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TO HIM  
WHOM I RESPECT  
AS TEACHER AND LOVE AS FRIEND,  
WHO HAS BEEN TO ME, AS TO MANY OTHERS,  
A SECOND FATHER,  
TO  
DR. HERMANN BAAR  
THIS ESSAY IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

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THE PLACE OF THE ZOHAR

IN

JEWISH MYSTICISM

BY

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I.

P R E F A C E.

This Essay is intended to give in brief outline the mystic movement in Judaism, culminating in the Zohar; also to trace the influence of the Zohar upon the ritualists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At a glance it can be seen that the field of investigation here was very large, too much so for a beginner in this study with a very limited amount of time at his disposal. Much of the work is, therefore, superficial, and in a great part is not the result of original research. Still in the course of the preparation of this Essay, the writer was introduced to a subject which, in spite of its interest to students of Jewish History, would have otherwise probably remained to him a terra incognita. He at least arrived so far as to be able to view the subject sympathetically. This tells only of the subjective value, to the writer, of the work which is but feebly represented by this Essay. Its objective worth, is undoubtedly little, still it is the most that could be done in the limited time, and upon a subject to approach which requires a special preparation. The writer submits this Thesis,



## II.

acknowledging his and its limitations. He has done the best he could.

He wishes, however, before closing the work that has occupied him since last summer, to take this opportunity to thank the Professors for their help and the uniform kindness they have evinced toward him during his career at the Hebrew Union College. For the interest in, and the advice concerning the preparation of this Essay, he wishes to express his thanks to DDr. Wise, Philipson, Grossmann, and Mielziner. He is, however, under deepest obligation to Dr. G. Deutsch, at whose suggestion he took the subject of this essay and who has ever been ready and willing to direct and encourage him in the course of his work. For these favors, and kindnesses simple thanks are not enough.

D. L.

## INTRODUCTION.

### MYSTICISM OUTSIDE OF JUDAISM.

RATIONALISM AND MYSTICISM: REASON AND FEELING--PHIL-  
OSOPHIES UNDERLYING MYSTICISM: DUALISM AND PANTHEISM--NIHILISM  
IN INDIA--SUFISM IN PERSIA--NEOPLATONISM: PHILO, PLOTINUS--  
CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM: ST. ANTHONY, BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, ECKHART,  
TAULER, EMERSON, THEOSOPHY, SPIRITUALISM.

## I N T R O D U C T I O N .

Rationalism and mysticism are two opposing forces in man that ever struggle for empery. Man is ever trying to find himself, to discover his place in the general scheme of the universe. What is his relation with the world, what with God? To answer this question he depends, consciously or unconsciously, upon either his reason or his feelings. Reason works slowly and carefully to decipher the world outside of man in order to learn where man's place is. It turns to logic for aid and comes to a faint probability after long chains of deductions. But man tires of logical processes which do not rest upon solid foundations. No satisfactory logical proof has yet been given of the existence of God. What need, says that other part of man, the mystical, is there for syllogisms here. As the belief in God springs from something within us, an intuition, so must our perception of relation between us and God come through intuition. Look within yourself, not on the outside world.

Mysticism has, therefore, always appeared as a reaction against rationalism. This is well seen in our century which is essentially one of rationalism. Man has in this age directed

his mind upon nature's secrets and has shed the light of day upon many of them. The scientist became arrogant and claimed for science the power to unravel all the world's mysteries. He reduced everything to matter and force. But he finally came to a wall. There were things he could not explain. He had only unearthed secrets to find beneath them more difficult ones. And those who watched, and even many of the workers themselves, became dissatisfied with the slow processes which often brought no explanation at all, and no answer to their question "What is our relation to God?" They sought other means to tear aside the dark veil which enfolds human existence. To them the laws of matter were not regarded as imperious; there were other laws, they asserted, to which they must yield. Theosophy, spiritualism, and that misnomer, Christian Science, are all turnings-aside from the belief that we are entirely under the control of material laws. They protest against the subordination of man to matter, and maintain that there is that in man which transcends matter. And here we have the common feature in all mysticism, from that contained in the BAGVAT-GITA to that expounded in Mrs. Eddie's book, "SCIENCE and HEALTH."

Etymologically mysticism (Greek *μυσ*, to close, Engl. *mum*)

means either any secret language or ritual which is understood only by the initiated; or the practise of closing, as effectively as possible, every avenue of perception by the senses, so as to fit the mind, thus withdrawn from everything external, to receive divine illumination. These definitions, however, do not give the source, the cause of mysticism, nor its end and aim.

The cause and source of mysticism is in the nature of man.<sup>1</sup> Here we find a struggle between a rational and ideal view of things, between Reason and Feeling, Knowledge and Faith, Idea and Symbol. And where feeling overrules the reason, where faith overcomes knowledge, and where the Symbol is put forth as the idea, there has mysticism arisen. The aim and end of mysticism is the passing over the finite limits of Reason by means of the Feelings, so as to be literally one with God. And the means by which this passage across the finite may be accomplished are a state of passivity and opposition against Nature.

Mysticism may therefore be again defined as a belief,

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1. "Der Mysticismus des Mittelalters in seiner Entstehungsperiode", Heinrich Schmid, Jena 1824.



fostered by the inordinate rule of the Feelings, that man can passively attain to an immediate union with God.

The philosophy underlying and serving as a foundation to mysticism has been of two kinds. The one is dualism which teaches that all existence rises out of a double principle, a good and a bad. This dualism exists also in man. His soul emanated out of the higher principle and was enclosed in the product of the lower principle. Thus man before his birth was one with God and may, through the destruction of matter, again attain to union with God. The second is pantheism which deifies all nature. There is no distinction between God and the world. We see such a distinction because of our limited point of view. A proper spiritual outlook would unify and bring identity between the divine and the worldly.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally the form which mysticism took depended greatly upon which of these two aspects of the universe it was founded. The first aspect produced such forms of mysticism as monasticism and flagellation, while the second gave rise to nihilism (in Nirvana), and quietism.

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1. The Platonic ἰσότης καὶ παν- Schellings's Philosophy of identity.

Nihilism appeared first in India. With this we also have the first appearance of mysticism. Both Brahmanic pantheism<sup>1</sup> and Buddhistic Nihilism<sup>2</sup> alike teach the unreality of the seeming world. The mystics of these religions laid claim to disinterested love as opposed to a mercenary religion. They express the reaction against the ceremonial prescription and pendantic literalism of the VEDAS. Their pantheism is seen in such remarks as that made by the God, KRISHNA, "I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and moon, human nature in mankind----the understaining of the wise, the glory of the proud, the strength of the strong."<sup>3</sup> Their method of attaining NIRVANA was the keeping head, neck and body steady, without motion, eyes fixed on the point of the nose. The monks on Mt. Athos, whose mysticism was also of this most degraded type, substituted, as a gazing point, the navel for the nose.

1. "When all the desires of the heart shall cease, then man becomes immortal, then he attains to union with the absolute being." Katha Upanishad, transl. by E. W. Hopkins.
2. "All thy rafters are broken, thy ridge-pole is sundered; thy mind, approaching Nirvana, has attained to extinction of all desires." Dhammapada, transl. M. Mueller.
3. Wilkin's translation of the BAGVAT-GITA, a heroic poem which is considered the best exponent of early oriental mysticism.

If we were treating mysticism chronologically, Neoplatonism would be placed after the Hindoo mysticism. But chronology need not be our ruler here. For mysticism, it seems, has no genealogy. It grows up spontaneously in each nation and religion, fostered as it is by the common human nature in all. Remaining, therefore, for convenience in the East, the next form of mysticism is the Sufism of the Mohammedan religion. The cold rationalism of the KORAN, its ritual minutiae, its formal self-righteousness, its prohibition of monasticism--all these would seem to preclude the possibility of a rise of mysticism in Islam. But human nature makes mystics and religion cannot overcome human nature. SUFISM was perhaps a reaction against that very formalism. In the second century of the Hegira the mysticism of RABIA appeared. She believes that through suffering she comes to deity. She declared herself the spouse of Heaven, her will and personality lost in God. This union she attained "when everything which I had found I lost again in God."<sup>1</sup> In the 9th century of our era SUFISM is led by BUSTANI. His pantheism is extravagant beyond measure. To recognize a personal existence

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1. Tholuck "Ssufismus, sive Theosophia Persarum pantheistica." Berlin, 1822, pp. 51 to 54.

was idolatry, he said. "When man adores God, he adores himself." He would say "I am a sea without bottom, without beginning and without end, I am the throne of God, the word of God." JELALED-DIN RUMI, a Sufi poet, of the first half of the thirteenth century, described the emancipation of the soul from intellectual distinctions--from the laws of finite thought, the fluctuations of hope and fear, the consciousness of personality--under the image of night. The delights of love in the songs of Persian poets (HAFIZ, SAADI) are made to stand for the raptures of union with the divine.<sup>1</sup> Sufism came to be so much respected in Persia that we find members of this sect on the throne for a period of two hundred years, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

From Persia we cross to Alexandria. There we find the NEOPLATONIC school of mystics. The first exponent of NEOPLATONIC mysticism is PHILO.<sup>3</sup> He is more of a Greek than a Jew. But one who may stand as a type of the whole school is PLOTINUS, who flourished in the second third of the third century. He

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1. Somewhat similar treatment, though for a different end, given to Shir ha Shirim by the Talmudic Rabbis.

2. Malcolm's Persia vol. II, p. 383.

3. See chap. I p. 13ff.



taught the philosophy of negation and abstraction. PLATO who was the inspiration of PLOTINUS taught the doctrine of ideas. There is an ideal world but there is also a real. PLOTINUS neglected the real world, the world of objects and posited only the ideal world. The object we contemplate and that which contemplates are identical.

The many followers of PLOTINUS had an important influence on the Christian church. Constitutionally the Christian religion is easily susceptible to mystic explanation, for Neoplatonism had a hand in its inception. Thus we have a long line of Christian mystics from ST. ANTHONY, who sees his own soul, separated from the body, carried through the air, down through BERNARD of CLAIRVAUX and ECKHART and TAULER to EMERSON and the later theosophy and spiritualism of our day.

Especially of importance were the mystics of the Christian church at the time of the Reformation. They were a preparation for that church departure. Preaching as they did against all authority in religion, they were naturally at one with the Reformists who objected to the Pope's rule. But when the Reformation was established the mystics were as inimical to it as they had been to the Catholic church. They objected to all authority



even that of the Bible. Man is self-sufficient. All possibilities are in him.

