similarly, as a number of scholars have explored, religious poetry, dating back as early as the Qalir and Yanai are important signposts for the diffusion of esoteric themes.[356] Liturgy as with other forms of Hebrew poetry through the late Middle Ages should be studied in order to shed light on the meaning and context of many Jewish mystical texts.

A related and extremely interesting project would be a volume that collects anti-kabbalistic polemics, beginning with Meir ben Simeon's *Milḥemet Miṣwah* and ending with current attacks in Israel and the Diaspora, or rather, Hebrew and other languages. Moreover, a volume which collects polemical comments against Christianity and Islam would offer much insight into kabbalistic thought. As noted above, virtually nothing has been published on the kabbalistic codex, collections, anthologies and other editings of texts from various circles and periods. Dozens of very important manuscripts should be published in facsimile form and their appearance, indeed the distribution of such volumes amongst scholars in the field would propel the discipline forward immeasurably.

Graphic Images and Kabbalistic Texts

Yet another tool, which has only just begun to become the object of study, is the graphic element in kabbalistic manuscripts, amulets and printed books. The

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in Medieval Spain, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002. Elisabeth Hollender, *Clavis Commentariorum of Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in Manuscript*, Brill, Boston-Leiden 2005. For the most recent study and edition of poetry which includes many kabbalistic themes and poems see Devora Bergman, *I Raise My Heart: Poems by Moses Zacuto: A Scientific Edition*, Jerusalem 2009 [Hebrew]. For mystical and kabbalistic themes in medieval Hebrew poetry see Wolfson's *Through a Speculum*. See now the volume by Binyamin Bar-Tikva, *Genres and Topics in Provençal and Catalonian Piyyut*, Jerusalem 2009 [Hebrew], which presents editions of otherwise unknown poems by R. Ezra and R. Azriel of Gerona, pp. 382-383 and 364-365 respectively.

[356] See for example the important source book and catalog by Elisabeth Hollender, *Piyyut Commentary in Medieval Ashkenaz*, Berlin-New York 2008. See also Ithamar Gruenwald, '*Piyyuṭei Yanai* and the Literature of the Descender to the Chariot', *Tarbiz* 36 (1967), pp. 257-277 [Hebrew].

most impressive study to date is that of Giulio Busi who presented and analyzed some of the most celebrated images and texts in kabbalistic literature.[357] In a much earlier review essay of a contemporary edition of diagrams and drawings that decoded the main text of Lurianic Kabbalah, published in Charles Mopsik's on-line journal, *Journal pour les études de la Cabale: Revue Interdisciplinaire de recherche et d'information*, I discussed the epistemological and phenomenal status of mystical and interpretive experience in relation to pictorial images.[358] In short, graphics that interpret a kabbalist's own text (or even that of an earlier author) are devices that explain text and so have their place in editorial practice. And even if the importance of many of the images is not always understood by modern scholars, they are certainly part of the authorial intent of the work and their meaning may be better understood in the future.[359]

While the popular interest today in an index or collection of all such images in one volume is presumably to gain immediate access to an esoteric tradition that is far removed from their experience and education, the kabbalists included diagrams, such as those of the ten *sefirot*, from the earliest years of literary production, in a way that complemented the written text, but certainly could not exist independent from it.[360] Related here are the diagrams and

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[357] Giulio Busi, *La Qabbalah visiva*, Torino 2005; Amos Goldreich, 'Rabbi David ben Judah he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*', pp. 79-84.

[358] Daniel Abrams, 'New Study Tools from the Kabbalists of Today: Toward an Appreciation of the History and Role of Collectanea, Paraphrases and Graphic Representations in Kabbalistic Literature', *Journal pour les études de la Cabale: Revue Interdisciplinaire* de recherche et d'information 1 (1997), pp. 1-7 (electronic journal: http://jec2.chez.com/artabrams.htm). In addition to the two editions of the fantastic diagrams of the Beṣalel Moshe Bloom's, *Derekh le-'Eṣ ḥa-Ḥayyim*, Jerusalem 1996 (second edition, Jerusalem 2000). Other works of this type include David Qapshien, *Sefer Es ha-Hayyim she-ba-Gan*, Jerusalem 2010; Mordechai Aṭiyah issued *Eṣ ḥa-Ḥayyim le-Moṣeihem*, Jerusalem 2010, which includes many colored diagrams. Qapshein provides a rich introduction of kabbalistic sources that remark positively on the production and use of images in kabbalistic literature. See his introduction, pp. 11-19.

[359] See Scholem's comment 'Added to the book (in all the manuscripts) are drawings and numerous circles and I cannot admit that I was able to gain much benefit from them' ('R. David ben Yehuda he-Ḥasid, the Grandson of Nahmanides', *Qiryat Sefer* 4 (1928), p. 315 [Hebrew]; reprinted in his volume, *Chapters in the History of Kabbalistic Literature*, Jerusalem 1931, p. 26 [Hebrew]).

[360] Note the diagrams in the thirteenth century texts: Abrams and Farber-Ginat, *The Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. 'Eleazar of Worms*. See further Yosef Ofer, 'A

textual instruments offered in select texts aimed at assisting the reader in kabbalistic techniques whose goal is mystical experience. The most prominent examples are the wheels of divine names at the end of Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-ba*[361] and the various diagrams and clock-like hands on the wheels printed in the first edition of *Sefer Yeṣira* (see figure 5.9).[362]

In a similar vein, a diagram of the sefirotic tree was added to a particular copy of the widely disseminated classic of Moses Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmon* in which the name of each sefirah is written upon a circle that is sewn into the center of a circle underneath it so that it can rotate and point to a name written on the outer circle. On the outer circle, like the numbers of a clock each of the ten names is written out as spokes of wheel which also can turn. While following the same physical technique of circles sewn onto the page, here, each *sefirah*, in its fixed location, swivels to align itself at the reader's wish with the name of another *sefirah*, each of the ten found in the background in every wheel (see figure 5.10).[363] Here we have a special circumstance of manuscript traditions, and printed editions, as material culture that played a role in conveying the meaning of a text and providing techniques for mystical experience.[364] Mention should be made here of the as-yet unpublished research

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Diagram of the Open Land of the Levite Cities in Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (2009), pp. 271-283.

[361] On similar diagrams in the works of Ramon Lull see the two additional pages to the article of Moshe Idel, 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah: Some Preliminary Observations', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), pp. 170-174 and illustrations there on pp. 16-17. See further Harvey Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans and Joachimism*, Albany 2007, p. 11 n. 14; idem, *Art of Conversion*. For an on-line image of a manuscript of *Ḥayye ha-'Olam ha-ba* with the circles drawn but not affixed with a separate circles see Ms. 251 of the Braginsky collection: http://braginskycollection.com/start.php#/single/books/251/6. See also Ms. Oxford, Bodleian 1742, fol. 242b related to the *aleph beth* of Metatron.

[362] Mantua 1562, fols. 8b, 10b 33a. See also the beautiful wheels in Ms. Moscow-521 fols. 8a, 9b, 24b and 41a. For further parallels of this phenomenon see Alan H. Nelson, 'Mechanical Wheels of Fortune, 1100-1547', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43, (1980), pp. 227-233, esp. sources cited on p. 227 n. 3.

[363] Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 626, fol. 90a.

[364] In this growing interest of Jewish studies and Jewish mysticism a number of studies should be cited including, Batsheva Goldman, 'The Hasidic Ritual Object', Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007, two volumes [Hebrew] and Daniel Sperber, *Material Culture in Eretz Yisrael during the Talmudic Period*, Jerusalem and

of Menachem Kallus and J.H Chajes who are studying the various scrolls and manuscripts that contain diagrams of the ten *sefirot* and other forms of pictorial organizations of texts about the divine theosophy. This literature is a neglected genre in Kabbalah scholarship and holds major implications for various fields of inquiry.

In the context of the present study it is important to note the relationship between graphic images and text in kabalistic works. As discussed in the first chapter of the present study, the earliest dated kabbalistic manuscripts from the end of the thirteenth century include simple, but fascinating, diagrams, mainly of the sefirotic tree.[365] It is clear that the graphic images aid in explaining the textual material and that they have no independent life as a pedagogical tool outside of the work. As works unfolded into books, a genre emerged of full-length works, and volumes printed as books, wherein the diagrams provided the structure for a textual description, which was literally included within this frame, which extended to incredible lengths and widths, defying the confines of the pages of a book and requiring the scribe to prepare a scroll. Between these two extremes of a text that includes a diagram, and a diagram that includes a text, there are compromises between the two media. Take for example *Liqquṭim me-ha-Rav Hai Gaon* (Warsaw 1798), which includes various short kabbalistic works. Following the 'Questions and Answers' of R. Azriel of Gerona, an oversized page was sewn in (between folios 36 and 37), which includes a relatively large diagram of the ten *sefirot* with a significant listing of appellatives for each *sefirah* inside each circle (figure 5.11). In this case, the physical dimensions of this material book could not contain the accompanying diagram with its large circles that represent the ten *sefirot*, each with a significant amount of text contained within each circle. Instead of having the printed medium become the 'procrustean bed' of the diagram, it spilled out beyond the physical confines of the printed book with a fold-out page.

Ramat Gan 2006 [Hebrew].

[365] See Elliot Wolfson, 'Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in the Early Kabbalah', *Da'at* 32-33 (1994), pp. v-xxii, who discusses a manuscript in which the first sefirah is half-filled, blackened out, indicating apparently its ontological attachment to the *Ein Sof* or unknowable region above the *sefirot*.

