

## 5 Coronation of the Sabbath Bride: Kabbalistic Myth and the Ritual of Androgynization

Historians of religion have long noted the intricate nexus of myth and ritual: The function of ritual is to instantiate a particular myth, which in turn provides the symbolic narrative that informs and organizes the practitioner's behavior in the world. Through ritual performance, therefore, the individual inscribes the mythic belief in the spatio-temporal world. One may challenge the universal application of this nexus to different religious societies, but it is beyond question that the relationship between myth and ritual as delineated above can be applied legitimately to the history of kabbalistic speculation in which the supreme importance accorded normative halakhic practice is upheld.<sup>1</sup> Even the antinomian tendencies, latent in some early sources and actualized in the Sabbatian and Frankist heresies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are dialectically related to the nomian impulse: abrogation of the law was perceived as the ultimate means to fulfill it.<sup>2</sup> As a number of scholars have pointed out in recent years, in the literature of theosophic kabbalah the traditional commandments were seen as the principal way that the human being interacts with and is influenced by the divine.<sup>3</sup> From this vantage point, it seems to me entirely apt to use the technical theological term "sacrament" to describe the kabbalistic understanding of ritual. That is, according to the mainstream approach adopted by theosophic kabbalists, the ritual serves as the symbolic embodiment through which the divine permeates the social sphere of the practitioner at the same time that the practitioner gains phenomenal access to the realm of the divine. By participating in the rite with the proper mystical intentionality, the individual not only connects with God, but acts upon God. At the same time, however, the one who performs the rite symbolically embodies, or better signifies,

the sacred secret of the divine power operating in the world. Sacramentality thus entails the mutual empowerment of God and human, as the one is manifest through the other by virtue of the symbolizing function of the ritual.<sup>4</sup>

But the scope of theurgic efficacy is not limited to the human relationship to God; it extends to the various potencies of the Godhead. Indeed, the anthropocentric and the theocentric perspectives are not easily distinguishable in the kabbalistic explanations of the commandments. Not only is it the case that the kabbalists presume that what God does affects humanity just as what humanity does affects God, but the very imaging of the one reflects the imaging of the other. The ritualization of myth and the mythicization of ritual are interweaving patterns of mystical piety in the kabbalistic sources. Moreover, the double mirroring of humanity and divinity – the form of God is reflected in the *anthropos* and the form of the *anthropos* in God<sup>5</sup> – sheds light on the kabbalistic use of religious ritual to depict the dynamic myth of the supernal realm.

In this study, I will explore one particular mythic complex that is portrayed as an essential ritual performed not by the mystic but by the sefirotic gradations: the coronation of the Sabbath queen.<sup>6</sup> One of the most powerful images of the Sabbath in classical rabbinic sources is that of the bride or queen. In two virtually identical talmudic passages, the Sabbath is personified as the bride who is greeted by various rabbis at sunset on Friday evening.<sup>7</sup> In one midrashic passage, the Sabbath is compared parabolically to the bride who enters the bridal chamber, which is identified as the six days of creation.<sup>8</sup> According to another midrashic passage, all the six weekdays are paired as male–female couples, and the feminine Sabbath is paired with the masculine Israel. Significantly, the proof-text that is cited in that context is *zakhor et yom ha-shabbat leqaddesho*, “remember the Sabbath to sanctify it” (Exod. 20:8), for the word *leqaddesho* is read as “to betroth it.”<sup>9</sup> In another midrashic source, God and the Sabbath are compared, respectively, to the King and the Matrona.<sup>10</sup> The motif of Sabbath as a personified queen of God is enhanced in a passage in a text that is related to the ancient esoteric corpus, the *Seder Rabbah di-Bere’shit*. According to that passage, on Friday evening God takes the angelic Sabbath and places her on the throne of glory, and all the other celestial princes rejoice before the Sabbath. One can imagine here that there is something akin to the wedding celebration.<sup>11</sup> The key to this

interpretation is the image of enthronement, which often functions as a symbolic depiction of the sacred union between male and female.<sup>12</sup>

In the kabbalistic literature, these aggadic motifs are developed and expanded into an elaborate mythical drama centered around the image of the crowning of the Queen of Sabbath, which is identified more specifically with the *Shekhinah*, the last of ten divine emanations. To be sure, Israel below has a critical role to play in facilitating the ceremonial coronation above on the eve of Sabbath, particularly through liturgical recitation. In that respect, this rite should not be treated in isolation from the general theurgical principle widely adopted by the kabbalists, which is expressed in an especially succinct way in one zoharic passage wherein R. Eleazar reports having heard the following statement from R. Abba about the relationship of the feminine *Shekhinah* to the masculine *Tif'eret*: "There is no perfection, desire, or yearning of the Community of Israel for the Holy One, blessed be He, except through the souls of the righteous, for they arouse the spring of water below corresponding to that which is above. In that moment, the perfection of desire and yearning is in one union to produce fruit."<sup>13</sup> The action of the righteous below results in a seminal discharge that causes the supernal phallus to overflow and to inseminate the female attribute of the divine. Elsewhere this process is depicted explicitly in terms of orgasmic imagery: the righteous unite with the *Shekhinah* to stimulate the female waters (*mayyin nuqvin*) from below, which in turn arouse the male waters (*mayyin dukhrin*) from above.<sup>14</sup> To cast the theurgical principle in terms of the gender dynamic: the heterosexual pairing in the Godhead is facilitated by the homoerotic arousal of the phallic potency by the righteous males who correspond to the phallus.<sup>15</sup> Although this principle is clearly operative in the case of the rite of coronation, the full drama occurs in the pleroma of divine potencies.