Thus we have traced, necessarily in the faintest outline, the history of mysticism. In all its phases we find it ego-theistic, turning its back upon the world of the senses and trusting in the practice of intense devotion or utter listlessness to bring divine illumination, unity with the Godhead. In many of its phases we see theurgy or the practice of magic introduced. It always appears as a reaction against the formalism of religion, a reaction against rationalism. Wherever the reason claimed too much for itself there appeared mysticism. Men tire of logical processes where no certainty can be reached. In the following chapters we shall see whether Jewish mysticism shows the same characteristics that mysticism in general presents to us.

## CHAPTER I.

### MYSTICISM IN JUDAISM TO THE ZOHAR.

#### IS THERE MYSTICISM IN THE BIBLE? OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

UPON JUDAISM: PERSIAN, BABYLONIAN, GREEK--ESSENES--PHILO, THE LOGOS-- MYSTICISM IN MISHNA, TOSEFTA AND GEMARA: THE FOUR WHO ENTERED PARDES: ANGELS, DEMONS, INCANTATIONS--EIGHTH CENTURY: OTHIYOTH DE RABBI AKIBA, SHIUR KOMA, HECHALOTH RABBATHI, HECHALOTH ZUTRATHI, SAR HA-THORA, SEFER CHANUCH, SEFER YEZIRAH--INTRODUCTION OF THE SEFIROTH, PYTHAGOREAN USE OF NUMBERS--HAI, SADYA, SHERIRAH, ALFASI, NACHMANIDES.

## CHAPTER I

Pure Judaism offers very little ground for the growth of mysticism. Just as it is monotheistic religiously, its philosophy, conscious or unconscious, is monistic. Man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1<sup>27</sup>), and God breathed into his nostrils the soul of life (Gen. 2<sup>7</sup>). The forces of nature are manifestations of God. He maketh winds his messengers, flaming fire his ministers (Ps. 104<sup>4</sup>). The entire universe is but a manifestation of God.<sup>1</sup> Only the recognition of a sharp cleft in the universe, a distinct dualism, can engender mysticism. So we find that the literature of Judaism is free from mystic elements as long as Judaism remains uninfluenced by other religions and philosophies. Thus the Bible, in spite of the "Azazel" command, the story of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor and similar incidents<sup>2</sup> is quite free from mystic influences. In fact, its spirit is directly opposed to mysticism. Its rigid formalism, its insistence on outward forms of worship, its worldly realism and its demand for statutory observance well-nigh make the appearance of mysticism in Judaism impossible. It is only

1. "צר אור ובורא חשך עשה שלום ובורא רע." Isaiah 45<sup>7</sup>.

2. For the explanation and full treatment of which, see "Der Aberglaube und die Stellung des Judenthums zu demselben," Dr. D. Joel, vol. I.

when Judaism comes in contact with the Aryan nations, with their pronounced objectivism, that such a foreign movement is made possible.

The first Aryan nation that had any marked influence upon Judaism was the Persian. Here the Jews found a distinct dualism. The universe was split in half. The forces of nature were either messengers of Ormuzd, the god of Light, or Ahriman, the god of Darkness. The conception of Satan as a separate deity doing evil on his own account, not under the direction of God and for a righteous purpose,<sup>1</sup> arose through the contact with Persian thought. The belief in, and naming of, angels came a little later through the Babylonian influence.<sup>2</sup> It was, however, the Greeks with their conscious philosophizing who turned the Jewish mind toward mysticism. The Greeks taught a dualism: that the gods or the ideas (Platonic) were in the upper realm and, separated from them, were man and nature. The Jew, however, had an intuitive feeling that he was of divine origin, that the soul of man was of God. Those strongly influenced by the Greek

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1. As we find the case to be in Job, chaps. I & II.

2. שמות המלאכים עליונים (Jerus. Talm. Rosh. Hash. Cap. I).

philosophy were the ESSENES<sup>1</sup> and the ALEXANDRINIAN JEWS. The former tried to reconcile the Jewish teaching with the Greek in their lives, the latter in their philosophy.

The ESSENES believed in an evil power, hostile to the divine power. This evil power manifested itself in the material world. The body was considered a prison,<sup>2</sup> pleasure was shunned. The final aim of the ESSENES was, without doubt, the attainment to prophetic ecstasy, so that they might become worthy of the Divine Spirit (רוח הקודש). They were not only considered as holy men, but also as workers of miracles. They claimed prophetic power.<sup>3</sup> They occupied themselves with cures, exorcisms etc. Curative remedies consisted partly in softly-spoken incantations and verses (לחישת), and partly in the use of certain roots and stones supposed to possess magic power. They saw in the Old Testament stories and sayings symbols of the highest truth. The Ma'ase B<sup>e</sup>reshith and the Mercaba of Ezekiel were considered as containing great secrets as did also the names

1. The rise of the Essenes is placed by Graetz, vol. II, p. 24 at the time of religious enthusiasm aroused by Syrian tyranny. Greek learning and customs had then become quite popular in Palestine. --See also, Zeller "Phil. der Griechen" vol. 3, p.279ff.

2. See Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," II 8<sup>11</sup>.

3. ibid. II 8<sup>12</sup>.



of God.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews in Alexandria came closer into contact with Greek civilization and thought than any of their brethren in other lands. It is but natural, then, that on them the Greek spirit should show its greatest influence. The Greek philosophy of that period was the dualism of Plato and Aristotle. This dualism naturally offended the innate Jewish feeling for monism. They soon tried to reconcile the stern monism of the Bible with the dualism of Plato. Plato posited, as distinct in the world, both spirit and matter. The Jewish mind naturally sought to derive one from the other. Many<sup>2</sup> occupied themselves with this task. Philo is distinguished among these because of the complete system he evolved.

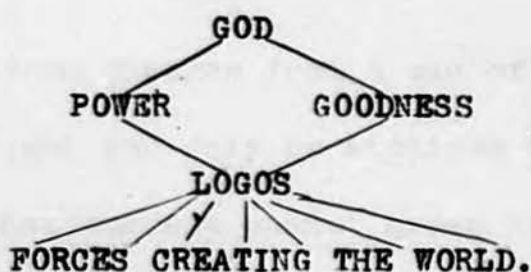
Philo is a student of Plato and cannot fail to notice the separation between spirit and matter, but he is also a Jew and cannot bear the dualism. There must be unity. Did matter come from spirit or spirit from matter? Of course, matter from spirit. But how? Here PHILO turns to his Bible for answer.

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1. Jost, "Gesch. d. Jud. u. s. Sekten." vol. I, p. 212.

2. Some (Gfroerer and Daehne) seem to find traces of the theosophy which is the natural result of such an effort in the Septuagint. Zeller, however, only sees here some slight influence of Greek philosophy.

To him, all Scripture is an allegory. Here he learns God's personality, and the fact that He is the source of all reality, beauty and reason in the world. But God, the infinite, cannot be in the world, neither can he directly work in the world, for the perfect cannot besmirch Himself with matter. There must be a medium, a means whereby God works in the world. This medium is a compound of Plato's ideas, the Jewish-Persian angels, the Greek demons, and the Stoic teaching of working causes. God first made the supersensual world of ideas, which are not only patterns of things to be, but working forces to bring them into existence. The angels in the Pentateuch are but allegorical presentations by Moses of these forces to the ignorant people. It is in these forces that personality and lack of personality lose themselves. As to the origin of these powers there arises a doubt. PHILO speaks of an extension of God's being, an emanation. Above all forces of God are those of power and goodness. Through His goodness all was created, through His power he rules all. The force which unites these two is the Logos. Thus the intermediation between God and the material world is effected as follows:-



He finds this Logos in the Bible, in the "Word of God", the Spirit of God", the Divine Wisdom". The last, "Divine Wisdom", had most influence upon him. Its separation from God is foreign to the Bible; this he gets from Greek thought. He avoided the Stoic teaching of Pantheism, by separating the Logos from God; and materialism, by separating the Logos from matter.

Hence we, finite beings, can only know God through the Logos. The more we abstract ourselves from matter the nearer do we come to God. Hence virtue is not the limitation, but the uprooting of all desires and affections. It is perfect apathy. Man is not to turn to reason, but to put himself in relation with God. He who wishes to know God must give up self. He who thus gives up self, perceives God. The end of all wisdom is to know God directly. The attainment of this end PHILO declares possible through exaltation to the divine, in which the soul stands, not only over the sensual world, but also over the ideas

and the LOGOS. Man then changes from a son of LOGOS to a son of God. But this height can only be attained by a state of Ecstasy. The finite consciousness cannot grasp God. To perceive God, man must give himself over passively to the action of divinity, so as to become God through completely passing out of self. This power of exaltation is given to but few. Hence the means to its attainment must be secret, a treasure only to be shared by the select.

Thus the philosophy of PHILO and the life of the ESSENES, both influenced by Greek thought, arrived at the same conclusion; that finding God could only be attained by despising the body, by closing the eyes to everything material.

For any information concerning the thought of the Jews after the time of PHILO we are restricted almost entirely to the Talmudic literature, i.e. to the MISHNA, the TOSEPHTA and the GEMARA. It is here that we must seek for traces, if such there be, of mystic tendency in Jewish thought. That there should be mysticism among the Jews of that period is but natural, as in Babylon they came in contact with a dualism as sharp as that of Plato. In Babylonia, the godheads MARDUK and ASSHUR were on an



equal rooting. Such a religion could not but have an influence for mysticism on the Jew.<sup>1</sup> Both it and the Persian religion (which also was dualistic) gave to Judaism its angelology and demonology. Specific incantations in the Talmudic literature can be traced to both Persian and Babylonian sources.<sup>2</sup>

In Mishnaic times, however, this influence was not strong enough to affect in any emphatic way the compilers of the MISHNA. When we come across anything mystical in the MISHNA, it is generally introduced with a "they say".<sup>3</sup> Even where there was much temptation to explain a Biblical passage mystically (such as the offering of the two goats) they kept to the plain meaning, (and translated Asasel as a steep rock צוק).

When the Mishna, in Chagiga<sup>ג</sup>, says that a teacher should not discuss the Ma'ase Breshith in the presence of two pupils, nor the Ma'ase Mercaba even to one, except he be wise, it seems to me the reason can only be that such discussion in public will lead to misunderstanding on the part of some of the pupils, thus

1. Jastrow in his "Religion of Babylon and Assyria", p. 697, claims that Babylonian influence is noticeable even in Ezekiel.