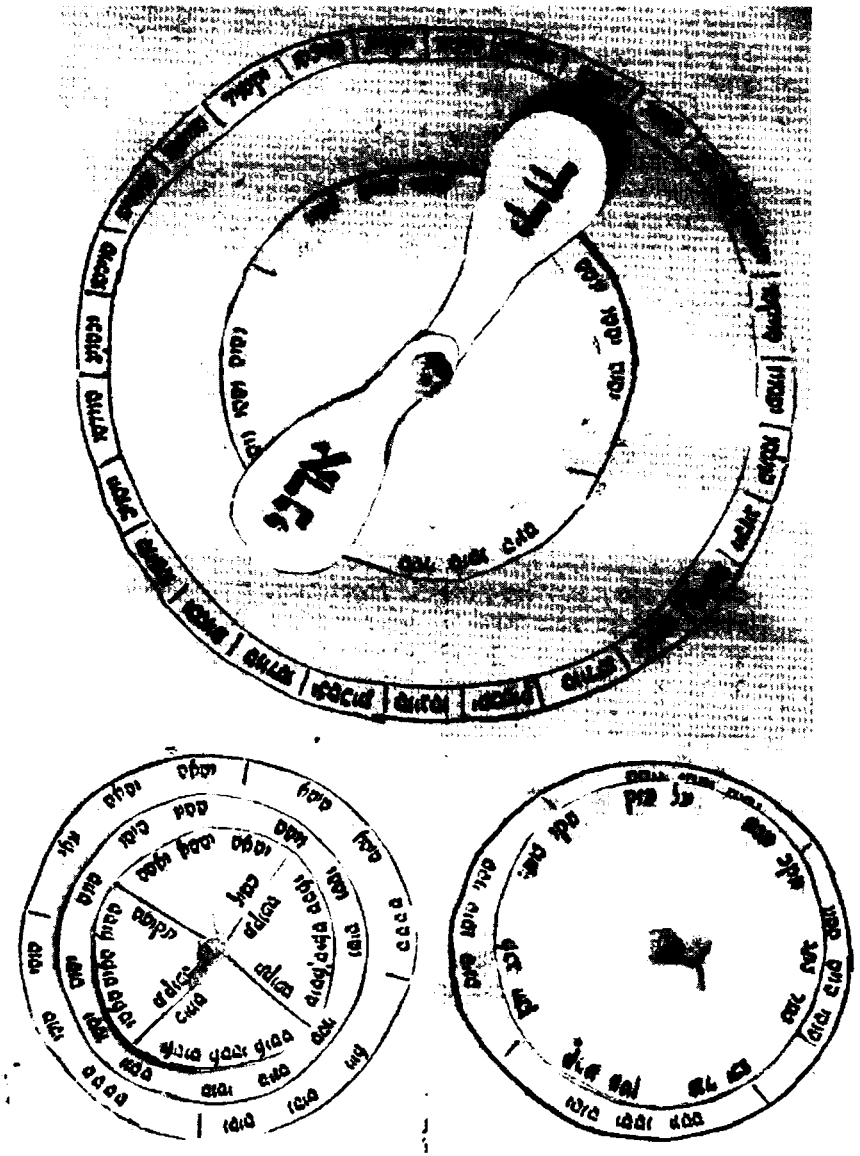

Figure 5.9: Sefer Yesira, Mantua 1552, fols. 33a (top); 10b (left); 77a (right)

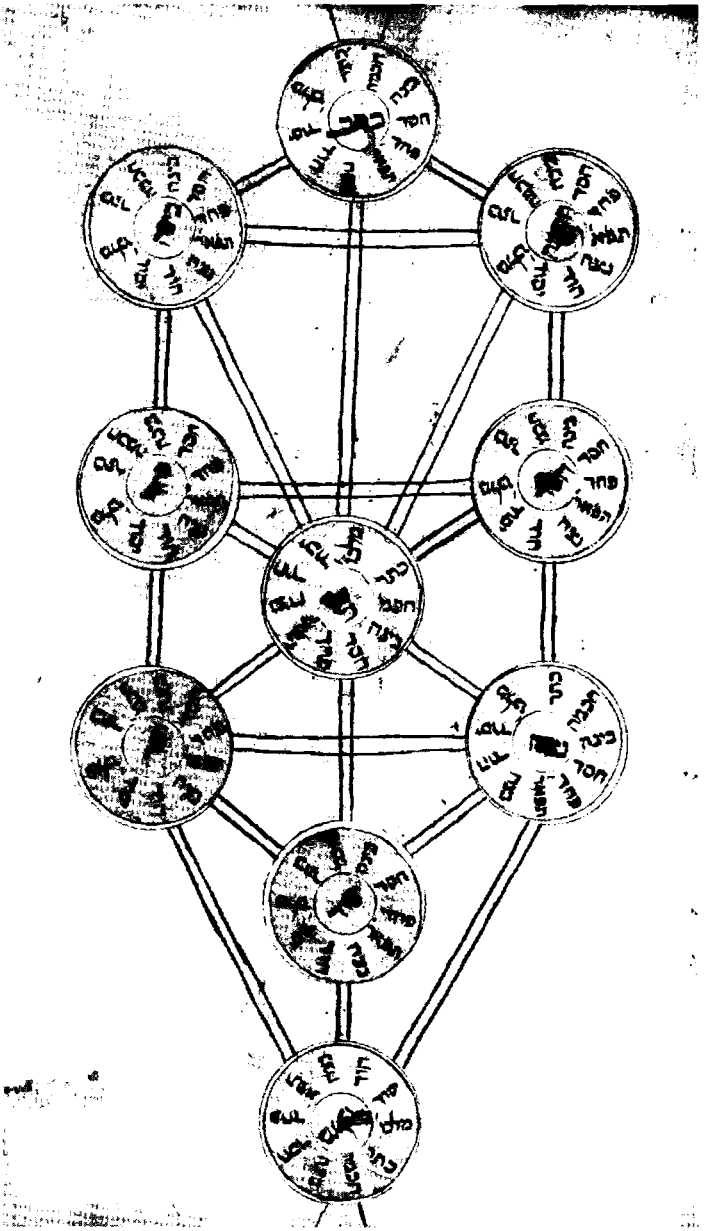

Figure 5.10: Ms. Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel 4° 626, fol. 90a

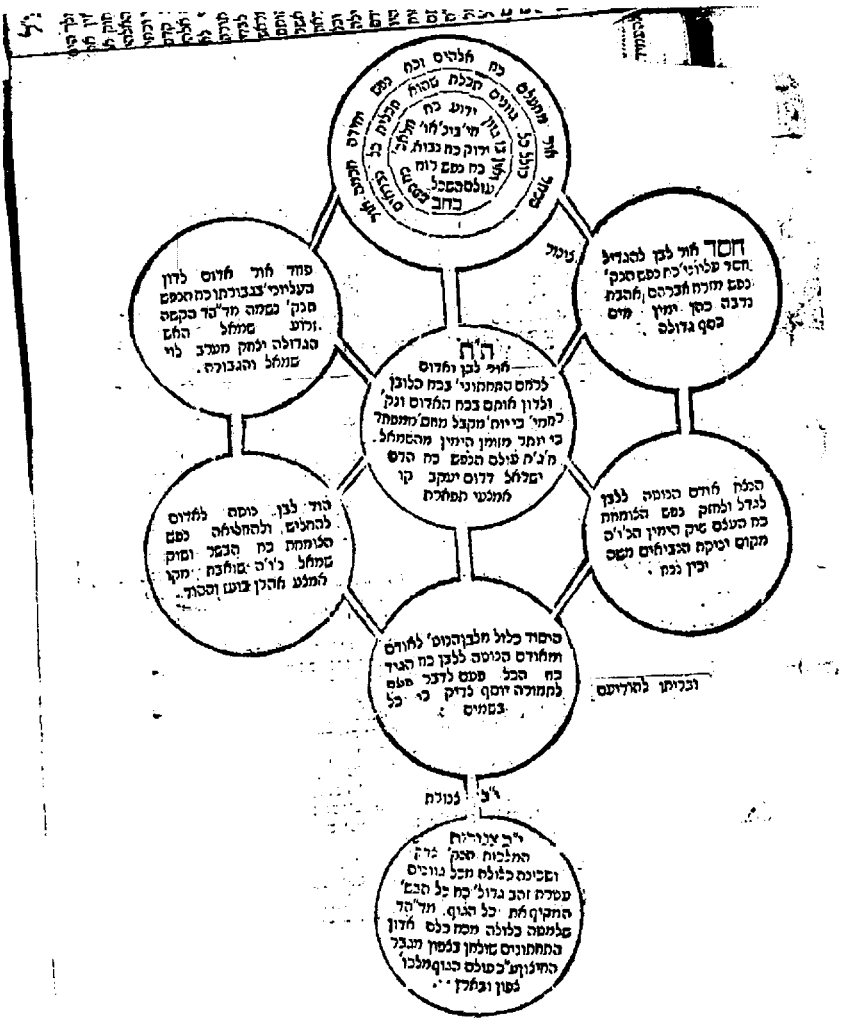

Figure 5.11: Liqquṭim me-ha-Rav Hai Gaon, foldout sheet. Note the lines of text from folio 36b at the top of the oversized fold out, where it is sewn into the book.