The centrality of Sabbath in the imagination of the theosophic kabbalists has been well noted by previous scholars.<sup>16</sup> Simply put, the ultimate significance of Sabbath in kabbalistic theosophy is related to the presumption that it comprises both a feminine and a masculine aspect, typologized as the *shamor* of the eve of Sabbath and the *zakhor* of the day of Sabbath,<sup>17</sup> which is reflective of the nature of the covenant of divine unity more generally. Moses de León expresses the matter in succinct fashion: "You must know that the secret of Sabbath is the essence of faith and of the covenant, and thus

there is in it *zakhor* and *shamor*, *zakhor* for the male (*zakhar*) and *shamor* for the female (*neqevah*).<sup>18</sup> Exile is the spiritual condition of separation or the incomplete union of male and female, whereas redemption is the complete union and consummation. Insofar as redemption is portrayed in this light, Sabbath serves as a prolepsis of the eschaton. To be sure, already in classical rabbinic sources one finds the connection between Sabbath and eschatology: Sabbath is depicted as a foreshadowing of the world-to-come and the world-to-come is described as the day that is entirely Sabbath.<sup>19</sup> From the perspective of the kabbalists, however, this connection implies a fundamental change in the nature of being manifest in the divine, human, and cosmic planes. Indeed, according to the theosophic kabbalah, the basic rhythm of time itself is invested with soteriological significance: the six days of the week represent the exile in which male and female are separated and the demonic has dominion over the world, whereas the Sabbath is the moment of redemption in which the sacred coupling of male and female is realized and the letters of the Tetragrammaton (*yod he waw he*) are reunited such that the providential care over existence is entrusted solely to God. To cite but one of numerous zoharic texts that enunciate this motif: "On the weekdays the lower *Shekhinah* is clothed in those shells of death, which are from [the attribute of] judgment, but on Sabbath she is divested of them on account of the Tree of Life... At that time *yod he waw* unite with the *he*, and rest is found in relation to the *he* and all that is beneath her."<sup>20</sup>

The designation of the Sabbath as the appropriate time for the *hieros gamos* above between the king and queen provides the underlying basis for the widely attested explanation in kabbalistic literature of the talmudic dictum that Friday evening is the time for the Torah scholar to engage in physical sex and thereby fulfill his conjugal responsibility.<sup>21</sup> I cite but two of numerous sources that illustrate the point. The first example is from the secret of the Sabbath (*sod ha-shabbat*) composed by Joseph Gikatilla. In this text, the fifth of the eleven activities that Gikatilla delineates as essential for the proper observance of the Sabbath is sexual intercourse. On this matter, Gikatilla writes:

Sexual intercourse is the secret of holiness (*sod ha-qedushah*) and the multiplication of the [divine] image, and its opposite is the diminution of the image. Therefore, sexual intercourse on

Friday evenings is the time of the conjugal obligation of the scholar, “who yields his fruit in season” (Ps. 1:3),<sup>22</sup> in the secret of *zakhor* and *shamor*, and the secret of “you must keep My Sabbaths” (Exod. 31:13). Since the extra soul (*neshamah yeterah*)<sup>23</sup> is added to a person on Sabbath eve, then is the time for the sanctification of the union (*qedushat ha-hibbur*) and worthy children [shall be born] on behalf of the “eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths” (Isa. 56:4).<sup>24</sup>

The very end of this citation is an allusion to the fact that the sages, who are obligated to engage in carnal intercourse on the eve of Sabbath according to a tradition recorded in the Talmud,<sup>25</sup> are considered to be eunuchs the rest of the week while they abstain from physical sexuality, a motif that is widely attested in kabbalistic literature from the period of the Zohar (the later part of the thirteenth century) and in subsequent generations.<sup>26</sup> The ambivalent nature of Gikatilla’s remarks about carnal sexuality is indicative of a more prevalent attitude expressed by medieval kabbalists. On the one hand, holiness is linked to sexual intercourse, which is related specifically to procreation as the means to augment the divine image in the world,<sup>27</sup> but, on the other, the mystic must refrain from engaging in sex in the course of the week.<sup>28</sup> The ontic condition of the Sabbath is such that the enlightened kabbalist can partake of physical pleasures, for by so doing he theurgically assists in the sacred union of the masculine and feminine gradations in the sefirotic realm. The limited asceticism required during the week gives way to the full embrace of the carnal on the Sabbath, since on that day the corporeal is transformed from a crude materiality to a spiritual state.<sup>29</sup> Gikatilla’s point is corroborated by a second example derived from the commentary on the biblical prohibitions by Joseph of Hamadan: “Whoever keeps the Sabbath causes the unity above and the time of intercourse above, as the sages, blessed be their memory, said, the time of intercourse for the scholars is on Friday evening. Regarding he who keeps the Sabbath it is as if he unites the bridegroom, who is the King, Lord of hosts, with the bride, the Community of Israel, perfect in all perfections and comprised of all beauty, and he causes the supernal and the lower beings to be blessed.”<sup>30</sup>