2. Jastrow "Religion of Babylon and Assyria."

3. Berachoth, chap. 5, Mishna 5: אמר עלי על רחמינו בן דומא  
שהיה מתפלל על החולים ואמר זה חי וזה מת וכו'.



bringing them near to the danger of mysticism.<sup>1</sup>

Still from other sources we learn that among the TAN-  
NAIM there were a number of mystics. R. JOCHANAN BEN ZACCAI con-  
sidered the study of Ma'ase B<sup>e</sup>reshith and Ma'ase Mercaba the  
highest form of sanctification.<sup>2</sup> We also have the story<sup>3</sup> of the  
four learned men who entered PARDES, פֶּרְדֵּס, AKIBA, SIMON BEN AZ-  
ZAI, SIMON BEN ZOMA and ELISHA BEN ABUYAH. From this PARDES,  
AKIBA alone came out sound, BEN AZZAI and BEN ZOMA became af-  
flicted, while ELISHA BEN ABUYAH tore down the plants. PARDES  
probably means learning, literature and philosophy other than  
Jewish.<sup>4</sup> Thus foreign literature had its mystic effect upon  
all, though only ELISHA did it turn from Judaism. BEN AZZAI,  
through the influence of mysticism became a religious enthusiast.<sup>5</sup>

1. Though Bertinoro gives another reason.

2. Chagiga פֶּרְדֵּס.

3. Chagiga 14<sup>b</sup>, and Jer. Chag. II, 1.

4. Jop<sup>1</sup>, "Gesch. d.Ju.s. Sekten." p. 102, takes Pardes to mean "die hoehere Theosophie", while Freudenthal (Hellenistische Studien, p. 75) says that Pardes is "nicht etwa die hellenisti-  
sche Theosophie, wohl aber eine ihr verwandte mystische Forsch-  
ungsweise. . . ."

5. "With him died out the enthusiasts, הַשְׂקֵדוּת", Sotah 49<sup>b</sup>.  
This, however, is said of both him and ben Zoma in Jer. Ned. 40,4.

He insisted upon the thoughtful pronouncing of the "Amen" at the end of a blessing, as though that brought the fulfillment of the prayer.<sup>1</sup> BEN ZOMA, his colleague lived a life of abstemiousness.<sup>2</sup> He was always abstracted and dreaming. When once in this mood he was asked by JOSHUA "Whence and whither, BEN ZOMA." To which he answered, "I have been reflecting over the story of Creation, viz., over the upper waters and the lower waters, and the hovering of God's spirit between them." Then JOSHUA said to his pupils, "BEN ZOMA is still not himself. The two verses belong to different days of creation."<sup>3</sup> Showing that JOSHUA considered such mystical reflections as mistakes.

But while very little of this mysticism is permitted a place in the MISHNA it is more often and less hesitatingly introduced in the TOSEPHTAH and GEMARA. Angels and devils, and incantations find places upon many pages of the GEMARA. The angel Metatron was given preëminence above all others. The names of God were made the subject of mystical studies. The

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1. Jer. Berachoth, 12 c.

2. "Abstemiousness exalts one to the Holy Spirit."-- Aboda-Zara 20<sup>b</sup>.

3. Chagiga, 15.--Bereshith Rabba, 2.

Tetragrammaton was taught in the schools once a week.<sup>1</sup> The name of twelve letters was originally taught <sup>to</sup> all. But when the number of impious ones increased it was confided only to the most discreet priests.<sup>2</sup> The name of forty-two letters was most holy קדוש מקודש<sup>3</sup>, and was taught only to a man of known discretion, of advanced age, one who was calm and temperate, a stranger to vanity and of a kindly disposition.<sup>4</sup> And the Talmud adds, "whoever is instructed in this secret and guards it with care in a pure heart can count upon the love of God and the favor of men; his name inspires respect and he will inherit both worlds, that in which we now live and the world to come."<sup>5</sup> The doctrine of the names of God taught only to certain persons at stated times, was supposed to give men special powers.

Thus we may conclude that in Mishnaic and Talmudic times a mystic science was current amongst the learned Jews,

1. Talm. Berachoth,

שם בן ארבע אותיות חכמים מסרו אותו  
לבניהם ולתלמידיהם פעם אחת בשבוע:

2. *ibid.* supra.

3. *ibid.* supra.

4. *ibid.* supra.

5. *ibid.* supra. Maimonides says that a name with so many letters (42) cannot exist in any language, and therefore infers that this consists of a sentence expounding the nature of God.

and was so far developed as to be divided into a doctrine concerning creation (מעשה בראשית), and concerning the divine nature (מעשה מרכבה).

But a comparatively consistent system of mysticism does not appear in Judaism until in the Geonic time, beginning about the middle of the eighth century.<sup>1</sup> Among the works of this time which contain mystical sayings are the OTHIYOTH DE RABBI AKIBA, SHIUR KOMA, HECHALOTH RABBATHI, HECHALOTH ZUTRATHI, SAR HA THORA and SEFER CHANUCH. Besides these may be mentioned others of a theurgic character such as SEFER HA YOSHOR (probably identical with the CHARBA DE MOSHE), SEFER HA RASIM and SEFER SHEM BEN NOACH. These latter contain kameoth and magical formulas to calm the sea, kill men, kindle love, etc. In the Othiyoth of RABBI AKIBA ethical, national and mystical hagadas are deduced from the various letters of the alphabet. The letter Beth (ב), for instance, treats of the greatness of ביה, understanding, (mystic speculation)<sup>2</sup>. Vav treats of God's names

1. Solomon ben Jerucham, a Karaite writer of the tenth century, speaks against some of these writings; and Agobard, bishop of Lyons, (writing about 829) includes some of the teachings found in these writings in his book, De Judaicis Superstitionibus.

2. מכאן אתה למד שגדולה בנה לפני הקב"ה יותר מן התורה. תורה נביאים וכתובים משנה ומדרשות including in the following: הלכות ואגדות, שמיעות ותוספות, מושבות ומעמדות והגדות וכל סדרי בראשית: Beth ha-Midrash, Adolph Jellinek, p. 19, Leipzig, 1855, vol. 3.



in a mystic sense, and the mystic power of the Amen. Cheth teaches concerning the form of the Shekina, (inserted from Shiur Koma). The SHIUR KOMA is known to us only through extracts found in the book RAZIEL and in the OTHIYOTH of RABBI AKIBA (f. i. the letter  $\aleph$ ). From these portions we learn that the book is a description of God in the most grossly material anthropomorphic manner. It mentions the various parts of God's body, beard and all, gives the measurements of the various limbs in the form of parasangs, which it heaps to enormous proportions; "for those parasangs are not like ours; one parasang of God consists of a million ells, one ell is four spans, and one such span reaches from one end of the world to the other." In response to a question as to whether (Rabbi) Samuel, the supposed author of the SHIUR KOMA, teaches these measurements traditionally or on his own authority, SHERIRA GAON says that it is certainly tradition, and is part of a mystic, esoteric science imparted to but few. Saadia had doubted the authenticity of the SHIUR KOMA before SHERIRA'S time, while MAIMONIDES declares it as positively pseudepigraphic and warns all scholars against these and like un-Jewish monstrosities.



The HECHOLOTH mentioned by Hai Gaon<sup>1</sup> (969--1038) under the name of Mishnas begin with the heading אמר ר' שמעון. They treat of the heavenly economy,<sup>2</sup> of the hosts of heaven and their songs,<sup>3</sup> as well as of the theories of creation<sup>4</sup>, and of the human soul. The book was probably written in Persia and certainly shows Persian influence in the finger-counting mentioned as a means of inducing the descent of the Mercaba, and also in the vivid manner in which the writer describes the horses and horsemen who stand watching the seven temples in heaven. The persons mentioned in this work are R. AKIBA (פרק כז), ELIEZER HA-GODOL or BEN HORKINOS (פרק ל'), R. NECHUNYA BEN HAKANA (פרק יג), and R. ISHMAEL (passim).

Passing by minor writings, such as MIDRASH KONEN and SEFER HA-YASHAR, we come to the work that in importance stands just below the ZOHAR. It is the Sefer Yezirah, the Book of Creation, ascribed by some to ABRAHAM, by others to AKIBA, but probably written in the GEONIC times,<sup>5</sup> perhaps in Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

1. See Rapoport's Rabbenu Hai.

2. Bet ha-Midrasch of A. Jellinek, vol. 3, p. 94--100.

3. ibid. p. 91, 89, 92. / 4. ibid. p. 102.

5. Graetz, "Gnosticismus und Judenthum", p. 118, ff.

6. According to Saadia, who is led to this view by the fact that the author includes the Resh, ר, in the letters of בגדי כסף.

This book had wielded its influence from the time that Saadia wrote a commentary to it down to the present century, when a christian scholar, J. J. von MEYER (1830, Leipzig), added another to the many commentaries upon it. While the mystic works before mentioned treated mostly with God and the heavenly hosts, i.e. with what may be termed the מעשה מרכבה, the Sefer Yezirah directs its attention upon the manner of the creation of the world, or what may be called the מעשה בראשית. Its task is to solve the old and difficult question how the perfect, the infinite, can create the world which is imperfect and finite. Being the first attempt at a complete and systematic philosophy ever written in the Hebrew, the writer is naturally at a great loss for words to express his meaning. He therefore uses metaphors, and this, added to the practice of giving nothing but headings makes the little pamphlet quite difficult. It is Pythagorean in its use of number in its explanations.

The fundamental thought in the book is that there is but one God who created the world; for otherwise there could not exist the harmony in the diversities of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Sefer Yezirah, Perek 2, Mishnah.

Thus far reason goes. Beyond that he uses the first ten numbers and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, and by the combination of these thirty-two paths of wisdom<sup>1</sup> the world is formed. Noteworthy as an example of the practice of mysticism, as it is found in all times and in all lands, is the fact that the things that are first taken as symbols of objects are finally posited as the objects themselves. Thus in this book the letter A, א, which at first symbolizes air (אֵר) is later taken to be air itself: M, מ, at first symbolizes water (מַיִם) and then is water itself: Sh, ש, symbolizes fire and in the end is taken as fire itself.<sup>2</sup> In this book we first come upon the much-used Kabbalistic phrase Sefiroth סְפִירוֹת. Here the word means the most general form of things and in consequence the most essential. Thus, the first is "the spirit of the living God", the second is air derived from the spirit, the third is water emanating from the air, the fourth is fire emanating from water, and the last six are the six directions in space. Here the author teaches that the elements of the world came one from the other, each becoming more and more material as the distance from the

1. Sefer Yezirah, Perek א, Mishnah.

2. ibid., Perek י, Mishnah.

holy spirit, their common origin, becomes greater. This is nothing less than the doctrine of emanation. For the formation of particular objects the author posits the combinations<sup>1</sup> of the twenty-two letters which he divides into three classes. First, the three "mothers", אִמֵּי, second, the seven double letters בְּגִדְּפֶרֶת and third, the twelve simple letters. These various numbers (3,7,12,) the author tries to find in the three divisions of nature, in the general composition of the world, in the division of the year and in the figure of man. In this is the implied thought that man is a microcosm. Thus the number three is found in nature in the three elements, air, water, fire; in the year in the three seasons, summer, winter and the temperate season; in man, in the head, heart and stomach. The seven doubles represent those things in nature, in the year and in man which have opposites. Thus in Nature they represent the seven planets which may influence for good or bad; in the year, the seven days of the week; in man, the eyes, the ears, the nostrils and the mouth. The twelve simple letters appear in nature in the twelve signs of Zodiac; in the year in the twelve months: and in man in twelve principal organs of the body, in

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1. Sefer Yezirah, Perek 2, Mishna 4.



the organs of speaking, thinking, walking, seeing, hearing, working, coition, smelling, sleep, anger, swallowing and laughing. But in all this diversity there exists a unity, for we read that one is above three and three above seven and seven above twelve.<sup>1</sup> Thus a system is formed which substitutes for the apparent dualism in the world a strict monism and unity. The whole world is an emanation from the spirit of the living God, רוח אלהים חיים.