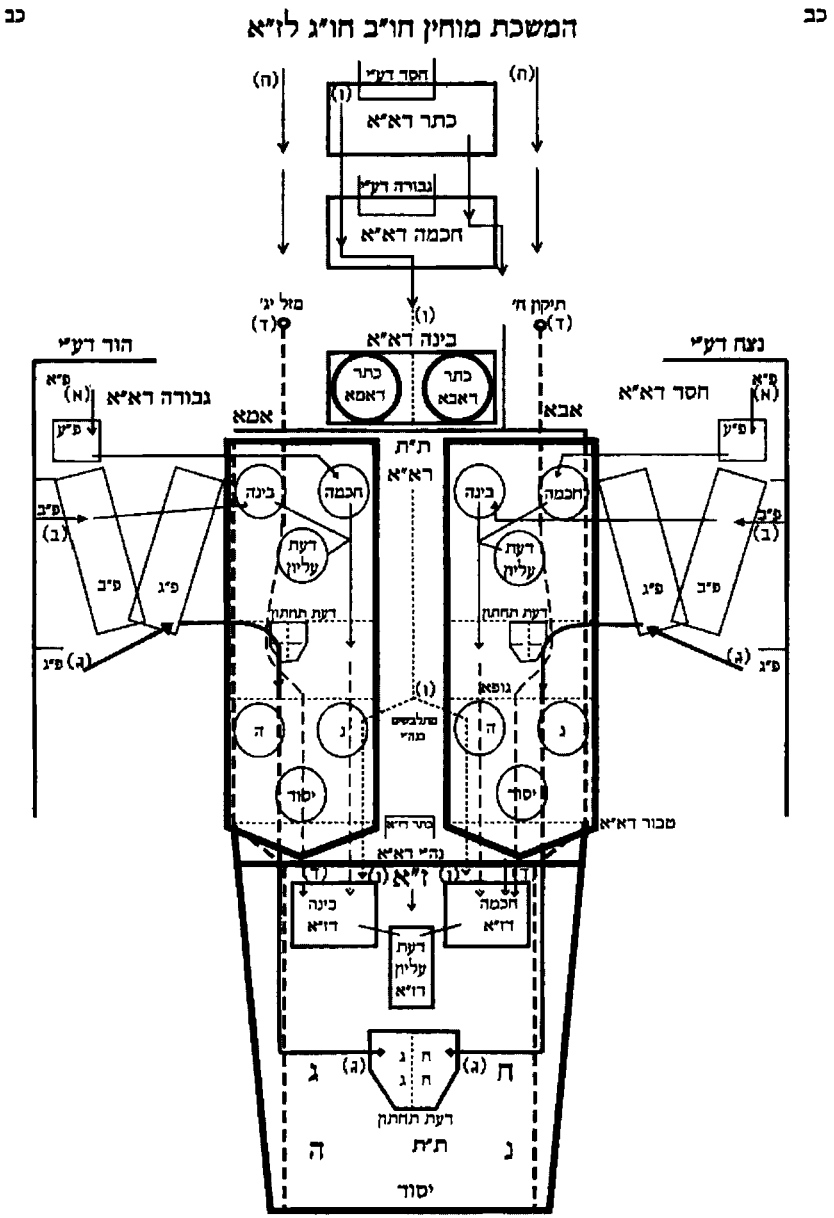

Figure 5.12: Diagram from Derekh le-Eṣ Ḥayyim

Another example of the tension between book and scroll is Meir Poppers' *Sefer Ilan ha-Gaddol*, which originated in a manuscript scroll. It was first printed in Warsaw 1864 as a scroll that was created by pasting printed folio sheets together, even if these sheets were at a later time collected and bound together as a separate volume.[366] Other modern forms which show the fissures between these two (literary?) expressions include visual guidebooks such as *Derekh le-Eṣ Ḥayyim*, which graphically presents the models of relations between hypostatic entities and depicts the mythic relations described in Vital's *Eṣ Ḥayyim* in complex diagrams (see figure 5.12).[367]

The Juxtaposition of Text, Jewish Magic and New Scholarly Tools

A number of kabbalistic manuscripts and printed books that contain graphic images defy digitization, as the string of typed characters which can be re-displayed in any one of the electronic media now available, including searchable computerized text or a new edition that restructures the words as a chain of letters. We see here examples of a literary form that are far from the spirit of Nahmanides' tradition of the Torah as one long name of God, copied out on one form of numerous platforms, but preserving the order of characters. Here the text, with its illustrations, their placement on the page in relation to the text, an integral part of understanding its intention and with the devices sewn onto the page, transform the volume into the material book that cannot be defied, as such, and reduced to its text.

Eventually someone will publish a kabbalistic textual summation of commentaries to the Jewish classics, much like Kasher's *Torah Shelemah*, or Gellis' *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, culling comments from the various kabbalistic classics and presenting them around the frame of the Hebrew Bible, the prayer book, and the Talmud. Small steps in this direction include Margolioth's

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366 My thanks to J.H. Chajes who informed me of the manuscript copy in the collection of Bill Gross, Tel Aviv. Chajes has charted the various historical reverberations of the work from manuscript to print in a special study which he is preparing. A digital facsimile of the scroll can be found at the web site of the National Library of Israel, Jerusalem: http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/books/djvu/1325487/index.djvu?djvuopts&thumbnails=yes&zoom=page. This scan reproduces the work in separate pages. A copy I have was never bound and is glued together as a scroll. It was later reprinted in Warsaw 1897 and various facsimile editions were printed in large (Jerusalem n.d.) and reduced format (Jerusalem 2005).

367 See my discussion of the epistemological questions of reading, experience and representation in my study, 'New Study Tools'.

Sha'arei Zohar, two new editions of Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orah* (for a sample page of one of these editions, see figure 5.13),[368] annotated with references to Rabbinic literature and which includes according to the editor's assumptions, parallels or 'sources' from the *Zohar*, and an edition of the prayer book with zoharic parallels to every prayer or locution at the bottom of the page structured as a running commentary.

The *Zohar* is featured prominently in all these editions, although not in order to present the history of ideas as reflected in the reception and use of earlier sources in medieval texts, but rather to further the traditional presumption, and perhaps offered as well as a polemic with the historical conclusions of academic scholarship, that the *Zohar* was authored by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai. In any event, Gikatilla's relationship to the traditions and composition of the *Zohar* has not yet been sufficiently elucidated by academic scholarship, and these new editions serve as powerful tools for future scholarship on Castilian Kabbalah at the end of the thirteenth century.

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[368] *Sha'arei Orah*, ed. Y. Baqar, Jerusalem 2005; another edition was edited by Michael Borenstein, Jerusalem 2005. Despite multiple editions in modern time of *Sha'arei Orah* none have been edited from manuscript. Given the importance and circulation of this work and the kabbalist's return to the subject in writing new compositions of commentaries to the ten *sefirot*, I speculate that differences will most likely be found between the manuscript traditions of *Sha'arei Orah* as well as important divergences with the textual version widespread in print. Joseph Ben-Shlomo's popular two-volume paperback edition of *Sha'arei Orah* (Jerusalem 1981) has served as a primer for many students of Theosophic Kabbalah in academy for years, but a different type of edition, and annotations is necessary to show the tensions and flexibility of thought within Gikatilla's writing. That is while his work has been seen as the codification of theosophic symbolism, it only brings the terminology to a plateau relative to the dynamism found in a collection of earlier writings. Gikatilla, I believe is a very dynamic and even radical thinker, and the Ben-Shlomo's annotations, much like those of Tishby to the translated sections from the zoharic corpus in *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, do more to sculpt a particular message and air to the text, then to open the text to various interpretations.

6 ספר שערי אורה

ולכל אחד מאלו הכנויים יש כנויים אחרים תלויים בכל כנוי וכנוי מאלו והם שאר כל מלאת התורה, עד שנמצאת כל התורה כולה נארגת על הכנויים, והכנויים על השמות, והשמות הקדושים כולם תלוים על שם יהו"ה יח' והולם מתאחדים בו, [1]ונמצאת כל התורה כולה נארגת על [2]שם יהו"ה יח', ולפיכך נקראת תורת יהו"ה.

— לקוטי ראשונים —

אן חיל הריקאנטי שי ל"ח: דע כי מצוה התורה הם נחלקים לרבים רבים. הכל מצוה היא אבל אחר מהתורה העליונה, עד שבהשלם כל התורה כולה נמצא הצדק והעליון שלם. כי כל מצוה והמצוה מעשר מצוה יש לה תיקון הדבר עם המצוה והמצוה לה, עד שיתגדרן כולן ותשאה תורה אחת, ולפי שהכל והמצוה הזאת נתן לנו התורה שלמה מבראשית עד לעתי כל ישראל. חזנו כל אותיות התורה – המרחיקים הכינוים המרחקים, ובאותיות עקמנות ועקשות, והרחה והרחקה, קצבות הגדלות, בחרי האותיות, מתוקות ומתוחות, והזרן – זן מרחי עשר מצוה. ולכך היה והמרך לשמר המצוה הזאת הכינוים, הכתיב ולא קרי, קרי ולא כתיב, כי כולה בין אלה המצוה בשמו של הקב"ה. הכל בן מצר תורה שהמר אותו אותה או הרחיר אותו אותה, מטול, לפי שאין זו צורה המשר מצוה. ע"כ.[2]

— מאמרי חז"ל —

קשה בעיני שהתן לי בן אחד וכו'.

א) זוהר משפטים קכ"ד א': כל מאן דיצמר ארחי דאוריתא דאשתדל בה, במאן דאשתדל בשמא קדישא. דהיינו, אוריתא בלא שמא דקב"ה, ומאן דאשתדל בה במאן דאשתדל בשמא קדישא, בגין דאוריתא בלא הוי שמא קדישא הוא.