The eschatological character of Sabbath is thus expressed in the ontological elevation of the material to the spiritual.<sup>31</sup> Once again

the kabbalists follow a path opened up by rabbinic exegesis by associating the Sabbath with the realm of souls, which in the medieval setting is further identified as the neo-Platonic world of ideal forms. However, the increase of the pneumatic element on the Sabbath, or, in the language of the rabbis, the “extra soul” (*neshamah yeterah*), does not result in the negation of the body and the renunciation of physical pleasure. On the contrary, the augmentation of soul on Sabbath yields the spiritualization of the corporeal, and hence fulfilling sensual needs remains an essential component in the idea of restfulness on the Sabbath,<sup>32</sup> for the latter is, according to the locution of Nahmanides, the “fount of all blessings” and the “foundation of the world.”<sup>33</sup> The aforementioned passage from Gikatilla is revealing on this score: Friday evening is the time for scholars to engage in carnal intercourse precisely because it is the moment in which Jews are endowed with the extra soul. A similar argument is made by the anonymous author of the kabbalistic treatise on sexual etiquette, the *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, in all probability composed near the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>34</sup> According to this text, the rabbinic tradition that physical sex is appropriate for the sages only on Friday evening is explained on the grounds that the Sabbath is a time of increased spirituality, the day “that is entirely cessation and repose,” the “foundation of the world,” which is “in the pattern of the world of souls.”<sup>35</sup> A similar perspective is affirmed by the fifteenth-century Italian kabbalist Judah Ḥayyat in his commentary on the anonymous *Ma‘arekhet ha-Elohut*, wherein the sin of Adam is portrayed as a reification of the feminine that results from the separation of the male and female, the mystical significance of the plucking of the fruit from the tree.<sup>36</sup> Elaborating on the kabbalistic interpretation of the primordial transgression, Ḥayyat writes,

Since intercourse is considered profane in relation to Adam after he had sinned, and it is performed through the sign of the holy covenant, it is appropriate not to engage in sexual intercourse except for the nights of Sabbath in order not to make from that which is holy something profane. On the eve of Sabbath he is in his potency and intercourse is then holy, for the days of the week, wherein the shells surround them below, are completed and finished on the day of Sabbath. This is the secret of [the tradition that] the time for scholars to fulfill their marital obligation is on the eve of Sabbath.<sup>37</sup>

Ḥayyat thus explicitly advocates a qualified asceticism as the ideal of pietistic behavior. On account of Adam's sin, which transformed sexuality from a sacred to a profane act, it is necessary to abstain from carnal intercourse during the days of the week. By contrast, physical sex is permissible, indeed obligatory, on the Sabbath, for that day is one in which the profane itself is sanctified and thereby elevated to a higher ontic status. This metamorphosis must also be seen in terms of gender inasmuch as the kabbalists widely affirmed the standard hierarchy in medieval European culture whereby the lower (physical) entity was viewed as female and the upper (spiritual) as masculine.<sup>38</sup> In short, the feminine body is valenced as masculine on the Sabbath, which is another way of articulating the view that Sabbath is a prolepsis of the redemption, a state characterized by the substitution of the ethereal/angelic body for the coarse physical/human body. More specifically, the *Shekhinah*, the last of the ten sefirotic emanations, is the focus of this ontic transformation. In the course of the week the fulfillment of religious ritual, and particularly prayer, transforms the *Shekhinah* from a state of diminution (*qatnut*) to augmentation (*gadlut*), a transformation that signifies the ontic transition from a state of exile to one of redemption. According to the imagery employed in one zoharic context to depict this transition, the female virgin without breasts becomes the voluptuous bride prepared to unite with her masculine consort.<sup>39</sup> But it is the Sabbath that truly anticipates the eschatological overcoming of time and the transposition of the physical order.

That this metamorphosis assumes gender characteristics as well may be seen, for example, from the following passage that describes the conjunction of *Malkhut* ("kingdom") and the three Patriarchs (symbolic of the three sides of the sefirotic edifice or the fourth, fifth, and sixth emanations, *Ḥesed* ["lovingkindness"], *Din* ["judgment"], and *Raḥamim* ["mercy"]), which results in the elevation of the *Shekhinah* from the lower world of the feminine (*alma de-nuqba; olam ha-neqevah*) to *Binah* ("understanding"), the supernal world of the masculine (*alma di-dekhura; olam ha-zakhar*):<sup>40</sup> "Come and see: The holy kingdom (*malkhuta qaddisha*) does not receive the holy and perfect kingdom until she is joined to the patriarchs, and when she is joined to the patriarchs a perfect edifice is constructed from the supernal world, which is the world of the masculine."<sup>41</sup> The gender transformation is described as well by the zoharic

authorship in terms of the decomposition of the word *shabbat* into *shin* and *bat*. The *shin*, which symbolically represents the masculine, for its three branches correspond to the three Patriarchs, is united with the *bat*, the daughter or the *Shekhinah*.<sup>42</sup> The union of the *shin* and the *bat*, which creates both the linguistic and the ontological reality of the Sabbath,<sup>43</sup> transforms the latter. Alternatively expressed, this unity signifies the three aspects of Sabbath: the *bat*, which corresponds to the *Shekhinah* or the “night of Sabbath” (*leil shabbat*), unites with the *shin*, which corresponds to *Yesod* or the “day of Sabbath” (*yom shabbat*),<sup>44</sup> and as a result they are elevated and reintegrated in *Binah*, which corresponds to the “great Sabbath” (*shabbat ha-gadol*)<sup>45</sup> or the “supernal Sabbath” (*shabbat ila'ah*).<sup>46</sup> The ultimate consequence of the constitution of the fourfold chariot<sup>47</sup> through the conjunction of the *bat* and the *shin* is the assimilation of the feminine into the masculine, which is portrayed as the ascension of the daughter into the higher aspects of the Godhead.