This work received much attention, was commented upon and explained, until in the course of a few centuries a mystic nomenclature was fully established. Among the many who now engaged themselves in mystic studies none was clearer than NACHMANIDES (MOSE BEN NACHMAN, 1195 to about 1270) who although he wrote no special Kabbalistic work, spread its teachings through remarks and even small brochures in his commentary on the Bible.

The early Geonic time received its mysticism from Palestine where the study of the Talmud had long languished. Thus the principal of the academy in Pumbeditha in the year 814 was a mystic of small learning, JOSEPH BAR ABBA; his successor, MAR-ABRAHAM BEN SHERIRA (816 to 828) was also a mystic who was sup-

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1. Sefer Yezirah, Perek 6, Mishna 8.



posed to foresee the future from the rustling of palm leaves on a calm day. But in Saadia (892 to 942) mysticism found a strong opponent. He was not only assiduous in explaining the Biblical text rationally, in fighting superstitions, but also combatted those who believed in emanation.<sup>1</sup> After him Hai Gaon took a very decided stand against mysticism. He denied that miracles could be performed by the mere use of a formula. It is wrong, he declares, to use God's name for mystic purposes. He does, however, often in his responses mention mystic teachings without condemning them; though he shows his preference for rational explanations. Thus to a question whether it is true that God created every one in the form that that person had wished, Hai answers that there is a mystic teaching to the effect that each creature has a spirit or angel in heaven. To this angel God directs the question, Do you wish to have a creature formed in thy image on earth, and in what form? But according to my opinion, adds Hai, God has made each creature in such a manner that if he were now asked he would declare himself satisfied with his present form.<sup>2</sup> So we see that while HAI GAON expresses him-

1. Emunoth ve-Deoth, 14<sup>b</sup>.

2. Opinions of the Gaons, ed. Lyck, No. 28, a question concerning the Talm. quotation, (Rosh. ha-Shono, 11<sup>a</sup> & Chullin 60<sup>a</sup>)--

כל מעשה בראשית בקומתו נברא, בדעתו נברא, בצביונו נברא:

self very forcibly against the practical Kabbala, with its use of God's name in formalae, and cameos (Kameoth) he is not ready to say anything against the mystic, theoretic teaching as such. His two disciples, however, R. CHANANEL BEN CHUSHIEL and R. NISSAM ben JACOB in Kairuan (Cyrene, North Africa) while ever ready to agree with their teacher in other points, stand strongly against all mysticism, theoretical as well as practical. R. YIZCHAK ALFASI ר'יצחק (1013-1103) was also ever ready to combat mysticism with his rational explanations. This was the position held by the majority of the learned until the death of MAIMONIDES (1135-1204), when a division arose in the camp of the Jewish sages. MAIMONIDES had established a system of rational philosophy. He had carried his rationalism to such a degree that he either explained away or declared false most of the Agada. And while his system admits of miracles, it reduces them, as far as possible, to natural causes and interprets them in a rationalistic manner. It was inevitable that the religious spirit should rise against this rationalism, and just as AKIBA, in the first century, in opposition to the new-Christian method of explaining the Bible into symbols, gave worth and value to each parti-

cle, to each letter, to each ornament,  $\aleph$ , on each letter, so at this period arose SOLOMON ben ABRAHAM of MONTPELIER who, opposing the rationalism of MAIMONIDES declared that according to the Bible, and therefore according to his belief, the deity is furnished with the eyes, ears and other human organs, sitting in heaven upon a throne surrounded by darkness and clouds. About SOLOMON clustered the Anti-Maimunists. Opposition to MAIMONIDES came also from another sphere. MAIMONIDES' philosophy was intellectual and against this was posited the philosophy of Feeling by NACHMANI. According to the latter, the mystical and the unknown were the holiest elements of Judaism. Thus, while MAIMONIDES considered it superstition and even heathenish to ascribe power to evil spirits, NACHMANIDES allowed the demons considerable place in his system of the world. A support of the Agada which MAIMONIDES attacked, NACHMANI found ready to hand in the KABBALA. What before appeared blasphemous or meaningless or childish in the Agada, now took on, through the KABBALA, a deep, mysterious and transcendental meaning. Around NACHMANI clustered the third party of Kabbalists. As a party which strenuously opposed the rationalism of MAIMONIDES and the servile subjection

to authority shown by the Anti-Maimunists, the Kabbalistic party soon grew in number and power. Gradually, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, perhaps in opposition to the Aristoteleanism of MAIMONIDES,<sup>1</sup> a sort of Platonistic explanation of the creation of the world arose. Plato's ideas were replaced, in a way, by the ten SEFIROTH, through which medium God created and rules the world. These Sefiroth emanate from God, the EN SOF,

אין סוף, the Infinite. They form the following gradation:

1. The highest Sefira, Kether, כתר, which is the materialization of the deity, and from which the other nine Sefiroth take their origin;<sup>2</sup>
2. Chochma, חכמה, Wisdom;
3. Bina, בינה, Understanding, which means the practical carrying out of the ideas of Wisdom through the powers of the Kether, כתר;
4. Gedulla or Chesed, גדולה or חסד, Greatness or Love;
5. Gebura or Din, גבורה or דין, Strength or Judgment, standing in opposition to the fourth Sefira, which opposition is overcome by the 6, Tifereth or Rachamim, תפארת or רחמים, Majesty or Mercy;
7. Ne-

1. "The principal opponents to the Moreh, R. Solomon of Montpellier, his pupils R. Jonah and David ben Saul, and Meir ben Todros ha-Levi were Kabbalists." --Jellinek, Moses ben Shem Tob de Leon p. 14, note, Leipzig, 1851.

2. Zohar, III, 288<sup>a</sup>.



zach, נצח, Victory, perhaps the power of morals;<sup>1</sup> 8. Hod, הוד, Splendor, perhaps the force of the beautiful;<sup>1</sup> and these two opposing forces (7 and 8) find a balance in number 9, Yesod, יסוד, Foundation; 10. Atereth or Malchuth, Crown or Kingdom. Exactly when the science of the ten SEFIROTH arose cannot be stated. It is, at times, credited to ISAAC the BLIND, son of ABRAHAM ben DAVID of POSQUIERES (דוד אברהם died, 1198). At all events this mystic system was taught by ISAAC the BLIND at the end of the twelfth century and was there made as definite as such teachings can possibly be. With this system, and the rest of the previously written mystic literature as a foundation there appeared about this time the Bible of the future Kabbalists, the ZOHAR.

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1. Suggested by Dr. P. Bloch "Geschichte der Entwicklung der Kabbala" p. 37.



## CHAPTER II.

THE ZOHAR: ITS HISTORY THROUGH THE CENTURIES.

ITS INFLUENCE UPON SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RITUALISTS.

SIMON BEN YOCHAI, SEFER YUCHSIN, LETTER OF ISAAC OF  
ACCHO--SHALSHELETH HA-KABBALA--LEON MODENA, JOSEPH SOLOMON DEL  
MEDIGO-- CONDITION OF JEWS DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH  
CENTURIES--JOSEPH KARO, ABRAHAM GUMBINER, DAVID HA-LEVI, ABRA-  
HAM DANZIGER--EPHRAIM HA-COHEN, ZEVI ASHKENASI, DAVID IBN ZAMORA  
SAMSON BACHARACH, YAIR CHAYIM BACHARACH, SAMUEL EDELS, BRECHYA  
SHAPIRA, JACOB EMDEN--SOLOMON HERSCHEL, SOLOMON DUBNO, MOSES  
MENDELSSOHN, SOLOMON PLESSNER.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ZOHAR: ITS HISTORY THROUGH THE CENTURIES.

The ZOHAR poses as the work of SIMON BEN YOCHAI, a Tanna of the fourth generation, flourishing from 139 to 165. But this claim has been combatted on several grounds. An external proof against the authorship of SIMON BEN YOCHAI is that in all the centuries between the second and the fifteenth <sup>1</sup> no mention is made of the ZOHAR, until we come to the SEFER YUCHSIN. In this chronicle, under the name of SIMON BEN YOCHAI, are given various opinions concerning the authorship of the ZOHAR, "which is called מדרש קריאור". While it is ZAKUTO'S belief <sup>2</sup> that the ZOHAR is a compilation from the traditions handed down by the disciples of SIMON BEN YOCHAI of their teacher's lectures (מה שקבלו ממנו), and that this compilation only took place after the time of NACHMANIDES and R. ASHER (הראש) still he quotes a letter of a R. ISAAC of ACCHO who gives an altogether different account. ISAAC of ACCHO <sup>3</sup>, desirous of knowing the origin of the ZOHAR asks a

1. By Abraham bar Shemuel Zakuto, first edition, 1504, Constantinople.

2. Sefer Yuchsin, 42<sup>a</sup>, Cracow ed., 1680.

3. Flourished at end of thirteenth century. He escaped from Accho when it was taken by the Egyptian Sultan in 1291.

number of scholars who possess the book concerning the author. Some said that RAMBAN found it in Palestine and sent it to Catalonia, and the spirit (רוח, perhaps an angel) carried it to Aragon where it fell into the hands of MOSES DE LEON. Others said that the book was not written by SIMON BEN YOCHAI but that MOSES DE LEON, who knew the Written Name (שם הכתוב), the name of God that could only be written but not spoken) wrote a work on esoteric mysticism and in order to make great profit thereby ascribed it to a great personage<sup>1</sup>, SIMON BEN YOCHAI. "But", goes on the writer of the letter, "I, myself, came to the city Valladolid where I found R. MOSES DE LEON who swore to me that the (original) book of SIMON BEN YOCHAI was in his home in Avila. But MOSES DE LEON died before he reached home. Still I saw a relative of his, R. DAVID RAF'ON, who said that R. MOSES DE LEON had dissipated the great sums of money which he had obtained from the sale of his mystic writings and when he died his wife, upon promises of reward, told the wife of a certain R. JOSEPH of Avila that the ZOHAR was a forgery by her husband. Rabbi

1. "Hung it on a high tree." A quotation from the Talmud.