תרגום: כל מי שישמור את דרכי התורה הישתדל בה, מדי הוא בבני שהשתדל בשם הקדוש. שהדי שהיא, והתורה כולה שמו של הקב"ה, ומי שהשתדל בה מדי הוא בבני שהשתדל בשם הקדוש, משום שהתורה כולה הוא שם אחד קדוש.[1]

עוד בזוהר אחרי מות נ"ג א': ואמר לאחרא

— תיקונים והערות —

1) הזה לשון הרמב"ן בהקדמתו לפירוש התורה: עוד יש בידינו קבלה של אמת, כי כל התורה כולה שמותיו של הקב"ה, שהמצות מתחלקות לשמות בענין (אחד) (אחר), כאילו התפרד על דרך משל כי אמנם בראשית (א' א') יתחלק לחיבות אחרות, כמו ברשש יתברא אלהים. וכל התורה כן, מלבד צירופיהן וסיפוריהן של מצות וכו'. ומפני זה מאר תורה ששמה בו באות אחת, בחלש או בחסר, מטול וכו'. וראוה שהתורה הכתובה באש שהתורה על נבי אש לבנה, בענין הזה שהחכרו היה, שהיתה הכתובה רצופה בלי הפסק וחיבות. והיה אפשר קריאתה שהקרא על דרך השמות, הקרא על דרך קריאתנו בענין המדות והמצות. ואיתנה למשה רבינו על דרך הילוק קריאת המצות, ונמסר לו על זה קריאתה בשמותיו. ע"כ.

הזה לשון פירוש הפירוש להראב"ד על ספר יצירה פ"א מ"ב: ואלו ל' ספירות בליפה כולם חיים מתנועים וכו'. המנהגן והנאצן אחרות וכו', ומהם נברא מאחר אחד וכו' והוא כולל כל המנהגים וכו'. וכולם משחרים על מי כ"ב אותיות, כל פרט ופרט של כל מין ומין. מהמי ונמצאות וכו', ומאותיות הייתה ראצות ומרחות ומרחות מדרכי המציבות ומעלות עד לארץ מקף וכו'. ונגנעפו אותיות בתוך אותיות, עד שנכפרפו מהן כל לשון וכל דבור וכל ומרל"ג מצמה, והיא תורה שקבמה לעולם, והרא פומו של הקב"ה. ע"כ. (ועי' כאן בשם הריקאנטי).

2) ר"ל ר' עזריאל בפירוש האגדות (מאמרה פ"ו א'): למה נתקנו אמר על נבי ספר תורה (בהרשאת הנר שלנו אותנו) על נבי מיסר. הן הוא בהשמה. אמר ר' יהודה בן פזי "עפר אנכי בארה", ר' שמעון בן לקיש אמר "בבל ברחם לו זה". אמר ר' דידא בי חזיאנו דיהבי אמר על נבי ספר תורה מדיאמ כלי נחמדי וכו'. והתורה נקראת 'שם' וכו', והמתנן בו אמר הין נתני הנכבדים מהדעדים. משום איבמה נתני תורה ואקראות שם. פחם מעיגים הנפש בגוף, ולפי שהתורה מעיגה נפש בגוף הין נתני הנכבדים מהדעדים. ולפי שהתורה נקראת שם והיא מעיגה הנפש, יש בה המרשות

Figure 5.13: Sha'arei Orah, Jerusalem 2005, with zoharic parallels

What would be helpful for the study of the Kabbalah of R. Joseph Gikatilla, particularly the development of his literary works, would be a synoptic edition of his commentaries to the ten *sefirot*, which would highlight both the parallels and the important changes, and would include sections excluded from the printed editions.[369] At issue here is not only the intellectual biography of a kabbalist, but the question of editorial practice in presenting discrete works as texts that comprise a collective work, or more precisely, an ongoing literary project of an 'author'. Put differently, Kabbalah scholarship has yet to engage an author's final intention as the guiding principle of an edition of a text. The point has overriding importance when constructing an edition of the *Zohar* as a book, according to the (constructivist) theory of its composition, particularly if viewed as disparate attempts to write about the opening of chapters of Genesis or culminating in *Idrot*, all of which have various renderings (or: multiple texts, if we do not wish to take on these literary assumptions).

Commentaries to the ten sefirot should also be appreciated as contributions to kabbalistic literature that are in dialogue especially with other works of this genre. The preparation of a fuller list of such work as begun by Scholem in his listing, 'An Index to the Commentaries on the Ten Sefirot', and the execution of good editions of each would be of special importance to the history of kabbalistic literature and lexicography, especially in the first few centuries of activity in France and Spain. To this end, Michal Oron's edition of *Sefer ha-Shem Attributed to R. Moses de León* is a welcome step to a scholarly treatment of such commentaries and history of the works of this genre.[370]

As the production of studies about early Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah proliferate and the availability of new and old editions of kabbalistic works becomes widespread, many who begin to enter the study of Kabbalah and academics outside of the field proper will consult anthologies. Such tools already exist, but in the future, many will be specialized to account for particular subjects within its study. One such volume of substance from 1970 is

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[369] Epharim Gottlieb, 'The Last Section of *Sefer Sha'arei Ṣedeq* of R. Joseph Gikatilla', *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, Tel Aviv 1976, pp. 132-162 [Hebrew]; Moses Ḥayyim Weiler, 'The Kabbalistic Teaching of R. Joseph Gikatilla in His Books *Ginat Egoz* and *Sha'arei Orah*', *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism* 1 (1972), pp. 157-186 [Hebrew]; Azzan Yadin, 'Theosophy and Kabbalistic Writing: Comparing *Sha'arei Orah* and *Sha'arei Ṣedeq*', *Peamim* 104 (2005), pp. 41-64 [Hebrew].

[370] *Sefer ha-Shem Attributed to R. Moses De León*, edited, annotated and introduced by Michal Oron, Los Angeles 2010 [Hebrew].

the anthology of ethical literature, translated from the Hebrew term, *sifrut ha-musar*.[371] The more interesting material, from my point of view, and the material that is most related to Jewish mysticism is found in the later periods not covered in this volume. Apparently, other such volumes were planned but not realized. In light of recent theoretical advances in the appreciation and analysis of kabbalistic ethics, namely Elliot Wolfson's distinction between the modern, philosophical category of values as distinct from the definition of the literary genre and the works produced by kabbalists according to their androcentric and anthropologically particularistic categories, different conceptions of such anthologies should be produced. Such an editorial project is ideological in the sense that it culls certain materials from within a large body of literature not necessarily defined by its genre and transmission history. It would serve the function of highlighting those texts whose interpretation or presentation to an audience today would force a particular engagement and assessment of a discourse that has been considered along different lines until now. Indeed, Wolfson's monograph did not seek provocation, but is an interpretative accounting of the sources in light of a register of modern values in order to stay within the tradition and an interpretive reader who does not immediately opt out of the plain sense of texts, apologetically, to cover one's discomfort with the author's intent. Editorial practice could offer a further correction by highlighting such traditions outside of the interpretative effort.[372]

Despite numerous studies on ancient Jewish magic, and the recent methodological advances by Gideon Bohak,[373] and Yuval Harari,[374] the study of this literature suffers from the lack of published editions which would correct the impression of its relative proportion and presence amongst others forms of Jewish mystical literature.[375] While the study of Jewish magic is emerging from

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371 Isaiah Tishby (in collaboration with Joseph Dan), ed., *Hebrew Ethical Literature: Selected Texts with introductions, Notes and Commentary (10th-12th Centuries)*, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv 1970 [Hebrew].

372 Elliot Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Morality and Law in Kabbalistic Mysticism*, Oxford-New York 2006; Jenny Labendz, 'Socratic Torah: Non-Jews in Rabbinic Intellectual Culture', Ph.D. Thesis, The Jewish Theological Seminary, 2010.

373 Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*, Cambridge 2008.

374 Yuval Harari, *Early Jewish Magic: Research, Method, Sources*, Jerusalem 2010 [Hebrew].

375 Numerous studies could be cited here for recent work on Jewish magic. A fine collection of studies from recent years is *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of*

its methodological beginnings, it is still plagued in my view by a constant return to basic questions which detract from the study of its texts as such and develop the questions about the texts from within the language and discourse of the documents. Arguably, I am biased from the interests that shape the field of medieval Kabbalah, but nonetheless, questions about what is magic, how Jewish is any particular magical text and what in it influenced, inspired or reflects the ideas and language of other cultures, speak more to the historically and culturally situated issues of the researchers than the material itself. From a perspective of textual scholarship, the lack of literary identity of magical texts as works is less significant relative to the later uses of such texts in fascinating permutations as the linguistic material was reconfigured in the Middle Ages. Ironically, many continue to refer to 'early Jewish magic', configuring the material under study through the prism of literature from a different period and geographic context. The term is misleading as these authors are apparently referring to magic from early Judaism (a designation which is also problematic),[376] and not a study which emphasizes magic of a particular period from within a holistic perspective of magic throughout Jewish history.

The rich materials that have been preserved within the Cairo Geniza are worthy of study and their systematic study and publication is a *desideratum* for the study of Jewish magic and Jewish studies as a whole.[377] Ancient magical texts have also survived in medieval works and copyings of manuscripts sources, and sometimes exclusively in these late copies. And while we might be tempted to distinguish between early sources, later copies, reworkings and 'new' texts composed in later times, Jewish magic might best be appreciated as an on-going story of a genre and religious practice that does not segregate material according to the historical interests of modern scholarship. Let us

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Magic in Antiquity, ed. Shaul Shaked, Leiden-Boston 2005. I note a recent resurgence in the study of magic and the popular and cultural acceptance of magic within Jewish life and society. Note the recent catalog of the exhibition from the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem: *Angels and Demons: Jewish Magic through the Ages*, ed. Filip Vukosavović, Jerusalem 2010.