The point is implied in Zohar 2:204a.<sup>48</sup> The six days of the week are said to correspond to the “other” days that exist within the “holy circle” and are bound to the “holy point.” Those who are holy during the week, which I assume refers to those who abstain from engaging in sexual acts with their wives,<sup>49</sup> cause the six weekdays to be united with the six inner days, which are united with the central point. During the six days the point is hidden, but on the Sabbath the point ascends and is crowned and united above so that everything is concealed within it. The transition from the state of occultation to the ascent and coronation of the point symbolizes the gender transformation of the latter, which corresponds to the *Shekhinah*. The process is related in slightly different terms in the continuation of the passage:

When the point ascends everything is hidden, and she ascends. When she ascends, she is called *shabbat*. What is *shabbat*? The secret of the matter: When that point ascends and the light shines, she is crowned by the Patriachs.<sup>50</sup> When she is crowned by the Patriachs, she is joined and united with them to become one, and she is called *shabbat*. *Shabbat: shin bat*. The secret of the three Patriachs that are united with the only daughter, and she is crowned by them, and they are one in the world-to-come. Everything is one, and this is *shin bat* so that everything will be one.<sup>51</sup>

Sabbath is depicted in the above passage, to use a technical term of Jungian psychology, as the “quaternity,” for the feminine *Shekhinah* is united with the three Patriarchs. In other passages in zoharic and related literature, these attributes are identified as the four legs of the chariot<sup>52</sup> or as the fourfold chariot.<sup>53</sup> The ascension of the point and its coronation signify the restoration of the *Shekhinah* to *Binah*, which is described as the “palace for the supernal point,” that is, the womb that contains the semen of *Hokhmah*. The attribute of *Binah*, the divine mother, is thus assigned the function of containing the supernal point of *Hokhmah*, the father, and the lower point of *Shekhinah*, the daughter. From a symbolic perspective, then, the reintegration of daughter and mother approximates the union of father and mother, which in effect signals the masculinization of the lower point. The gender transformation that eventuates from this reunion is the mystical secret of Sabbath, which anticipates the complete redemption of the world-to-come.

The image of the point assumes a dual symbolic connotation. On the one hand, the point clearly has masculine, indeed phallic, significance inasmuch as it symbolizes the attribute of *Hokhmah*, which deposits its seminal discharge into the receptacle of *Binah*.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the point has a feminine connotation inasmuch as it symbolizes the *Shekhinah*, which is depicted as the female in relation to the three Patriarchs. The doubling of the point is thus an alternative formulation of the doctrine of the twofold *Hokhmah*, which is widely affirmed in kabbalistic literature.<sup>55</sup> The androgynous nature of the image of the point as it relates specifically to the Sabbath is emphasized by Moses de León:

Thus you can know what is written, “You shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy for you. He who profanes it shall be put to death” (Exod. 31:14). This is the secret of the point, for she inherits from the point of thought, which is the supernal point, and from there the entities emanate in their mystery until the end of thought, which is the final point, the secret of the holy covenant, and she stands amongst her hosts in the secret of the midpoint, which is the beginning of the edifice, within the circle. For the circle does not revolve on its axis except through the midpoint, which is in the space of the circle (*ḥalal ha-iggul*) ... According to this mystery it says, “He who profanes (*meḥalaleha*) it shall be put to

death,” the one who enters the space of the point of the edifice to uproot the thing from all of its emendations and from all of its matters shall be put to death.<sup>56</sup>

According to this text, the sin of desecrating the Sabbath is interpreted symbolically as entering into the space of the midpoint of the circle, which corresponds to the *Shekhinah*.<sup>57</sup> The application of the symbol of the point to the *Shekhinah* is related to the fact that this attribute receives the flux of emanation from the supernal point or the attribute of *Hokhmah*. Hence, the *Shekhinah*, which is the lower form of wisdom, is characterized by the very symbol that is associated with the upper form of wisdom.<sup>58</sup> I would suggest, moreover, that implicit here is a presumption regarding the gender transformation of the *Shekhinah*.<sup>59</sup> To put the matter concretely, the symbolization of the *Shekhinah* as the point in the center of the circle signifies the aspect of the female genitalia that is anatomically homologous to the penis of the male, which is associated with the vagina or the uterus.<sup>60</sup> This, I surmise, is the implication of the designation of the midpoint of the circle as the “secret of the holy covenant,” *sod berit ha-qodesh*.<sup>61</sup> That is, the term “holy covenant,” which generally applies to the phallus, is assigned to that part of the female anatomy that corresponds to the *membrum virile*.<sup>62</sup> Support for this interpretation is found in the reworking of this motif in another work of Moses de León:

The secret of the Sabbath is the lower point ... and all the lower entities sit beneath this one point, which is the final point. Indeed, the foundation stone is that from which the world is established, and it is the midpoint of all the seventy nations and she stands in the middle ... Just as King Solomon, the secret of the median line, stands in the middle between the upper waters and the lower waters, so the secret of the lower point stands in the middle. Thus, she stands in the middle and revolves until she ascends in holiness, and the seventy thrones stand surrounding this point that is in the middle ... There is no circle without the beginning of this point that is in the middle ... When everything is in the surrounding circle and the point is in the middle, which is the space of the circle, the one who comes to touch the space of the circle, which is in the middle and which is called the “Sabbath,” is deserving of the punishment of death.<sup>63</sup>