R. Akiba said to R. Simon ben Yochai-- בקשת להחניק התלה

באלון :ל'ג

ISAAC then left Avila and came to Talavira where R. JOSEPH ha-LEVI BEN R. TODROS spoke for the genuineness of the ZOHAR. But in Toledo the test that RABBI JOSEPH HA-LEVI made was not considered as proving anything." So far the letter of R. ISAAC of ACCHO. It must be stated that this letter appears in but few editions of the SEFER YUCHSIN.<sup>1</sup>

In the same century that the SEFER YUCHSIN was published, R. GUEDALYA IBN YACHYA (1515 to 1587) of the family of ROM, wrote a chronicle SHALSHELETH HA-KABBALA, שלשלת הקבלה, in which he quotes the SEFER YUCHSIN concerning the various opinions on the genuineness of the ZOHAR, but does not mention the letter of ISAAC of ACCHO. His own opinion is that all doubts as to the authenticity of the ZOHAR are foolish (הכל הנה) and says that SIMON BEN YOCHAI and his holy associates taught these theories, but the writing down was done in later times. He compares this process to the transmission and final editing of the Mishna by R. YEHUDA HA-NASI, and of the GEMARA by R. ASHI.<sup>2</sup>

1. M. H. Landauer, in Orient, 1845, p. 709 ff., contests by numerous and plausible arguments the genuineness of this letter. His arguments are somewhat weakened by Carmoly's statement in Orient, 1851, p. 360.

2. Shalsheleth ha-Kabbala, 23<sup>a, b</sup>, Amsterdam ed., 1697.



But the seventeenth century found outspoken opponents to the Kabbala in general, and the ZOHAR in particular. The Kabbala in the fifteenth and sixteenth century gradually developed and claimed in ever greater degree the attention of the Jews, and "instead of being as before but the occupation of a few who treated it as a secret study, it now came before the general public, took the place of the Halachic studies and spread without bounds."<sup>1</sup> This in the end brought a reaction, the first fruit of which appears in the opposition to the Kabbala, and especially to the ZOHAR, by LEON MODENA (Yehuda Arye de Modena, 1571 to 1649). Modena was a person of keen critical insight and could have had much influence upon his time if he had been as earnest a fighter as he was a bold thinker. His critical studies were but mental amusement for him.<sup>2</sup> He wrote a book against rabbinical tradition, SHA'AGATH ARYE שַׁאגַת אֲרִיָּה, which he did not even publish. His opposition to the Kabbala and the ZOHAR appears in his ARI NOHEM, אֲרִי נֹחֵם. He boldly states that the ZOHAR is a comparatively "new work (הוא חבור חדש, לא מקובל), not a tra-

1. Geiger in "Melo Chofnaim", a biography of Joseph Solomon Meir Medigo, introduction, p. XIX. See also Kelilath Yofi I, p. 7.  
2. Graetz, "History of the Jews, vol. 5, p. 74, Eng. Transl.



dition, either from R. SIMON BEN YOCHAI or from his disciples, but brought forth by one of the later teachers.<sup>1</sup> He admits, however, that there is much that is praiseworthy in the ZOHAR, that it contains many explanations and hints on passages of the Scriptures, that its language is beautiful and incites the reader to the service of God.<sup>2</sup> He produces a number of reasons against its authorship by R. SIMON BEN YOCHAI. One is that it cannot be believed that such a pious man as SIMON BEN YOCHAI would transgress the law which says that oral tradition is not to be written down.<sup>3</sup> Another is, that it was impossible for SIMON BEN YOCHAI to write the work, as was claimed, in a cave where he and his son were concealed for thirteen years, covered to the neck in sand. And again if it were the work of SIMON BEN YOCHAI, mention would have been made of it in some boraitha or agada in the Talmud. To the argument that if a later writer was the author of the ZOHAR it would not contain, as it does, a number of laws contradictory to the later compilers, Tosefists,

1. Ari Nohem, written 1639, edited by Dr. Julius Fuerst, Leipzig, 1840, Perek 17, p. 47.

2. ibid. pp. 48, 50.

3. דברים שבעפ אי אתה רשאי לשום בכתב:

Leon Modena answers that but few of the Kabbalists are expert in Talmud and the Posekim; for all their days are spent in the esoteric studies ( פנימיות ), so that they do not know the outward things ( חיצוניות ).

His disciple, JOSEPH SOLOMON DEL MEDIGO (born 1591 in Candia i.e. Crete, died 1655) was another opponent of Kabbala, but like his teacher he had no influence upon his age because of his insincerity. It is bewildering to read his various works. At one time he is a sincere Talmudist and Kabbalist, at another he is a Karaite and rationalist. In one and the same book he produces arguments for the authenticity of the ZOHAR<sup>1</sup> and speaks highly of its worth<sup>2</sup>, and also blames the Kabbalists for being worse than the Christians, the latter praying to but three divinities while the former pray to ten.<sup>3</sup> In his letter, however, to the Karaite, SERACH BEN NATHAN of TROKI, he shows his true colors. Here he boldly speaks against a favorite trick of the Kabbalists, letter combinations, also against transmigration

1. Mazref la-Chochma, ed. of Odessa, 1865, p. 60 ff. It was first edited by Samuel Ashkenasi in Vasilia, 1629.

2. ibid. p. 40.

3. ibid. p. 38, where he says that the Kabbalists pray

פעם לספירה אחת, ופעם לספירה אחרת:

of souls ( <sup>ל</sup>לגול ), against the thirty-two paths of wisdom (in the SEFER YEZIRAH), against the substantiation of the letters of the alphabet. He further says that the Kabbalists did not, in claiming great age for their system, even know how to hide their deception; for they say that the ZOHAR is the work of the Tanna, SIMON BEN YOCHAI, and yet mention therein later Amoraim, who lived many years after.<sup>1</sup> While he mentions the name of MOSES DE LEON,<sup>2</sup> in a very slighting manner, he does not connect him with the ZOHAR.

Since the time of MAIMONIDES philosophical studies represented by Kabbalistic works, and Rabbinical occupations in the commentaries on the Bible and the earnest study of the Talmud were widely separated. The Kabbalists regarded the Mishna and Talmud as dry and lifeless, while the Rabbinites considered the Kabbala as being at times profanity, and always as inducing laxness in the law. And though we have seen that in the fifteenth and sixteenth century the Kabbala and especially the ZOHAR did not stand undisputed, it gradually came into high repute among

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1. See the letter of Joseph Solomon del Medigo to Serach ben Nathan, the Karaite, of Troki, found in the appendix to Geiger's "Melo Chofnaim," Berlin 1840.

2. *ibid.*, where he calls Moses de Leon a mountebank.

the masses, who did not at all understand it, but were hypnotized by the word jugglery.

The Jews in Italy, including among them the most learned in the European Jewry, were ardent Kabbalists, and continued so until the present century. The Jews in Poland and Russia during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, who had been driven from Germany were, because of the hard struggle for a livelihood, totally ignorant of the Law, Talmud and later commentators; still they spent all their leisure time upon the study of the Kabbala, especially upon the work, Mesores ha-Kabbala, מסורת הקבלה, of R. YEHUDA the PIOUS and also the writings of his pupil, R. ELIEZER of GORMIZA. This attachment to esoteric studies at the expense of the Talmud continued until the time of JACOB POLLACK, 1500, by whose efforts the study of the Talmud again came to occupy the attention of the people.<sup>1</sup> Still, even during the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth century the Kabbala held its place in Poland. MOSES ISSERLES (1520-1572) complains that not only the scholars but almost every householder (בעל הבית), "who does not know his right

1. Kelilath Yofi by Chaim Nathan Dembitzer, Cracow, 1893, part 2, note pp. 7 & 8.



hand from his left, studies the secrets of the Law (סתרי תורה)<sup>1</sup>. In the next century, R. JOSHUA BEN JOSEPH, (1590 to 1648) rabbi at Lemberg, reproaches the people of his time for turning to the secret things more than to the revealed.<sup>2</sup> He does not deny the principles of the "Secret Wisdom," but deprecates the fact that attention is paid to them solely, and also holds to the law that Kabbala must not be mixed with the Thora, אין לנו ספק בנסתרות.<sup>3</sup> Still the Kabbala was almost universally recognized as a "holy" study. It was not, as a few "heretics", especially in Amsterdam, claimed, simply one of the many existent systems of philosophy.<sup>4</sup> It was The Philosophy. As a reaction against this steady canonization of the ZOHAR we notice a movement toward a positive and definite statement of the laws. And peculiarly enough, this movement culminated in a Kabbalist, but one

1. Thora ho-Olah of Rabbenu Moses Isserles (הרמ"א) Perek ד'. Also quoted by Samson Bacharach in his שמן למאור, פ"כ תע"א. May be seen in the Responsa of his son, Yair Chaim Bacharach, חות יאיר, Resp. 210 end.

2. In the prefaces of his two works, פני יהושע and מגני שלמה.

3. Responsa of R. Joshua, פני יהושע, סי' ע"ח, חלק ב', in answer to the author of מופת הדור, R. Mendel.

4. See Joel Sirks, died 1640 at a great age, pupil of M. Isserles' pupil, in his Responsa אחר סי' ד beginning

קול ענות שמענו מארץ רחוקה מעיר אמשטרדם

who, seeing visions of the Messiah, felt that his coming could only be hastened by religious unity in Israel. This man was JOSEPH KARO (1488 to 1575), and his Shulchan Aruch accomplished in a great measure the purpose for which it was written. Judaism remained what it has been until this century through the power of the Shulchan Aruch. His plan in this compilation was, different from MAIMONIDES', to keep philosophy entirely separate from practical religion, and while mystic elements naturally crept into his work, still he showed an unwillingness to place the Zohar on the same level as the Talmud as a guide for religious observance.<sup>1</sup> His two commentators, ABRAHAM ABLI ben HAYIM LEVI of GUMBINNEN,<sup>2</sup> (called Abraham Gumbinner), and David ben Samuel ha-Levi<sup>3</sup>, both recognize the Zohar as an authority in religious observance.<sup>4</sup> ABRAHAM GUMBINNER explicitly puts its authority below that of the Gemara and the Posekim. He says,<sup>5</sup> wherever

1. Graetz, Hist. of Jews, vol. 4, p. 613, Eng. transl.
2. Died probably 1683, see J. M. Jost, Gesch. d. Jud. u. s. Sek. vol. III, p. 245. Wrote מגן אברהם to Shul. Ar., was Rab. in Kalisch.
3. Died 1667, see כלי יסוד, vol. I, p. 58<sup>a</sup>. Author of סורי זרוב, a Comm. to the 4 parts of ש"ע. Rabbi in Lemberg.
4. מגן אברהם Orach Chayim, 25, 20; 128, 18 and 21.  
סורי זרוב Orach Chayim, 102, 5.
5. Mogen Abraham, 25, 20. Refers to the question whether Tefillin are to be put on standing or sitting.