376 Michael Satlow, 'Defining Judaism: Accounting for "Religions" in the Study of Religion', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006), pp. 837-860; idem, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice*, New York 2006.

377 See Steven M. Wasserstrom, 'The Magical Texts in the Cairo Genizah', *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judeao-Arabic*, ed. J. Blau and Stefan C. Reif, Cambridge 1992, pp. 160-166.

recall that some Ashkenazi manuscripts and works preserve ancient material, such as *Havdala de-Rabbi Akiva*, and later kabbalistic manuscripts that include Ashkenazi material including traditions from the school of R. Neḥemiah ben Shlomo.[378] My call, instead, is for the appreciation of Jewish magical materials within the full range of their transmissional histories, independent of the privileged search for isolating the antique character of what is authentically rabbinic, Greek or originating in the amalgam of ancient cultures in the first few centuries in Palestine and Babylonia.

This means that scholars should not restrict their interest and use of medieval Hebrew manuscripts to the identification and isolation of more ancient texts. Rather, they should read and edit *the codices that exist in their bound form*, containing all that the scribe included in the volume he produced. The study of Jewish magical texts would highly benefit therefore from the publication of compilations of important magical texts or even an annotated edition of a manuscript anthology of magical texts such as Ms. Sassoon 56 (NYPL 190) or Ms. Sasson 290.[379] Many other such manuscripts could represent this genre of anthologies of magical formulae, recipes and practices and the scholarly community awaits the *first* publication, in print, of such a codex.[380] The publication of complete manuscripts, as anthologies of ancient, reworked, and medieval magical materials would offer an important window into the reception history of Jewish magic. Jewish magic as a literature can thus be appreciated within the wider historical context of its textual transmission and contact and integration with other kabbalistic material and texts of other genres.

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[378] See Gershom Scholem, '*Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva* – A Source for the Tradition of Jewish Magic during the Geonic Period', *Tarbiz* 50 (1981), pp. 243-281 [Hebrew] and reprinted in *Demons, Ghosts and Souls: Studies in Demonology by Gershom Scholem*, ed. E. Liebes, Jerusalem 2004, pp. 145-182 [Hebrew]; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, pp. 158, 222 aptly notes this situation and enumerates a number of other medieval collections which were copied as books. On Idel's conclusions regarding R. Neḥemiah and one such manuscripts see Moshe Idel, 'R. Neḥemiah ben Shlomo and Ms. London, The British Library 752', *Newsletter of the Israel Academy of Sciences* 29 (2007), pp. 6-10 [Hebrew].

[379] See Meir Benayahu, '*Sefer Shushan Yesod ha-'Olam le-Rabbi Yosef Mirshom*', *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism* 1 (1972), pp. 187-269 [Hebrew].

[380] As the editor of a book series, I am working with Gideon Bohak to realize such a volume.

Shaked and Naveh have issued a number of volumes of texts from magic bowls, and a project on magic headed by Peter Schäfer's has yielded a number of volumes of texts from the Geniza. Shaked is working on a massive project of publishing hundreds of additional magical bowls which will expand the data pool of texts in this form of magic from late antiquity. Most recently Bill Ribiger has published a study and edition of *Shimushei Tehilim*,[381] and from earlier times with Peter Schäfer, a two volume study and text edition of *Sefer ha-Razim*.[382] The next stage of research on magic will reach beyond antiquity and Geonic times to the transmission and reception of magic in and context of Kabbalah.[383] New texts were composed, others preserved or adapted in anthologies and formulae modified to meet the expectations and orientation of medieval European mystics. It would be highly difficult to write a (new) major trends of Jewish mysticism in that the texts lack recognized authors, do not lend themselves to the discourse of speculative texts of Theosophic Kabbalah that explore historically specific ideas, couched in the language, symbolism and philosophic sources of their time.[384]

In terms of editorial practice, I am suggesting first the acknowledgement of a shift of interest from antiquity to the Geonic times, and on to medieval compilations and their relationship to kabbalistic texts, codices and the blurring of clear definitions of genre. Having established these categories, they too should be broken down to dissolve the dichotomy between the ancient text and its medieval reception, as two foci in the composition and later modification or corruption of the 'original' magical text, with changes made to

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[381] Bill Rebiger, *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim – Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen – Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 2009.

[382] Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer, ed., *Sefer ha-Razim I und II – Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II: Band 2: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Tübingen 2009.

[383] Klaus Herrmann, 'Jewish Mysticism in the Geonic Period: The Prayer of Rav Hamnuna Sava', *Jewish Studies between the Disciplines = Judaistik zwischen den Disziplinen; Papers in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Klaus Herrmann, Margarete Schlüter, Giuseppe Veltri, Leiden 2003, pp. 180-217 (also appeared in *Officina Magica*, pp. 171-212).

[384] Recently Joseph Dan has issued the first four volumes of such a historical review. The intended audience appears to be a learned readership outside of the field, despite the extended description which will eventually amount to thousands of pages. Joseph Dan, *History of Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism: Ancient Times*, volumes 1-4, Jerusalem 2010 [Hebrew].

its language and or literary context. In line with the theory offered in this volume, all forms of the text(s) are integral parts of its life.

Jewish magic appears as discursive text in manuscripts but also as series of names, formulae and series of characters that do not read as the prose of other sources of Jewish mystical literature. Since antiquity, these texts were inscribed on various objects, not all of them flat surfaces, which redefine 'the text' of Jewish magic to include the object itself, the relationship of the characters and words to the object and the (magical) performance of the object as a whole. In many cases, where the gap between typical theosophic works and Jewish magical texts is small, the magical text can be reproduced in modern transcriptions. In other cases, editorial practice of Jewish magical manuscripts would benefit from facsimile reproductions. Finally, I suggest that modern editing expand its methods and aims to reproduce the objects as they have been preserved and as they were once produced, as bowls, amulets, and the lengthy scrolls that map the heavens. Traditional methods of the last century have in many cases *reduced* the text to a string of characters and sentences based upon a textual idealism that detaches it from the platform which includes much of the original meaning that extends beyond a question of form and which as a whole presents its practice and intended performance.

This section has been devoted to an expanded listing of Scholem's call for the future projects of the field of Jewish mysticism. Admittedly, the listing is incomplete and is offered as a sampling of significant lacunae in the field that should reorient the reader toward the importance of the textual under layer of all research. As the field develops and necessarily becomes highly specialized, the earlier studies are transformed from their function as secondary sources to primary sources.[385] Nowhere has this been more apparent than with Scholem's works. Here I have intentionally reworked his categories, and texts, to infuse them with new life, offering what Gérard Genette would have called a hypertext to Scholem's hypotext.[386] Such a relationship canonizes Scholem, while at the

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[385] The reprinting of scholarly works as primary sources is preceded by studies about the scholarship, already in the lifetime of the author. The most prominent example in the case of Scholem is David Biale's monograph, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, Cambridge, Mass. and London England 1979. The works of other scholars of Kabbalah have also merited critical review in our day. See for example Jeffrey Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism*, Chicago 2001; Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism'.

[386] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E.

same time opening up his ideas and text to new vistas. Earlier, I remarked on the various methods of editing and re-presenting Scholem's studies, with selections in translations and anthologies, which remove some items from the view of the reader in order to image Scholem in a particular light.[387] Other volumes annotated and 'updated' Scholem with references to the editors own studies and the more recent studies that they read with Scholem, or rather, through which they suggest one should read his work.[388] Major *desiderata* of Scholem's works that need to be reissued include his volume on *Jewish Gnosticism*, his catalog of the kabbalistic manuscripts in the National Library, his two volumes on R. Jacob and R. Isaac ha-Kohen, various studies on the Zohar, and his research on R. Abraham ha-Levi, to which he added extensive hand notes in the specially bound copies he interleafed with blank page that he kept in his library after their publication.[389] Scholem's studies are thus open

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Lewin; foreword by Richard Macksey, Cambridge 1997, pp. xv, 396.

[387] Note that the editors of the volume of Scholem's entries to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, entitled *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, removed some items into to make it more popular!

[388] The project to issue the collected works of Scholem in Hebrew has a variegated history, with volumes being issued initially by *'Am 'Oved* publishers and later by the Ben Zvi Institute, Cherub Press, Magnes Press and a volume issued by *Mishkan le-Omanut* of Scholem's study on the star of David (*The Star of David: A History of a Symbol: Expanded Version which Includes Notes from the Author's Archive*, ed. Galit Ḥazan-Rokem, with notes by Shlomo Zucker, Jerusalem 2009 [Hebrew]). The editorial practice of re-issuing Scholem's work is fraught with political, cultural and scholarly subtexts, and this can be argued without entering into the larger linguistic and geographic politics of the volumes issued in English, French and German. This topic is so complex that a separate volume would be needed to document and work through the materials available and describe the nature of the projects that have been issued.

[389] Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1960, 2nd revised edition 1965, Scholem Library, #R. Sch. 130); idem, *Catalogus Codicum Hebraicorum*, Scholem Library, R. Sch. 37; idem, 'The Kabbalistic Traditions of R. Jacob and R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen', *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 2 (1927), pp. 165-293, which was also issued separately as a pamphlet from the same plates with separate Hebrew pagination, 1-131 [Hebrew]; Scholem's various studies on the *Zohar* were never printed together nor bound together as a volume by him. I have begun preparation of such a volume; idem, *Research in the Kabbalah of R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen*, Jerusalem 1934 [compiled from articles published in *Tarbiz*, vols. 2-4 (1931-1934)] and also issued separately as a volume. For these two volumes see the

books in two senses, first, literary products that were issued but whose publication marked only a plateau in their growth for their author, and second, works that were intended for re-publication through the lenses of later editors who refashion them by incorporating later materials and open the book to intertextual readings of publications issued after his death.