The halakhic category of desecration of the Sabbath (*ḥilul shabbat*) is thus interpreted symbolically as the inappropriate touching of the midpoint, the space (*ḥalal*) of the circle, an act that has obvious erotic overtones.<sup>64</sup>

The complex gender valence of the symbol of the point is underscored in another zoharic passage wherein the *Shekhinah* is depicted in terms of the older mythical idea of the celestial beast (*ḥayyah*) upon whose forehead is inscribed the name “Israel” and whose function it is to lead the celestial choir in reciting prayers before the enthroned glory.<sup>65</sup>

This beast is aroused and she diminishes herself on account of the love of song. How does she diminish herself? On account of the love of song she diminishes herself little by little until she is made into a single point. When she diminishes herself through song, it is written, “A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman” (Exod. 2:1). “A Levite woman” – verily from the left side. How does he grab hold of her? Out of love he stretches out his left hand beneath her head. If you say, since she is a single point, how can he grab hold of a small point? But with respect to that which is above whatever is a small thing is praiseworthy, superior, and augmented in the supernal augmentation. Immediately the high priest arouses her, grabs hold of her, and embraces her. Had she been large he could not have held on to her at all. However, since she diminished herself and she is a single point, they grab hold of her and they lift her up above. When they elevate her and she sits between these two sides, the pillar that stands in the middle is united with her in the passion of kisses and in the love of one union. Concerning this [it is written] “Then Jacob kissed Rachel” (Gen. 29:11), through the passion of kisses they are conjoined one to another without separation until she receives the soul of delights as is appropriate.<sup>66</sup>

This passage reveals the esoteric significance of the attribution of the point to the feminine. The point is symbolic of condensation or concentration, which are aspects of the attribute of judgment associated with the female potency.<sup>67</sup> The compression of the feminine into a point, moreover, is presented as the necessary condition

for the union of the male and female: had the feminine been enlarged she could not have been embraced and elevated to unite with the masculine, which is portrayed as the “pillar that stands in the middle.” The conjunction of male and female, related by the biblical image of Jacob kissing Rachel, results in the feminine receiving the soul of delights, which denotes her reception of a higher (masculine) ontic status, presumably from *Binah*, the treasure of all souls in the divine pleroma. The diminution of the feminine into a point is thus valorized as a positive act insofar as it facilitates the heterosexual union within the divine.<sup>68</sup> As a result of that union, however, the point of the feminine is integrated into the masculine, a process that is completed when the lower feminine is restored to her source in the upper feminine, which is designated in zoharic and related kabbalistic literature as the world of the masculine. On account of the transmutation of the feminine into the masculine, it is appropriate to attribute the image of the point, which is related to the phallic aspect of the upper *Ḥokhmah*, to the lower *Ḥokhmah*. It is precisely this symbolic intent as well that underlies the zoharic attribution of the point to the *Shekhinah* in her manifestation as the *bat* that combines with the *shin* to constitute the *shabbat*.

The elevation of the *Shekhinah* to *Binah*, the mythic drama elicited by the rituals of Sabbath, typifies the symbolic intent of the eschatological moment. What is attained in the eschaton is a restoration of the original condition of the world before the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Both the beginning of creation and the end of redemption are homologized as manifestations of the Sabbath. The Sabbath sacramentally commemorates the beginning that anticipates the end and the end that retrieves the beginning.<sup>69</sup> The point is articulated lucidly in the following remark of Ḥayyim Vital, included in the Lurianic commentaries on passages from the Zohar edited by his son, Samuel:

Initially, before [Adam] sinned, the union of *Ze‘eir Anpin* and his *Nuqba* was above in the bosom of *Abba* and *Imma* and in their palace, for the world was in the secret of the holiness of Sabbath. Therefore, at that time the soul of the first Adam was from *Ze‘eir Anpin*, which at that time was in the aspect of *Binah*, and from there was the soul. And *Malkhut* was in the secret of *Ze‘eir Anpin* and from there was the spirit of Adam.

Consequently, the soul (*neshamah*) was masculine from *Ze'eir Anpin* and the spirit (*ruah*) feminine from *Malkhut*. However, after Adam sinned the worlds descended from their gradations and they were in the aspect of the weekdays, and *Malkhut* descended to the place of creation whence derived the soul (*nefesh*) of Adam at that time. Now his soul (*nefesh*) is from *Malkhut*, which has descended to the place wherein was the creation, and his spirit (*ruah*) is from *Ze'eir Anpin*, which has descended to the place wherein was *Malkhut*, and his soul (*neshamah*) is from *Binah*, which has descended to the place wherein was *Ze'eir Anpin*. Thus it follows that the soul (*neshamah*) is from *Binah*, the spirit (*ruah*) from *Ze'eir Anpin*, and his soul (*nefesh*) from *Malkhut* ... Before he sinned the worlds were superior: His soul (*neshamah*) was from *Ze'eir Anpin*, which was then in the place of *Binah*, and his spirit (*ruah*) from his *Nuqba*, which was then in the place of *Ze'eir Anpin*.<sup>70</sup>