The Kabbala and Zohar differ from the Gemara, the law is according to the Gemara and the Posekim; still, he admits, if the Kabbalists are more rigorous, their version is to be enforced. But any law that is not mentioned in the Gemara or Posekim, although it is mentioned in the Kabbala, cannot be enforced. Another later commentator to the Shulchan Aruch יורה דעה, Abraham Danziger,<sup>1</sup> in giving the reason of saying Kaddish in order to keep the parents out of Gehinnom, says that while there is no דין concerning Gehinnom in טורי זהב, there are דינים concerning it in other authorities such as the Zohar.<sup>2</sup> ISAIAH HURWITZ, great Kabbalist that he is, naturally believes in the binding power of the laws as explained in the Zohar. For, he says, each law has a mystic meaning (סוד) the incapability of seeing which is a lack on our part, ואם רק הוא, מכאן.<sup>3</sup> Still the general opinion of the ritualists of the seventeenth century was against the use of the Zohar as an authority in practical life. Thus in the Responsa of EPHRAIM HA-COHEN of Wilna, printed in 1688, though the

1. Disciple of Ezekiel Landau at Prague, was born 1780, d. 1820.

2. Chochmath Odom, 171, 12.

3. Two tables of the Covenant, division of Oral Law, part כלל כבוד אלהים. Isaiah Hurwitz died in Tiberias about 1630.

author defends his position even against an argument brought from the Zohar he says that such a defense is not at all necessary, since "it is not his duty to answer a proof from the Zohar"<sup>1</sup>, or in other words, an argument from the Zohar in ritual matters counts for nothing. Of a similar opinion was ZEVI ASHKENASI, also called Chacham Zewi,<sup>2</sup> who in answer to the question whether it is necessary to keep up with the congregation when praying with them, and to the remark that the "Zohar of R. SIMON BEN YOCHAI" does not consider it necessary, shows that the opinion of the Zohar is rather the other way, as we can see that R. Simon ben Yochai loves the prayer of the congregation, (Zohar, Bereshith י"ט). But, he adds, even if the Zohar contradicted the Posekim we would still have to abide by the latter. For in judgments ( דין ) we have nothing to do with the Zohar, except when the Posekim disagree. Then we follow that one which the Zohar upholds.<sup>3</sup> He then quotes DAVID IBN ZOMORA,<sup>4</sup> who in

1. Responsa Gate of Ephraim ( שער אפרים ) סי' ס"ה in an answer to R. Joseph Almosnino of Bilogradio.

2. Father of Jacob Emden. Was Rabbi of the German community in Amsterdam between the years 1710 to 1714. Died 1740.

3. Responsa of Chacham Zewi, סי' ל"ו, printed in 1766. Also see Solomon Dov in his haskomo to the Sefer עמוד העבודה, where he says that his father (Zewi Ashkenasi) was vs. engaging in Kabbala

4. A Spanish exile in Cairo, 1470 to 1573. Teacher of Bezalel Ashkenasi, who is the teacher of Isaac Lurya (b. 1534.).



his Responsa<sup>1</sup> says that wherever the decision in the Kabbalistic work is different from that in the Gemara and Posekim, we are to follow the latter. But where Gemara and Posekim are silent we act according to the prescription found in the Kabbalistic works.

Not only do these ritualists give the Zohar a lower place to that of the Gemara and Posekim but they also advise against the study of it. Samson Bacharach, while believing in the genuineness of the Zohar, thought that it was too deep for his generation. It was different, he says, in the days of Moses Cordovero (who lived hardly two centuries before him) teaching his pupils in Palestine; "but in our age and especially outside of the Holy Land we will receive more reward if we abstain from the study of Kabbala than if we occupied ourselves in it."<sup>2</sup> He then adds the pious wish, "Would that we could fulfill the principles of the law and the ceremonies therein prescribed, and occupy ourselves with the study of the Talmud and its commentaries and the books of the earlier and later Posekim. We would then not need to search into the hidden things."<sup>3</sup> "For our knowledge

1. Responsa of David ibn Zamora, ד"ר דב"ר, פ"ז and פ"ח.

2. In an excerpt from his שו"ת, chap. ל"ט, found in the Responsa of his son, J. C. Bacharach, at end of Resp. 210.

3. *ibid.*

is limited and the darkness is great."<sup>1</sup> His son, YAIR CHAYIM BACHARACH (d. 1702), speaks in the same strain as his father. He distinguishes the Talmud from the Zohar and other Kabbalistic works through the characteristic that the principles of the Zohar cannot be reached by means of the reason, but through the power of exaltation.<sup>2</sup> The results thus reached, he says, are clothed in similes and metaphors because of the weakness of the intellect of man; and this clothing may be taken by the uninitiated as the body and may thus become a source of sinful thought. Therefore, "Leave them alone.....for they are of no use to these our generations."<sup>3</sup> Neither would he have Kabbalistic prayers recited. "It is better for us to pray like children, for if our prayers and supplications are sincerely directed toward God there is no use of further study."<sup>4</sup> SAMUEL EDELS (מרש"א), Rabbi at Ostrah in the beginning of the seventeenth century, is also opposed to teaching the Zohar, but from a different reason than is given by the Bacharachs. He seems to imply that the Kabbala

1. In excerpt from his Shemen la-Mo'or (שמן למאור), chap. כ"ה, found in the Responsa of his son, at end of Resp. 210.

2. In the Responsa חת יאיר, Resp. 210,...

א"א לדד מצד שכל האנושי לשרשם אבל התעו

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

is not as old as it is claimed to be, when he says "We do not know why this (esoteric) wisdom is not mentioned in any place in the Mishna, Talmud, Tosefta, Mechilta, Sifri or Sifra."<sup>1</sup> BRECH-YA SHAPIRA, a contemporary of R. Joshua (author of מאני עלומה), in the preface to his book, זרע בירך שני על התורה<sup>2</sup> shows himself opposed to the unrestricted and promiscuous study of the Kabbala. R. MEIR EISENSTADT (אש)<sup>3</sup> writes in his כתנות אור on the Thora (in Parshas Bereshith) against the unrestricted printing of the Zohar. He evidently does not wish it to reach all hands. In the middle of the eighteenth century JACOB EMDEN, also called Jacob Herschel, wrote his Matpachas Seforim, משפחת ספרים<sup>4</sup> in which he attacked the Zohar, saying that while part of it was handed down from Simon ben Yochai to his disciples most of it is not genuine. He shows the sources of many passages of the Zohar in books of the tenth and eleventh centuries, such as the Kuzari. He was the first to show that the word אשנגה, was the Spanish

1. חגיגה, Masechta, חידושי אגדות.

2. Printed in Amsterdam, 1730.

3. Died in 1744 at high old age. Was also author of פנים מאירות.

4. Printed by himself in Altona, 1768. This was attacked by R. Moses Kunitz in his book, Ben Yochai, and was later defended by Solomon Judah Rapoport (שי"ר) in his Nachalas Yehuda, printed in the year 1873 in Lemberg.

word Esnoga, meaning synagogue.<sup>1</sup> He also shows contradictions between the Zohar and the Talmud, as well as discrepancies in time.<sup>2</sup> Grammatical expressions, invented by Spanish grammarians, philosophical nomenclature, medical and astrological terms which are not found in the Talmud appear in the Zohar.<sup>3</sup> Considering most of the Zohar a forgery, he naturally gives it no place as a guide for the religious life.

Strange as it may seem, men who may be called modern have found it difficult to deny the genuineness of the Zohar, and the Kabbala in general. SOLOMON HERSCHEL, rabbi in London (1760 to Nov. 1842), expresses his joy over the fact that Heidenheim in his German translation of the prayers did not translate the Kabbalistic Piyutim. For "who is there in this our generation so clean of hands and pure of heart as to say, my heart is worthy that I should enter into the mysteries (of the Piyutim) and to translate them into another language."<sup>4</sup> By refraining from such translations he has "kept his feet from stumbling in

1. Matpachas Seforim, Book I, chap. 3.

2. *ibid.* chap. IV.

3. *ibid.* chap. VI.

4. Haskomo of Solomon Herschel in the Heidenheim Machzor for Shebuoth, p.λ, Roedelheim, 1848.



ascending the mountain of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Another modern who stands out strongly for the Zohar and all Kabbala is SOLOMON DUBNO, (1734 to 1813). The Zohar is to him equal authority with the Talmud.<sup>2</sup> He is strongly under the influence of the Kabbala. Speaking of Kalir's use of the word  $\aleph$  for "tree" instead of  $\aleph$  in the expression  $\aleph$   $\aleph$   $\aleph$ , "and on a tree he (Haman) was hanged", he refers to Kabbalistic teachings. Kalir, he says, use the word to show that Israel was not worthy to be saved by this miracle, (for  $\aleph$ =71 and the name of God by which miracles are performed has, according to the Kabbalists, seventy-two letters,  $\aleph$   $\aleph$   $\aleph$ ); still God in his mercy performed the miracle.<sup>3</sup> It is strange that while at work to establish, by clear translation the plain meaning of the Bible, he should be a strong advocate of the mystic sense behind the words of the Scriptures. Such is the power of mental inertia! Stranger still is it that the initiator of this movement, MOSES MENDELSSOHN, (1728 to 1786), should hesitate to pronounce as the Zohar a forgery. In the controversy concerning the ori-

1. Haskomo of Sol. Herschel in Heidenheim Machzor for Shebuoth.

2. Preface to Genesis in the Mendelssohn Pentateuch, p. 30, printed in Prague 1836.

3. Letter by Sol. Dubno to Wolf Heidenheim in the latter's Machzor for Shebuoth, p. V, Roedelheim 1848.

gin of vowel points and accents, MENDELSSOHN took sides against ELIAS LEVITA who said that vowel points and accents originated with the Massorites, and the fact that the Zohar mentions vowel points and accents only shows the Zohar to be a late work. MENDELSSOHN admits that the Zohar contains things that the Rabbis of the Talmud were ignorant of, such as the grammar and grammatical nomenclature which comes from CHAYYUG, still he insists that much of the Zohar is genuinely old, among which is that part in which vowels and accents are mentioned.<sup>1</sup> He admits, however, that it is generally looked upon as inferior in authority to Mishna and Gemara.