My claim is that there are many Gershom Scholems and these comments refer to Scholem the scholar of kabbalistic manuscripts and books.[390] The important point here is that there are editors who have sought to embellish his standing, indeed his reception, as a cultural spokesman, at the expense of his scholarship. Such projects have been and are presently being undertaken in Hebrew, English, French and German. What is interesting to me as I describe the fuller spectrum of Scholem's relationship to textual scholarship and the more recent attempts to treat Scholem's life and work as a text, is the hyper-animation of Scholem for select purposes. I can attest to visits by scholars of European background without access to the Hebrew language who seek unpublished materials in his archives in order to gain additional information from this cultural spokesman. While this move stops short of hagiography it does resemble in no small way the moves by the Safedian kabbalists to learn more about the canonized texts such as the *Zohar* by accessing the voices of the authors from the material site of their passing, namely their graves. By contrast, the cue I have taken from Scholem emerges from the academic plan about texts and studies that he conceived early on in his career and one that fashioned the field and its practitioners to this day, even if the majority of the projects have not been realized. By superimposing my vision of future studies upon his plan I have appropriated the textual tradition of the field and offered a correction for future serious scholarship.

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heavily annotated copies in the Scholem Library #R Sch. 119, 120, 120.1; idem, *The Kabbalist R. Avraham ha-Levi,* R. Sch. 160.1, for bibliographic data about the printing history of these studies see my introduction to *Lurianic Kabbalah*, pp. 8-9 [Hebrew]. For a strategy of editing Scholem's works, that differs greatly from the previously cited volume. one intended especially for a Hebrew reading audience, see *The Latest Phase: Essays on Hasidism by Gershom Scholem*, ed. D. Asaf and E. Liebes, Jerusalem [and Tel Aviv] 2008 [Hebrew]. For a review of this volume and the vast materials available in his archives see Jonatan Meir, 'Scholem's Archives', *Tarbiz* 78 (2009), pp. 153-168 [Hebrew].

390 See Abrams, 'Presenting and Representing Gershom Scholem'.

13. Kabbalistic Hypertext and the Material Book: Technological Advances as a Challenge to Esotericism

As argued in various ways throughout this volume, there is no such entity as 'the Kabbalah' and we cannot even speak of the discrete units of kabbalistic literature as such, without much qualification. I dare say that the work and the book, as constructs, and the presumption that they are identical to each other, have misled scholarship more than they have afforded it a nuanced picture of how textuality functions as the dynamics of the kabbalistic engagement with the expression of the ideas and experiences that they mediate through language. Kabbalistic texts are thus not just fluid entities that have survived in their various forms, but are intertextually related one to the other. This is especially true within the genres of kabbalistic literature and those texts (and works) which, with intent, were inscribed within a chain of evolving reactions to a given text.

A variation on this theme is the case of orality, as explored in chapter three with the example of the supercommentaries to Nahmanides. More telling are the main genres of kabbalistic literature such the early commentaries to the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot. In the first genre, we have a series of commentaries whose authors are members of a particular school, beginning with a revered teacher, R. Isaac the Blind, in the geographic location of the initial kabbalistic (literary) activity. Even here, multiple versions of the teacher's text have survived, demonstrating that no neat demarcation can be presumed between the various generations, with a uniform text representing each figure and time. The second genre is a unique case of esoteric commentaries to a biblical text (and subject of theophany) in which texts have survived from each generation and geographic area of mystical activity, beginning with anonymous mystics in twelfth- or thirteenth-century Ashkenaz and continuing on through early fourteenth-century Castile.[391]

Elsewhere I have discussed the need for a Jaussian literary history of kabbalistic works, which would plot out the horizons of forms and meanings

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[391] Asi Farber-Ginat is to be credited with having tackled the very complex interrelationships between the ideas and language of the various documents in her brilliant doctoral dissertation. I admit that the monograph I published in 1997, emerged out of the manuscript transcriptions I prepared in order to understand her work, a larger project that resulted in cooperation and the issuing together of a number of salient texts on Ezekiel's vision of the chariot.

that can be expected within given genres and the moves that allowed for changes therein.[392] And although such a project would advance the field in providing the broader strokes and frames for appreciating kabbalistic literature, it would mask the substantive moves that blur the definitions of these very works. Technology may very well break the necessary dichotomy between the perceived divisions between printed volumes and the fluidity of text and the intertextual relationships that are so characteristic of kabbalistic writing. Hence, one might imagine the reprinting of texts realized in printed editions in interactive electronic editions, so that the reader/user could relate to any given work (and text) as hypertext. This could be achieved on paper, as I suggested in the example of the supercommentaries to Nahmanides' *Commentary to the Torah*, by placing all the works on the same page around the text upon which they are commenting.

In the age of technology and with the widespread (and virtual) dissemination of the electronic book, the kabbalistic work, as text, has come full circle. If the kabbalists envisioned the pre-existent Torah as a string of characters that would later be inscribed on a physical medium, that medium has since been displaced by digitization. Between these two extremes we have seen the ways in which the fluid texts of Jewish mystical literature often defied the physical medium which first allowed for their expression but ultimately resisted the construction of a canonical library as a set group of texts in a stable form. The modern library of books, and libraries of books of Jewish mystical literature in particular, are showing the outer signs of this impossibility. With increasing weight the attempt to collect and preserve texts has been transferred to computer files such that libraries devote new forms of space and resources to the virtual literary unit, including the production of virtual copies of material books in their collections, which are then (in the name of new these new technologies) hidden from the reader's purview, much like Baudrillard's

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[392] Abrams, 'The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar*', pp. 282-285. Some of these goals were achieved through a study of the development of hermeneutics from rabbinic literature through the early Kabbalah in Maurizio Mottolese's magnificent monograph, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah*. A study and case of note is R. Ṣadoq ha-Kohen's comments on kabbalistic literature. See Moshe Hallamish, 'A Typology of Kabbalistic Literature in the Worldview of R. Ṣadoq ha-Kohen of Lublin', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 15 = *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. E. Etkes, D. Asaph and J. Dan, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 211-233 [Hebrew].

description of the replicas of the Lascaux caves at that very site.[393]

This displacement of the material by the virtual comes into play where the kabbalistic book has been in many cases across its history both an open book and fluid work such that it can transcend the physical restrictions of the printed page and better adapt itself to the ways some modern libraries have dispensed with material books. Derrida offers a strong formulation of this scenario:

> This is in truth the question that we are being asked this evening. 'What about the book to come?' Will we continue for long to use the word library for a place that essentially no longer collects together a store of books? Even if this place still houses all possible books, even if their number continued to hold up, as I think can be envisaged, even if for a long time books still represented the majority of texts produced, nonetheless the underlying tendency would be for such a place increasingly to be expected to become a space for work, reading, and writing that was governed or dominated by texts no longer corresponding to the 'book' form: electronic texts with no paper support, texts not corpus or opus—not finite and separable oeuvres; groupings no longer forming texts, even, but open textual processes offered on boundless national and international networks, for the active or interactive intervention of readers turned coauthors, and so on.[394]

Even if foreshadowed by some Jewish mystical traditions, the kabbalistic book will not fulfill its implicit dream of extinction into the sea of letters from which all texts are formed. Due to its history and esoteric practices, which continue to restrict the production and dissemination of Kabbalah, the status of the kabbalistic book differs in many ways from other similar volumes of Hebrew works. Little needs to be said to defend the future of the kabbalistic book as a material entity. Despite the many published articles and books on the demise and eminent end of the material book,[395] no one to my knowledge has seriously considered that Hebrew book and books of Jewish mystical literature would one day evaporate entirely into the computerized databases of the internet or

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393 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, tr. Sheila Fara Glaser, Ann Arbor 1994, p. 9.

394 Jacques Derrida, 'The Book to Come', *Paper Machine*, tr. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford 2005, pp. 7-8.

395 See the collection of studies in: *The Future of the Book*, edited by Geoffrey Nunberg, with an afterword by Umberto Eco, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1996;. J. Yellowlees Douglas, *The End of Books—Or Books without End?: Reading Interactive Narratives*, Ann Arbor 2000.

other electronic media.[396]

As detailed in this study, numerous new electronic tools have been developed which have affected textuality for the modern scholar, affording new methods of research and compelling new types of questions to be asked. As noted above, there are few textual examples where the physical book included unique kabbalistic features that cannot be replaced by an electronic image or other digital format. This is not to say that kabbalistic literature will be made available electronically at the same pace as other forms of Jewish literature. On the contrary, I would argue, that the material publication of kabbalistic works is necessarily bound up with questions of esotericism and emerges as an effort to confirm, change or resist a pervading culture, even if that is conceived as a scholarly culture that imitates or images itself as different from the traditional culture that is indebted to the earlier context and norms that produced these texts. It is obvious that all literature makes a statement in some context, but still, the kabbalistic work both in its production and reception remains a provocative item. I thus read with suspicion the statements of those who would disagree by saying that kabbalistic texts have become popular and accessible, and have therefore been removed from the context of esotericism because they have been edited as part of an academic effort and published by a university press.

Most kabbalistic books are published by small publishers in limited runs. As any avid collector of kabbalistic books knows, copies of such books are quickly sold out and rarely reprinted. Those in the field know that many volumes are not available in most university libraries and some can only be obtained directly from the individual who published the book, with his permission or that of the head of a kabbalistic yeshiva. I recall that when the first volume of Abulafia's work was issued, in order to secure a copy, I was compelled to purchase the copy at a bakery in Me'ah She'arim, identifying myself as having been sent by the editor with permission to purchase the volume. This volume contains a history of the uses and references to Abulafia and his texts, recasting the ban by R. Solomon ibn Aderet within a larger history imaged as a healthy debate amongst rabbinic figures, and thereby justifying the publication of the volume.