Before the transgression of Adam and Eve, the ontic condition of reality was such that the union of the lower masculine and feminine potencies, referred to as *Ze'eir Anpin* and *Nuqba*, was realized in the place wherein the upper masculine and feminine potencies, *Abba* and *Imma*, are united. In this situation, the world was in the state of the holiness of Sabbath. Both aspects of Adam's soul derived from a masculine gradation, for the source of the soul (*neshamah*) was *Ze'eir Anpin*, which was on the level of *Binah*, and that of the spirit (*ruah*) was *Malkhut*, which was on the level of *Ze'eir Anpin*. As a result of the sin, however, the world was lowered from the sacredness of Sabbath to the profanity of the six weekdays. In this diminished state, the soul (*nefesh*) derived from *Malkhut*, which descended to the level of creation beneath the world of emanation, the spirit (*ruah*) from *Ze'eir Anpin*, which descended to the level of *Malkhut*, and the soul (*neshamah*) from *Binah*, which descended to the level of *Ze'eir Anpin*. The redemption will be a restoration of the original situation before the transgressive behavior of Adam and Eve and hence, the ontic status of the soul will be elevated from the feminine to the masculine.<sup>71</sup>

That the redemptive state entails the masculinization of the feminine is underscored in an interpretation attributed to Isaac Luria of a different passage in the Zohar regarding the three

meals of Sabbath, which are called the “meals of faith,” *se‘udatei di-meheimanuta*.<sup>72</sup> It is evident that Luria’s reading of this text is informed by the other zoharic passage that I expounded above.<sup>73</sup> After delineating the correspondences of the three meals to three personae (*partsufim*) of the divine (the Friday night meal to the *Haqal Tappuḥin Qaddishin*, the Saturday afternoon meal to *Atika Qaddisha*, and the Saturday evening meal to *Ze‘eir Anpin*), Luria comments “The matter is that Sabbath is the secret of the conjunction (*hitdabbequt*) of the *bat* and *shin*, which consists of the three Patriachs.”<sup>74</sup> Luria proceeds to explain this process of elevation of the *Shekhinah* in terms of the technical details of the theosophic structure as it applies to the different temporal moments of the Sabbath reflected in the respective meals. For my purposes, Luria’s comments regarding the third meal are the most interesting and relevant to the question of the eschatological ideal and gender relationships. I will cite a rather lengthy section of the passage given its central importance to my argument:

The third meal is the secret of the elevation of *Ze‘eir Anpin* entirely within the supernal *Abba* and *Imma*, the last three [*sefirot*] within him in the last three in them, and the three patriachs in him in the three patriachs in them, and three forms of consciousness (*moḥot*) in him in the three forms of consciousness in them. This is called the “property without boundaries” (*nahalah beli metsarim*),<sup>75</sup> for the shell has no dominion there since it is entirely contained in the supernal *Abba* and *Imma*, and nothing of it remains below like the first order of emanation. When he ascends and he will be contained entirely in *Abba* and *Imma*, he is near the supernal forehead in the secret of the first three [entities] in *Atiqa*, and this is the time of favor (*et ratson*). This ascent is not attained by the bride but only by the bridegroom. Therefore it is called the meal of *Ze‘eir Anpin*. We pray that the bride, too, will return to this level, and this is [the meaning of] “As for me, may my prayer come to You, O Lord, at a favorable moment” (Ps. 69:14). It is known already that she is called “prayer” and “moment,” and the secret of “As for me” (*wa-ani*) is to join *ani* [the feminine] and the *waw* [the masculine]. Therefore, during the afternoon service (*minḥah*) of Sabbath we read from the Torah scroll, to conjoin her with her

husband, which is the Written Torah ... Since *Ze'eir Anpin* is contained entirely within *Abba* and *Imma*, the judgments in *Ze'eir Anpin* are nullified, even though it is their [appropriate] time because the supernal forehead gazes upon him as he ascends there close to him. All the worlds are quiet and in peace for the supernal forehead sits upon the throne of the rivers of fire, to subdue them ... Thus we do not say *qiddush* at all for she is very hidden. There is the place of eating but not drinking ... During the time of the third meal the judgments are not discerned at all and everything is complete mercy. Therefore, Moses departed at this time, and not during the morning, to indicate that he ascended in the secret of simple mercy. Indeed, Moses, Joseph, and David had to depart on Sabbath for the sake of the three [forces] remaining in *Malkhut*, to elevate them above together with her husband.<sup>76</sup>

What is implied in this relatively early Lurianic text is the view of redemption as the elevation and assimilation of the feminine into the masculine. This process is depicted primarily as the reintegration of the daughter (accompanied by the son) into the mother. That redemption is linked essentially to the elevation of *Malkhut* to *Binah* is a zoharic motif expanded in the Lurianic sources. This fundamental principle of kabbalistic symbology is articulated clearly by Vital in the following passage describing the appropriate intention that the worshiper should have at the point of the liturgy when the oneness of God is proclaimed through the recitation of Deuteronomy 6:4:

We are in the supernal pairing of *Abba* and *Imma*, and our intention now is to elevate the female waters (*mayyin nuqvin*) to them from their offspring, which are *Ze'eir* and *Nuqba*, and also the souls of the righteous, and all of these need to elevate the female to the supernal mother. Thus the verse says, "Ascribe might to God, whose majesty is over Israel" (Ps. 68:35). The explanation of this is that God, blessed be He, as it were, needs help, support, and strength from the actions of Israel below. *Malkhut* is called the "fallen booth of David" (Amos 9:11), for on account of our sins and through our evil actions she has fallen. When she desires to ascend, it must be by means of our

merits and good actions, for our sins cause her to fall, as it were, and our merits elevate her. Thus, it is not possible for her to ascend now if there are not completely righteous men amongst us whose holy and pure souls have the power to elevate her to the place of the mother ... For this reason the exile continues and it is prolonged, for there is none amongst us who can rise to this level. If there were amongst us someone who could elevate his soul, he would also elevate *Malkhut* and the union would be accomplished properly, and the time of redemption would be expedited.<sup>77</sup>