More outspoken and bolder in his advocacy of the Zohar is SOLOMON PLESSNER (born April 23, 1797 in Breslau, died in Posen, August 28, 1883). His catechism, Religionsunterricht, continually proves its statements by citations from the Zohar.<sup>2</sup> To him all the prophets were Kabbalists, and Moses was the greatest.<sup>3</sup> He introduces in the body of his work the question, which are

1. In his preface, אור לנתיבה, to his translated Pentateuch, p. 6, printed in Offenbach, 1808.

2. Religionsunterricht, pp. 13, 32, 46 (!), 47, 49, 82, 103, 111, 112, 113, 115, 134, printed in Berlin 1839.

3. ibid. introduction, p. V.

The writings that contain the higher or secret exposition of the Holy Scriptures? To which he gives the answer, The clear traces of such an esoteric science are found already in the Talmud and Midrashim; but they are principally to be seen in the Yezirah, Bahir, and especially in the Zohar.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see that down to the present century the Zohar has in many quarters kept its high position. Even those who had doubts as to its authenticity were careful in expressing them. And to-day, though in scientific circles generally considered a forgery, it holds its own among a large portion of Israel. It is still a second Bible to the Chassidic sect, and its name still casts its spell over those who live in darkness.

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1. Plessner's Religionsunterricht, p. 47.

### CHAPTER III.

#### TEACHINGS OF ZOHAR EXEMPLIFIED BY TRANSLATIONS.

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THE WORDS OF THE THORAH ARE THE CLOTHES TO THE HIDDEN,  
TRUE TEACHINGS--MEANS OF PENETRATING THE CLOTHES: GEMATRIA,  
NOTARIKON--CONCEPTIONS OF GOD: NOTHING, INCOMPREHENSIBLE, THE  
ADAM KADMON, THE DIMYON, EMANATION FROM HIM-- THE TEN SEFIROTH--  
ZOHAR MIDRASH--IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL--PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE  
SOUL.



### CHAPTER III.

#### TEACHINGS OF ZOHAR EXEMPLIFIED BY TRANSLATIONS.

The Zohar considers the accounts as told in the Pentateuch as garments to the teachings contained in those accounts. The true teaching is the body which these clothes cover.

"Woe unto the man who says that the Torah contains only simple accounts and common words. For if that were so, even in our days would we be able to write out a Law in common words which would perhaps be better than the original; or, we would only have to follow the writings of earthly lawgivers among which we could find more chosen expressions, and thus make of the earthly law a similar and perhaps better one than the Torah. But, on the contrary, the words of the Law are exalted words, and contain deep secrets..... The stories of the Pentateuch are the clothes of the Law. He who considers the clothes as the law itself will go down to destruction, and will have no fortune in the world to come. And in this sense does David pray (Psalm 119) "Open my eyes that I may behold the wondrous things of thy Law."..... There are foolish men who take the clothes for the body, but the clothes are not the body and the

soul is still greater. And so the Torah has a body and this consists of the laws. This body is clothed at times in the garments of common accounts. The foolish only look at the garments which are the accounts in the law, and they do not know more, for they do not look for that which is beneath these garments. The educated, however, do not consider the garments, but the body which is beneath the garments. The wise who are the servants of the Most High King, those who ascended the Mount Sinai, look only upon the soul, which is the true law, and in future they will be worthy to look upon the Soul of the soul of the Torah."<sup>1</sup>

"If the Torah contained only common words and accounts such as the stories of Esau, of Hagar, of Laban and Jacob, of Bileam's Ass, of Bileam and of Balak, of Zimri, and other stories, how could it be called "The Law of Truth", "The Law of the Lord is perfect," "The Testimony of the Lord is faithful", "it is purer than gold and much fine gold"? But each word in the Torah contains a higher meaning than that which appears on the surface, and each story has a broad and deep significance."<sup>2</sup>

1. Zohar III, p., 152<sup>a</sup>.

2. *ibid.* 149<sup>b</sup>.

To penetrate the outer garment and thus reach the body, the true meaning of the Law, a number of artificial methods are employed. One of these is Gematria. Words of the same numerical value are considered to be explanations of each other.

"And behold three men, (Genesis 18<sup>2</sup>).... These are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael,"<sup>1</sup> (in Hebrew these two expressions, giving the letters their numerical values, separately amount to 701).<sup>2</sup>

"Until Shiloh comes, (Genesis 49<sup>10</sup>), and this is a secret of the Lord"<sup>3</sup>, i.e. the sentence means until the Messiah comes.<sup>4</sup>

Another form of reaching the secrets of the Law is Notarikon. In this method the initials, finals or medials of words in a sentence are together taken to form a word or words.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, initials of which form the word אֵהוּה<sup>5</sup> (a name of God). With this name he made the heaven and earth. With the first two let-

1. Zohar-Sisre Thorah I, 98<sup>b</sup>.

2. אלו מיכאל, גבריאל, ורפאל = 701. והנה שלשה.

3. Zohar I, 237.

4. איהו = 358. משיח = 358.

5. אֵהוּה — אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ

ters of this name he made heaven, and with the last two he made the earth and all that is therein."<sup>1</sup>

"The heavenly point נקודה remains the primal source of all existence. Both ראש, head and בית, house are woven into the word בראשית, and contain the secret of the Godhead, which in itself is the primal source of all existence and is the world of all elements."<sup>2</sup>

"Intelligence is the son of God" (בינה = בן י"ה)<sup>3</sup>

Conceptions of God.

"The first beginning of all existence, the Ancient One, the Holy One, the Most Secret of All Secrets, the beginning of all beginning, who had no beginning, of whom nothing is known and who revealed nothing of what happened to him in the beginning of time, it is He who cannot be comprehended through our wisdom or knowledge....and because of this the Ancient One, the Holy One is called Nothing."<sup>4</sup>

"The Ancient One, the Most Secret One, separates himself and is separated from all things, and still is not separated

1. Zohar I, 251<sup>a</sup>.

2. ibid I, 15<sup>b</sup>.

3. ibid. III, 290<sup>a</sup>.

4. ibid. III, 288<sup>a</sup>.



For everything is connected with him and he is connected with everything. He is everything. In taking a form he gave existence unto all which is.....When he took a form nine lights shone forth from him. They took their light from him, and spread their rays through the ether. Like a lamp that sends its light into the air, when one seeks to know the rays in their true substance one finds the lamp only. So with the Ancient, the Holy One, He is the highest light, the Most Secret. And these lights are called his Holy Name, and therefore All is One."<sup>1</sup>

"He is the Most Ancient, Most Mysterious, Most Unknown. He takes a form in which he appears as the Most Old, the Ancient of Ancients, the Most Unknown. And through his form, he is known and still remains unknown. His garments appear white, his countenance is brilliant. He sits upon a throne of pearls. The white light of his head illumines four hundred thousand worlds. And four hundred worlds, produced from the white light of God, shall be the heritage of the righteous in the world to come (Genesis 23<sup>16</sup>). Daily about his neck rest three hundred thousand myriads of worlds, which are supported by him. Dew

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1. Zohar III, 288<sup>a</sup>.

dripping from his head awakes the dead and revivifies them. Therefore it is written, "Thy dew is a dew of light" (Isaiah 26<sup>19</sup>). This is the nourishment of the saints of the highest order. It is the manna which is prepared for the just in the world to come. It descends into the fields of the "Holy Apples" (i.e. adepts of the Kabbala). This dew is white as bdellium....And the length of his face, from the top of his head is three hundred and seventy myriads of worlds. He is called the Long Face, Macroprosopus; for thus is called the Most Ancient."<sup>1</sup>

Before He had created any form in the world, before He had produced any image, He was alone, without form, resembling nothing. And who can conceive Him as He was before the creation, since He at that time had no form?.... But after He had produced the form of the Highest Man (אדם עליון), He used this man as a chariot, מרכבה, to descend to earth. He wished to be called by that form, which is the holy name of JHVH; He wished to make himself known by his attributes, by each separate attribute, and was thus called the God of Grace, the God of Justice, the God All-powerful, the God of Hosts, and all that he is.

1. Zohar III, 228<sup>b</sup>.

For if he had not extended his rays to all his creatures, how could we have known Him? How could it have been true to say, The whole earth is full of His glory? Woe unto him who dares to compare himself to one of God's attributes, the more so if he dare compare God to mortal man. God must be conceived above all creatures and all attributes. Now, when these things are removed from Him, He has no attribute, nor image, nor figure. That which remains is like a sea, for the waters of the sea are without limit and form. But when they spread over the land, then they produce an image, דמיון, (i.e. have a definite shape, such as rivers, lakes, etc.)".<sup>1</sup>

We can know nothing of God except through this Dimyon, דמיון. This image, or sensible part of God is divided into ten manifestations, or powers called Sefiroth. Continuing the metaphor of the sea:

"The source of the waters of the sea and the fountain that separates itself from the sea to extend everywhere, are two distinct entities. Then a deep basin was formed in which empty the fountains of the sea. The sea itself is the third entity.

1. Zohar II, 42<sup>a-b</sup>.

The basin then separates itself into seven streams, like in appearance to long vessels, by which the water escapes from the sea. The source, the fountain, the sea and the seven streams together make the number ten. Now, if the Maker broke the vessels, the waters would return to their source and only the fragments of the vessels would be left, dry and without water. It is thus that the First Cause produced the ten Sefiroth. The crown, כתר, is the source whence the rays expand without limit, and from this fact is derived the name Infinite, אין סוף, to designate the First Cause. For, in that state, it has neither form, nor figure. No means exist by which it may be comprehended, no manner by which it may be known. Then it makes a small vessel for itself, (this is the letter yod ' ), which is called the source of wisdom, also Wisdom. After that a larger vessel is made, like the sea, and it is called Intelligence. But these vessels are called Wisdom and Intelligence not because of themselves, but because the Cause of them in His substance is wise and intelligent; and if He were removed from them, they would be left dry. Then the sea divided into seven streams, and thus were formed the seven precious vessels. They were called Grand-



eur, Strength, Beauty, Victory, Glory, Foundation and Royalty.

All of the Sefiroth and all worlds rest upon Foundation, **יְסוּד**.<sup>1</sup>

The Sefiroth collectively are called The Supreme Man, the First Man, **אָדָם עֶלְיוֹן, אָדָם קְדוֹן**. It is the form in which God came down, i.e. made himself known.<sup>2</sup> Simon ben Yochai thus describes him:

"The form of the Man contains all that is in the heaven and on earth, the superior beings and inferior beings. It is for this reason that the Most Ancient chose him for Himself.<sup>3</sup> No form, no world could exist without this Human Form, for it contains all things, and all that is exists only through it."<sup>4</sup>

The first and most exalted divine manifestation, the first Sefirah is the Crown **כֶּתֶר**.