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[396] For a very erudite presentation of the changes in library accessibility and its effects on research, see Anthony Grafton, 'Apocalypse in the Stacks? The Research Library in the Age of Google', *Daedalus* 138 (2009), pp. 87-98; Anthony Grafton, *Codex in Crisis*, New York 2008, reprinted in *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, Cambridge, Mass. 2009.

Note the text on the title page of the first edition of Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba*, where it states that it was issued in a limited quantity. Nothing is new here as such justifications accompanied the publication of the first kabbalistic books, notably the 1558-1560 edition of the *Zohar* in Mantua. Another example is the new edition of Ḥayyim Vital's *Sefer ha-Pe'ulot* by a traditional editor who removed his name from his edition and included a disclaimer on the verso of the title page, warning the reader not to *use* the book for any practical purpose.[397] What is interesting, however, is that some forms of esotericism have been preserved well into the twenty-first century with the restriction of the sale and dissemination of material books that contain the texts that were once restricted to manuscripts. This social function of esotericism in the face of the printed event of the kabbalistic material book is worthy of further consideration.

Some books, however, are issued in censored editions with parallel editions in smaller runs containing the full text without earlier omissions.[398] For example, the uncensored version of *Ḥayyei Moharan* may be acquired in the Breslav book store on *Me'ah She'arim* street by requesting the special edition removed from view, literally under the counter or in a separate book case (as I can testify from my experience), not visible to the general public. The vocalized and punctuated edition of the standard text of the *Zohar* accompanied in parallel columns with a new Hebrew translation, as published by *Yerid ha-Sefarim Press*, lays out the Aramaic text alone to fill the whole page for the sections of the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Ṣeniuta*.[399] This editorial decision of translation is stated as following the tradition of Ben Ish Ḥai, although it should be noted that an English translation of the *Idrot* had been published long ago[400] and other volumes have been issued in recent years that have offered

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397 *Sefer ha-Pe'ulot*, n.p. 2010. Compare to *Practical Magic of Rabbi Hayyim Vital*, ed. Yael Buchman and Zohar Amar, Ramat Gan 2006 [Hebrew], based on material from this same manuscript but despite similar disclaimers, offers an anthology that is apparently intended for an audience that is interested in the modern application of such texts. On this work see Bos, 'Ḥayyim Vital's "Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy".

398 On the censoring of the works of Rav Kook, see Jonatan Meir, 'Lights and Vessels: A New Inquiry into the 'Circle' of Rav Kook and the Editors of His Works', *Kabbalah* 13 (2005), pp. 163-247 [Hebrew].

399 *Sefer ha-Zohar*, tr. Judah Edri, Jerusalem 1994/1998, vol. 5, pp. 455-472 (*Sifra di-Ṣeniuta*, vol. 8, pp. 63-159 (*Idra Rabba*); volume 9, pp. 518-574 (*Idra Zuṭa*).

400 Roy Rosenberg, *The Anatomy of God*, New York 1973.

interlinear translations, paraphrases and commentaries to these sections, which made them accessible to the Hebrew-reading audience.[401]

Other editions show the intervention of modern editors who *added* comments such as the *Commentary to Mishna Avot* by R. Nathan, the student of R. Naḥman of Bratslav, in which the polemics against the Sabbateans and Frankists now includes remarks against Reform and Conservative Jews![402] Multiple editions of major works in which some are censored and other present the full text are of great interest to the history of textuality in the field of Jewish mysticism. Obviously scholars should work with the undoctored text to consider what was written when the work was first composed. More interesting for the purposes of cultural reception is what was censored and in what contexts, scholars not being necessarily immune from such inclinations to present only part of the textual picture by selected samples in anthologies. In any event, it is usually the academic editor who restores the once full text in the later edition.[403]

The social function of esotericism in the meeting of production and restriction that marks the tension and appeal of Kabbalah books as unique amongst Jewish literature is not the sole guarantee of the future for Kabbalah books. Rather, the culture that produced Kabbalah, from its inception, indeed from the very textual processes that sculpted a theosophic midrash of the *Book Bahir* out of its earlier mystical attempts to convey some amorphous group of linguistic comments or messages in a rabbinic discourse, and coupled with the social appearance of a kabbalistic circle in Provence and Gerona, the Kabbalah has always emerged as a textual discussion that *takes place* on the written page, as the material stage of its performance and expression of its discourse. Ironic as it may be for a tradition known for oral transmission, its textualization is

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[401] Yeḥiel Bar-Levav, *Idra Rabba with the Commentary Yedid Nefesh*, Petaḥ Tiqwa 1996; idem, *Idra Zuṭa with the Commentary Yedid Nefesh*, Petaḥ Tiqwa 1997. Daniel Frisch's edition and commentary of the *Zohar* includes the Idrot but special mention should be made of the separate publication, as a soft-cover volume, of the *Idra Zuṭa* section in Jerusalem 2002.

[402] *Massekhet Avot 'im Perush Zekhut Avot*, Jerusalem [2000], p. 13.

[403] See for example Morris Faierstein, *'The Book of Visions': The Diary of Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital*, Jerusalem 2005 [Hebrew], and the discussion of censorship on pp. 42-43. Faierstein omitted the fifth section of the work as a later reworking by another hand. See the comments by Avivi in his *Lurianic Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 126-138, concerning the identity of 'two books' in the manuscript.

inseparable from its various forms and hypertext forms no exception.

In all likelihood, the fluidity of text that the electronic medium provides, including the electronic snapshot of the portable display file (PDF), in stark contrast to the stunted growth of a manuscript culture that was transformed by the rise of printing, will lend itself to new possibilities of Kabbalah scholarship. Instead of looking backwards into the (pre-)history of works through the lens of its printed forms, scholars may now begin to destabilize the printed work as one more rung in the chain of textual events that eventuated in the edition most readily available in their time. The hypertext may provide the illusion of the teleological fulfillment of an author's intent, capturing the pure or ideal text of the author's work, without the trappings of the physical page, thus offering the original, authentic or best string of words to the present-day reader without his or her having to grapple with the specific forms of the presentation that mark its printing history, and with the added advantage of the user's ability to manipulate the text for projects and purposes not envisioned by the author.[404] The various forms of a work could simultaneously be presented in an electronic medium, allowing for an expression in editorial practice of multiple authorship in this historical past as well as multiple editorship for scholars today.

Despite the idyllic advantages of the scholarly hypertext, these methods and work ideals offer an illusory goal in that they may distract the modern reader from the nature of the work as a text, namely that no edition lies outside of the contexts of the text, and that the collective identity is comprised of the various material forms of each text. Accordingly, every edition serves some function or as D.C. Greetham has put it, editorial satisfaction is never reached, such that we can speak of the 'perpetual becoming' of a text through its various presentations, including its critical editions.[405] Editions are reflections of their editors, no less the documents that fed into the presentations and the expectations (and demands) or an intended audience, however real or imagined. As Greetham has emphasized in various contexts, there is no pre-hermeneutical text and its presentation and editorial practice cannot claim to position itself outside of the continuum of negotiations between language, form, and meaning. Scholarship's goals include, therefore, the informed attempts to highlight the dynamics of what has been attempted in reading and

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[404] John Bryant, The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen, Ann Arbor 2002; Peter Boot, Mesotext: Digitised Emblems, Modelled Annotations and Humanities Scholarship, Amsterdam 2009.

[405] Greetham, 'What is Textual Scholarship', p. 28.

re-writing texts, including foremost a self-awareness of the benefits and limitations of current efforts.

14. Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have considered the specific instance of editorial practice in the study of manuscript texts of the Jewish esoteric literature. The discipline shares much of the methods and difficulties that scholars of other fields face when editing texts. One of the major contributions of the study of Jewish mysticism to editorial practice, as it moves away from textual idealism, is an appreciation that redaction is an invented construct, identifiable and significant to the modern scholar, but not part of how the medieval Jewish mystics viewed their own textual activity. In countless examples, the texts of medieval Jewish mysticism have survived in multiple versions, a phenomenon which I have argued should not be viewed as the discrete moments of an author's production and the later reception history of that work, which corrupted the original or transformed a clearly defined work into the fluid text that could be appropriated in various ways by the separate historical and literary circumstances and horizon of meanings not intended by the original author.[406]

The gap identified between past editorial practice in the academic study of Jewish mysticism and the nature of the textual processes that produced the multiple versions preserved in manuscript and print can be better addressed by a methodology that respects textual variation as the life of a text, which demotes the work to the fixed identifiable and ideal point for comparison. Editions that can account for this fluidity more faithfully convey the complexity of the cycles of transformation of the textual world that was lived by its

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[406] While numerous Hebrew manuscripts have been lost throughout history, a surprising number have been preserved and have survived, despite the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe in the Holocaust. What is little known is the very strong presence of kabbalistic material amongst manuscript collections of Jewish literature to through the twentieth century, despite the relatively small presence it has in printing history. For a study which sheds light on what existed and an exception to the great storehouses of manuscripts that survived in recent times, see Benjamin Richler, 'The Lost Manuscripts of the Library for Jewish Studies in Warsaw', *Omnia in Eo: Studies on Jewish Books and Libraries in Honour of Adri Offenberg, Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Biblioteca Resnthaliana in Amsterdam = Studia Rosenthaliana* 38-39 (2006), pp. 360-383.

practitioners, who knew little of modern academic constructs and titles. Appropriating Charles Mopsik's decoding of the engendering process of kabbalistic life to the dynamics of textual interaction, we can appreciate the generative life of textual traditions that is re/produced in the meeting of kabbalists at the material site of the margins and between the lines of the handwritten manuscripts and the printed page. As Mospik aptly wrote concerning the parallelism between procreation and esoteric transmission: 'Kabbalah signifies tradition, reception, transmission. It is not a body of doctrine passed down since Antiquity by Jewish esoteric philosophers, just as it is not merely a corpus produced with each new conception. What is transmitted is nothing other than the power to transmit. The power to adhere to the text, the power to engender: tradition, like the body of engenderment, is the point of passage through which the invisible allows itself to be glimpsed, through which the unspeakable allows itself to be spoken, through which the flux issuing from the Infinite takes form, link by link'.[407] Although not so intended by Mopsik, his formulation correctly named the relations between the fraternities of Jewish mystics in their written texts, works and comments. Their literary activity not only served as commentaries to earlier texts but functionally defined these figures as individual practitioners of the esoteric writings, who read and rewrote the texts through acts of engenderment. The textual face of esotericism is identified precisely in the ways in which it opens up the concealed writing to yet new writing.