The righteous below have the power to elevate the *Shekhinah* by becoming the female waters that arouse the male waters above, which results in the union of the male and female.<sup>78</sup> Vital emphasizes that, in the present state, this process is partially and temporally enacted through the simulated death associated with the liturgical recitation of the supplication prayer.<sup>79</sup> In this state, moreover, there is a reversal of the gender hierarchy: the exile is marked by the domination of woman by man, portrayed in the physical stance of the man being on top of the woman, but redemption is characterized by the female being on top of the male, for the woman has assumed the status of the man, that is, the feminine is transposed from that which is encompassed to that which encompasses. The eschatological transposition of the female into the male is often expressed in terms of the verse “a woman shall encircle a man” (Jer. 31:21).<sup>80</sup> The application of this verse to the condition of the eschaton is already established in a statement attributed to Samuel bar Nahmani. In that context, the male metaphorically represents God and the female the Jewish people. The present historical period is marked by the male surrounding the female, for God must cause Israel to repent in order to fulfill his will, but in the future the female shall surround the male, which signifies that Israel will fulfill God’s will without any prompting from above.<sup>81</sup> The kabbalists clearly built upon this midrashic reading, but they shifted the focus from an axiological to an ontological perspective. That is, according to the kabbalistic interpretation, on a simple level, the gender dimorphism signifies the hierarchical relationship that pertains between God and the Jews, but on a deeper level it represents the binary nature of the divine. The surrounding of the one attribute by the other denotes the condition of being as

such: in the present historical circumstance, the male surrounds the female, for the active principle of the masculine dominates the passive feminine; however, in the messianic future, the female will surround the male, which betokens the elevation of the feminine to a higher ontic status. Given the prevailing androcentrism in the literature of the kabbalists, this elevation does not entail a transvaluation of the gender hierarchy such that the female is accorded a loftier position than the male. On the contrary, the androcentric position is preserved intact inasmuch as the image of the female surrounding the male conveys the idea that the feminine is restored to the masculine. This ontic restoration is related specifically to the symbol of the crown as is made explicit in an interpretation of another zoharic text written by Luria. Reflecting on the sixth day of creation, which is linked exegetically to the phrase “is heard” (*nishma*) in the verse, “The song of the turtledove is heard in our land” (Song of Songs 2:12), Luria comments:

The sixth day is the holy phallus (*berit qodesh*), for after the holy seed is formed in the two testicles, as the verse says, “The song of the turtledove,” the semen goes out by way to the holy phallus to the point of Zion. Insofar as hearing (*shemi’ah*) is related to *Malkhut*, the sixth day is called [by the expression] “is heard,” and it is contained within *Malkhut*. It is called by her name to indicate that she governs ... and she ascends to the Infinite. This is from the side of *asiyyah*, the mother, for from her side the feminine rules over the masculine in the secret of the “crown of her husband” (Prov. 12:4) and in the secret of the [letters] *he* and *yod* from the [name] *elohim*, in the secret of the *yod*, the *dalet* over the *waw*, in the secret of the world-to-come. This alludes to the fact that Adam, who was created on that [day], would in the future place *asiyyah* [doing] before *shemi’ah* [hearing], to ascend in the secret of the world-to-come until the Infinite. Thus, the mentioning of [the word] *nishma* in *Yesod* alludes to the strengthening of *Malkhut* and her elevation above to the place whence she was hewn, until the point that *Binah* precedes *Malkhut* from below to above. “In our land,” this is the day of Sabbath, which is from the land of the living, the world-to-come, the world of souls, the world of comforts. On the sixth day *Malkhut* ascended to draw down the supernal light from all

the emanations and to bring it down to Adam so that his soul would be comprised of all the emanations from the beginning of the gradations until their end ... On the Sabbath there is the supernal union and *Tif'eret* is coupled with *Malkhut*. Had Adam not sinned, the world would have been quiet and peaceful, without Satan and without evil infliction. The supernal union would have been face-to-face, but he caused the sin with regard to the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>82</sup>

The Sabbath is thus characterized in terms of the heterosexual union in the divine realm between *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*, a union that is facilitated by human activity below. Moreover, we should assume that this face-to-face union informs us about the texture of the redemption insofar as the Sabbath is identified (following earlier rabbinic sources) as the pattern of the world-to-come or the world of souls. One should not, however, ignore Luria's remarks about the sixth day, which in fact hold the key to understanding the sacralization of the heterosexuality affirmed in the Sabbath. The sixth day alone is correlated with the world-to-come, but in that context, the nature of the redemption is depicted as the feminine ruling over the masculine, an idea articulated in terms of the biblical verse "a capable wife is a crown for her husband" (Prov. 12:4), and not as the face-to-face union of man and woman. To be sure, even the sixth day is described in heterosexual terms, specifically as the emission of the semen from the holy phallus, which corresponds to *Yesod*. However, Luria insists that what is distinctive about the sixth day is that the semen is contained in *Malkhut* in the characteristic of hearing. By contrast, the elevation of *Malkhut* to *Binah*, the daughter to the mother, results in the doing (*asiyyah*) taking precedence over the hearing (*shemi'ah*). This is obviously an allusion to the biblical tradition that the Israelites responded to the declamation at Sinai of the record of the covenant on the part of Moses with the enthusiastic remark, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and obey" (Exod. 24:7). The allusion to the Sinaitic theophany here is not insignificant; on the contrary, the status of existence at that moment indicates something about the nature of the world-to-come attained on the sixth day. That is, just as at Sinai the Israelites were sexually pure, having abstained from intercourse for three days before the epiphany of the divine glory upon the

mountain (cf. Exod. 19:14–15), so the nature of the sixth day of creation is marked by sexual abstinence.