"It is the principle of all principles, the secret wisdom, the Crown of all that is most exalted, the diadem of diadems."<sup>5</sup>

From that go forth two Sefiroth:

1. Zohar II, 42<sup>b</sup>.
2. See above p. 57.
3. Zohar III, 114<sup>b</sup>.
4. *ibid.* III, 114<sup>a</sup>.
5. *ibid.* III, 288<sup>b</sup>.

"There went forth and was illuminated from the Ancient Holy One both male and female. Wisdom was the father and Intelligence the mother, and through this male and female everything came into existence."<sup>1</sup>

The next three Sefiroth are Mercy, Justice or Strength, and Beauty.

"Justice and Mercy are bound together and therefore one cannot go forth without the other, and there is no justice without mercy."<sup>2</sup>

"These (Justice and Mercy) are connected by Beauty."<sup>3</sup>  
From them arise Victory and Glory.

"By Victory and Glory is meant extension, multiplication and force; for all the forces which are born in the world come from them, and for this reason these two Sefiroth are called the Hosts of the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

These are united by the Foundation.

"All things in the world return to the source, founda-

1. Zohar III, 290<sup>a</sup>.

2. *ibid.* III, 143<sup>b</sup>.

3. *ibid.* III, 141<sup>b</sup>.

4. *ibid.* III, 296<sup>a</sup>.

tion and root, from which they had sprung."<sup>1</sup>

"Therefore the Foundation is called the Lord of Hosts."<sup>2</sup>  
The last of the Sefiroth is Kingdom. Its work is to harmonize the nine other Sefiroth. Otherwise, it has no special characteristic.

"The Kingdom makes all one body. And thus God sits upon His throne, and is called by His perfect Name, His Holy Name. Blessed be His Name forever and ever."<sup>3</sup>  
These Sefiroth are the powers whereby God rules the world which emanated from Him.

"Secret are the causes of existence. They are represented by the Sefiroth which mediate between God and the World."<sup>4</sup>  
In all this diversity and separation there is an inherent unity.

"He who desires to know the science of the Holy Unity should look at the flame that arises from a brazier or burning lamp. The flame that arises is connected with the coarser substance "Coal or wick". This flame has two parts, a bright, white

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1. Zohar II, 213 .  
2. ibid. III, 296<sup>a</sup>.  
3. ibid. III, 296<sup>a</sup>.  
4. ibid. I, 23<sup>a</sup>.

flame and one black or blue. The white flame is above and rises in a straight line, while the black is below and forms a seat for the former. They are so connected that they form but one flame. The seat formed by the blue or black flame is also connected with the coarse substance which is still lower. The white light does not change, it always retains its own color; but one can distinguish a number of changes in the flame which is below. It is connected on both sides, above with the upper white flame and below with the inflammable substance. This last substance is continually absorbed by the lower flame, which in its turn mounts toward the upper light. It is thus that all returns to unity."<sup>1</sup>

With these teachings as a foundation, the Zohar explains the Biblical text Midrashically.

"And the Lord God built ( יִבְנֶה ) the rib which he had taken from Adam.' R. Simon ben Yochai said, it is written (Job 28<sup>23</sup>), 'God understandeth ( יֵדָבָר ) the way thereof and He knoweth ( יָדָע ) the place thereof.' This text contains great truths. But what is meant by the phrase 'God understandeth ( יֵדָבָר ) the

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1. Zohar I, 51<sup>a</sup>.



way thereof? Answer--'God built (בָּנָה) the rib.' This is the Oral Law, for in it is God's way as Isaiah (43<sup>16</sup>) says, 'God sets his way in the sea.' Therefore 'God understands the way thereof.' But what is meant by, 'and He knoweth (יָדָע) the place thereof?' The place of what? The place of the Written Torah which is Knowledge (דָּעָה). Knowledge and Understanding emanated from God as one. The expression, 'Lord God', is used in our text to show that what God presented to Adam was fully fitted out. The rib, (הַצֵּלָה) is the mirror without light<sup>1</sup>, (Psalm 35<sup>15</sup>), 'and in my adversity (בְּצָרָי) they rejoice and are glad.' 'The rib which he took from Adam'--is to show that the Oral Law is derived from the Written....'He built it into a woman' (בָּנָהּ) i.e. into a fire of the Lord אֵשׁ. 'And he brought her to Adam'--for He did not wish to leave it (the Oral Law) alone, but desired to connect it with the Written Law. As soon as they were connected he (Adam) had to give her food and garments and all that she needed. Hence we learn that before a daughter is married her father and mother must provide for her, but after her marriage her husband

1. אֶפְקֵרָא דְלֵא נִהְרָא --in contradistinction to the אֶפְקֵרָא נִהְרָא. The latter is the immediate recognition of God, while the former is the indirect or mediate recognition of God by the laws of Nature.

attends to her needs. First it reads, 'And God built the rib,' then father and mother had to provide for her, and later, 'And he brought her to Adam,' so that they were united and became as one, and he (Adam) gave her what she needed. 'God understands the way thereof,' i.e. father and mother should support their child; 'and He knows the place thereof,' i.e. when she is married her husband must provide for her."<sup>1</sup>

This Midrash puts a new meaning into the verse, 'and God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman and he brought her to Adam.' God through His Wisdom and Intelligence formed the Oral Law which is the most divine, out of the Written Law, and He gave it to Man that he should apply himself to it.

Again in reference to the passage from Ecclesiastes, 3<sup>21</sup>, "Who knoweth whether the spirit of man rises on high or whether the spirit of beasts descends downward," R. Abba began to lecture. "This Scriptural text has many meanings. Indeed, how many meanings are in the words of the Torah! The Torah separates itself into seventy faces, receiving seventy sides and

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1. Zohar I, 48<sup>b</sup>.

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seventy faces; and so from each word of the Torah and from everything that proceeds from each word many meanings spread out unto all sides. And from this text the Rabbis taught that when a man walks in the straight path he goes to the right and the Holy Spirit, the Most Supreme Spirit, is poured out upon him, and this spirit again seeks the upper spirits in order to come into contact with them, that it may not be separated from them. And when a man walks in the evil path, then the wicked spirit is poured down upon him from the left side, and he is unclean and others become unclean through him, according to Leviticus 11<sup>43</sup> .... And therefore is it written, Who knoweth whether the spirit of man goeth upward or downward".<sup>1</sup>

It was before<sup>2</sup> stated that the Kabbalists looked down upon the Talmudists with the same scorn and contempt that the latter manifested toward the former. This hatred of the Kabbalists for the Talmudists included also the Mishna and the Talmud, and biting sarcasm against them often appears in the Zohar.

"There are only two kinds of rocks (y<sup>l</sup>o), says the

1. Zohar I, 54<sup>a</sup>

2. See above p. 39.

Faithful Shepherd: the rock of Moses, and still another. The rock of Moses is rich in water, and needs only to be spoken to, in order to bring forth water. The other rock, however, is a sterile, hard stone, which has no springs of the waters of wisdom. This latter is called Shell, קליפה, or Mishna, משנה, and it must be struck with staff and hammer כפטיש יפוצץ סלע, before it will give forth a few drops of Halachas (הלכות ודקושות). But this is no wonder. For the rock of Moses, (the Torah), is the daughter of the King (God), and must be addressed in a soft and reasonable manner; but that other rock is the thorn of a boy slave, (ניקבא דעבד נער), and must be roughly handled. Because Moses struck his rock, the daughter of God, he was guilty of death.<sup>1</sup>

"Someone once related that sixty villages were once hatched out of one egg, and then a bird in the air let an egg fall so that the sixty villages were smashed. The meaning of this is the following: Out of the egg of the מארי משנה and the מארי מקרא there grew sixty Tractates, כרכים; then a bird in the air, the Messiah (who sits in the קן צפור<sup>2</sup>), lets fall

1. Zohar III, 279<sup>b</sup>.

2. Why קן צפור (bird's nest)? Landauer, in the Orient, 1845,



an egg so that the sixty volumes (of the Talmud) are crushed."<sup>1</sup>

"Fishes and grasshoppers do not need to have the rites of Shechita performed upon them.... So also the מארי מתיבנה do not need Shechita, but it may be said of them (Genesis 49<sup>33</sup>) 'and he died and was gathered to his people'. Just as the fishes of the sea can only live in the water, so the scholars, the מארי can only live in the Law, and if they are separated from it they immediately die.... They cannot soar upward. The man who stands above all, i.e. the מארי קבילה, rules the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air, i.e. the מארי מתניתין. For when the teachers of the Mishna study they quarrel with one another."<sup>2</sup>

"Woe unto those Rabbis who only know arguments like קל וחומר, but do not know the secrets of the Law.... Of the Messiah it is said, Zachariah 9<sup>9</sup>, 'he is a poor man riding upon an ass' (חמור). That is, he will ride upon those who occupy themselves only in קל וחומר."<sup>3</sup>

p. 542, explained קל as an equivalent of י"ה; i.e. ק=100 and ל=50, dropping the zeros, 10 and 5. י"ה. But he could not explain the word צפור. Jellinek in his Beitrage zur Gesch. der Kabb." p. 28, explains it as follows: Among the Spanish poets the soul was pictured as a bird fluttering about in the world, and at  
1. Zohar III, . / 2. ibid. III, 42<sup>a</sup>. 3/ib.III, 275<sup>b</sup>.

Ceremonial laws instituted by the rabbis are often held up to scorn by the Zohar.

"A bound person cannot free himself from the prison house'. So it is with the Israelites. They are in the fetters of the straps of the Tefillin, רצועות התפילין; the hands are bound with the רצועת יד, the head with the רצועת ראש. They cannot of themselves become free from these fetters; only one other, namely the ברא ומלכא, the Messiah, can free them from their bonds."<sup>1</sup>

There are two ways, according to the Zohar, of obtaining a knowledge of God. One of these ways is by means of direct revelation, the other by indirect recognition of God through his works.

"Moses was happy enough to recognize God by means of an inner reflection, אספקלריא נהרה, which certainly stands higher than that reflection which does not cast light, אספקלריא דלא

נהרה. God appeared to the patriarchs, who recognized God through nature, in the reflection which does not cast light, and death returning to the nest, קן. So the lap of God was rendered by the Zohar as the קן צפור.  
1. Zohar III, 2.

they saw God in His sensible manifestations; Moses on the contrary knew God in his very substance."<sup>1</sup>

The Zohar teaches the immortality of the soul.

"Rabbi Simon said and was accustomed often to repeat:

He who has attained perfection and thus the true essence of holiness, does not become a prey unto death. He is immortal, לא תליא ליה.  
בני מיתא ולא מית.<sup>2</sup>

The Zohar also teaches the pre-existence of the soul.

"The souls of men before they descended to the earth were all formed at first in heaven according to that form which they took on upon earth."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Zohar II, 23<sup>b</sup>.

2. ibid II, 174<sup>a</sup>.

3. ibid. III, 61<sup>a</sup>.