The European reception of ancient mystical sources was first championed by the Jewish mystics in Ashkenaz who were rather aggressive in reshaping texts through a complex process of reception, redaction and creation of multiple versions of texts. The Provençal and Spanish kabbalists exhibited very similar practices, such that we can speak of the culture of kabbalistic textuality. As both writers and transmitters of texts, it would be odd, at best, to claim that an original or single, authorized version of a text exists that should be exclusively presented as the basis for an edition. Indeed, such intent on the part of modern editors, to reconstruct the original or final intention, is foreign to these medieval figures who were not conscious of these categories when they redacted such texts and it is safe to say they would have rejected such practice. Textual versions of works, if they may even be called works, did not serve as signposts for the medieval mystics and so they mainly did not respect them as

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[407] Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul*, p. 68 n. 23

such. They were most often indifferent to the literary boundaries that are in so many cases imposed anachronistically by modern editors across the various manuscripts versions that have survived. We see therefore that inasmuch as modern editors seek to place themselves outside of the process that transforms and re-invents the work, they are nevertheless reinscribing themselves *within* this very process. Editorial practice should thus be appreciated hyper-literally, as the art, even if unintended, which instills new life in a chain of textual practices that engage the fluidity of a text's content and form and which draws the editor into the continuing tradition of negotiation meaning and expressing the text as work within a line of material expressions of its being in the (social) world.

To better appreciate the dynamic between editing, authority and the chains of transmission, we might revisit the notebooks of Yoḥanan Alemanno, who needed to recopy his open notebooks of sources and thoughts into a larger physical format so that he could continue to work on his own growing literary product. So even when a mid-point of the text's life survived in an autograph, it does not offer the final intention of the author or of the work. But the point here is that if we take the idea learned most radically from Ashkenazi revisions and apply it here, there may be no point in privileging the final version over any others. The last version is the fullest and complete form or a work only in the sense that the author ceased to add to it. All moments in the textual development of writing are equally important signposts in the processes of thinking as expressed on the page that marks the literary and intellectual activity of such a (mystical or esoteric) writer.[408] This does not discount, of course, the legitimate preference and interest of a scholar to read the fullest, largest or last version produced by such a figure, recognizing or assuming questions of intention and the maturation of one's thought, especially as system of thought, but this should not negate the relativization of textual versions from other perspectives.

Scholarship of Jewish mystical texts thus needs to question what it *expects* from the reading and editing of such texts. As argued above through the lenses of Foucault on the authorship of the *Zohar*, text studies often function as mediums or devices that access the author's intent and construct an intellectual portrait of the life and personality of the subject who composed a work. But

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[408] See Jack Stillinger in *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems*, Oxford 1994, who developed a theory of textual pluralism to replace final authorial intention.

nevertheless, there are also alternative hermeneutic strategies for engaging texts, especially for those that were not composed foremost so that readers could appreciate the author's intention, and works that were not written with others in mind such as private diaries of intimate communication with divine voices, a mystical diary or literary records of communications with angelic beings, and many other subcategories of unidentified, authorless or pseudepigraphic, mystical texts. Certainly, the divide that separates oral and written texts, especially in the late anthologies of the aphorisms of those who studied with R. Judah the Pious or R. Israel Baal Shem Ṭov and which purport to be, or were, re-edited forms of a uniform work prepared by a disciple.

New forms of editorial practice have emerged as a response to the limitations of prior methods. Textual idealism rests upon romantic conceptions of the individual who produces a book that reflects his unique creative genius. The reification of individualism marks an earlier period of thinking, which gave way to collective creativity, at first multiple authorship and eventually an appreciation that texts are the cultural products without identifiable authors. The dissolution of the self in postmodern thought afforded theories about the death of the author and the move from work to text.[409] Despite any similarity with certain conclusions about medieval Jewish textual culture, these are changes in textual theory that alter the modern reader and critic, but which did not emerge from the study of the surviving texts.

New theories of editorial practice potentially can instill new life in the culture of the academic study of Jewish mystical texts. The near messianic mission of creating a library of published works of Jewish mystical literature, from manuscript to print, could result in the 'mechanical petrification' of Kabbalah, reified in its new canonical form and distantiated from the fluidity of its oral and scribal forms as a living textual culture.[410] We might thus extend the dynamic interface some kabbalists understood, and at times expressed quite theoretically, between the oral and the written, to the relationship between the written and the printed (and the traditional edition to the

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[409] Barthes' essay, 'From Work to Text' has had a major influence on my thinking throughout this study. A separate essay would be required to explain the convergene of horizons between kabbalistic tradition(s) and his propositions.

[410] See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London and New York 2005, p. 124. On the creativity of the individual in Weber's thought and some of his influences see Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England 1997.

academic or critical edition), such that multiple forms of texts could continue to negotiate new and complex meanings even through the medium of authoritative editions that are produced within the academy.[411] The higher goal of editorial practice is therefore to issue text editions without falling into the trappings of publication as the routinization of the charisma of such activity that has marked Kabbalah as a living textualized and oral culture.

This volume has offered a number of highly significant examples of how methodologies of editorial practice invest textual scholarship with the ability to uncover meaning(s) in texts that have escaped scholarly attention or that have otherwise been obscured by an inappropriate acceptance of a particular version at the expense of its transmission history, or by a reliance on theoretical constructions that predetermined the horizons of expectations of a text and its literary nature, treating many texts as works. This study thus serves as a corrective to the field, both illuminating the complexities within texts and the methods available today, as it is a study of what has constructed the thinking and methods of the scholars themselves.

More generally, editorial practice has been shown to be the coextensive continuation of the textual process, which itself is social, experiential and transformative, for both the text and its practitioners, medieval and modern. Critical editions should therefore capture that dynamic and will then no longer be viewed as monolithic moments of an individual's thought and production. Previous methodologies have reified the printed book, whether that be the traditional or critical edition, far beyond its value for reception history, authorizing the final form and language of its text. In exposing the assumptions of past methods and providing for the potential of what can be gained from various advances, this study shows how textual scholarship of the study of Jewish mysticism participates in the same aspirations of critical theory.

The textual study of Kabbalah, arguably the necessary and main aspect of the study of Kabbalah as a whole, embodies a textual theory. As a specific case of textual scholarship, the study of medieval Jewish mysticism offers a unique contribution of the textuality of a traditional culture that feeds directly into the most current theories of editorial practice. Kabbalah is different from other textual processes of authorship, reception and dissemination. The kabbalists were involved in continuous social and textual interpolations due to the specific

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[411] For examples of such views, see Moshe Idel, 'On the Meanings of the Term "*Qabbalah*": Between Ecstatic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of the Sefirot in the Thirteenth Century', *Pe'amim* 93 (2003), pp. 39-76 [Hebrew].

nature of their construction of their literary traditions on the page. Kabbalistic literature, I have argued, was always in flux, dynamic for its own author, in intertextual relationships with existing literature, and fluid through its own versions on the part of the initial writer and on through the various stages of its transmission and reproduction, through which it was learned and often rewritten. The kabbalistic text thus offers itself up as a double hypertext, open to relations within itself and to possibilities not yet foreseen. In the construction of the kabbalistic text, the primordial text is already dialogical, a textual dynamic that informs not only the social interactions between the members of the textual communities that existed within particular geographic and temporal settings, but also across them. Kabbalah thus offers a new window to the general theory of editing for the collective, polysemic nature of its production, transmission and self-transformation.[412]

The kabbalistic textual process which engenders so many versions is in effect the collection and chain of the various moments of its performance. Kabbalah should not be essentialized in a definition that accords it with the literal meaning of the term, as only tradition or reception. Kabbalah is not limited to preservation, nor to the pretension of a conservative stance of retrieving the ancient at the expense of critical and illuminative insights that respond to the text and open it up to further links in the unfolding chain of tradition(s). The kabbalist thus does not act upon the text, changing and corrupting the work, nor should we mark such changes as the later reactions to the original source, which are inscribed by the academic as part of its reception history. Rather, the textual culture of Kabbalah is best understood as the practices of scribes and practitioners of Jewish esotericism who participated in what they understood as the intended life of the work as text, the textual interaction of Jewish mystical life itself.

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[412] Kabbalah scholarship in general, and particularly its contribution to editorial practice, thus earns its place alongside other disciplines within textual scholarship. See the representation of subjects in the 1995 volume, A *Scholarly Editing – A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C. Greetham, New York 1995.

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