This state is graphically depicted as the ascent of *Malkhut* and the consequent dominance of the *dalet* (the feminine) over the *waw* (the masculine). Emission of semen from the (phallic) *Yesod* is paired with the ascent of (the feminine) *Malkhut*, for both allude to the same process, albeit from opposite ends of the spectrum. The ascent of the feminine to the position of the crown is an alternative way of expressing the creative impulse of the divine represented by the image of the phallus discharging semen.<sup>83</sup> The ascetical implications of the former mirror the erotic dimensions of the latter.<sup>84</sup> In other words, the domination of the feminine is the precondition for the ascetic transvaluation of eros in the eschaton. Luria's thinking on this matter betrays the influence of the following zoharic passage from the section called *Ta ḥazei*:<sup>85</sup>

In the future, which is the end of days, in the sixth day, which is the sixth millennium, the Messiah will come ... Even though the portion of the Community of Israel is on the fourth day, she is alluded to on the sixth day in order to be proximate to her husband who is called *Tsaddiq*, the day of Sabbath, in order to prepare the table for him. Thus it is written, "For the Lord has created something new on earth, a woman shall encircle a man" (Jer. 31:21). This is in the time of the Messiah, which is the sixth day, and thus it is written "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31). Why [does Scripture] add here a [letter] *he* [in the word] *ha-shishi* in contrast to all the other days? In every place the *he* refers to the Community of Israel, which comes to unite with her husband, the day of Sabbath. When her husband comes to her, he raises her from the dust.<sup>86</sup>

The eschatological condition is such that the created order of the weekdays, which are symbolically correlated with the divine potencies, is changed: the *Shekhinah*, which technically corresponds to the fourth day, is put in the position of the sixth day so that she may unite with her masculine consort, the day of Sabbath. The relationship of *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* is linked exegetically to the verse that underscores the female encompassing the male, *neqevah tesovev*

*gaver* (Jer. 31:21). The messianic future is marked by the reunification of the feminine and masculine potencies of the divine. The sexual pairing results in the elevation of the feminine from her exilic state of degradation and humiliation, metaphorically depicted as the husband, the day of Sabbath, lifting up the Community of Israel, one of the standard names for the *Shekhinah*, from the dust. In that redemptive state, moreover, the gender hierarchy is reversed, for the lower and weaker female surrounds the higher and more powerful male. The image of surrounding clearly conveys the symbol of the crown. According to a theme repeated in any number of kabbalistic texts, the word *aṭarah*, which is one of the standard names attributed to the *Shekhinah*, connotes the sense of surrounding or encompassing. But it is precisely such a connotation that underlies as well the application of the term *aṭarah* to the corona of the male organ. Here I cite two texts that illustrate the point. The first example is taken from the anonymous *Sefer ha-Shem*:

[The term] *aṭarah* is [related to the words] “encompassing” (*heqqef*) and “surrounding” (*sibbuv*), as it says, “O Lord, You encompass him (*ta’ferennu*) with favor like a shield” (Ps. 5:13). The *aṭarah* encircles the head as well, and thus she encircles everything that emanates from her, and she also rises to the “head of Your true word” (ibid. 119:160) through the power of the crown (*keter*) and of the mercy (*ḥesed*) that is within her. The corona of circumcision (*aṭeret ha-milah*) in the arc of the penis alludes to this *aṭarah*, and in the arc is the form of a *waw* and in the corona the form of a *yod*,<sup>87</sup> the “glorious crown” (*aṭeret tif’eret*).<sup>88</sup>

The second illustration is taken from one of the collections teachings attributed to Ḥayyim Vital:

The point of the feminine in the end of the ten [points] is itself related to *Yesod*, the aspect of the seventh point in relation to him, the crown on the head of the righteous, which is *Yesod* ... for this point was in the aspect of *Keter* that is within her. Therefore, it is called *aṭarah*, for [the words] *keter* and *aṭarah* have the same meaning, for *aṭarah* has the connotation of surrounding (*sibbuv*), as [in the verse] “[Saul and his men] were trying to

encircle (*oṭrim*) David and his men” (1 Sam. 23:26), and *keter* is from the expression “[For the villain] hedges in (*makhtir*) the just man” (Hab. 1:4), and from the expression “crown” (*koteret*), for *Keter* encompasses the four brains in the secret of the skull, and similarly the *Aṭarah* encompasses the head of *Yesod* in the secret of “the crowns are on the heads of the righteous.” It follows that the crown of the phallus (*aṭeret yesod*) is itself the point of *Malkhut* in the aspect of the crown (*keter*) that is within her.<sup>89</sup>

We may assume that such symbolism is implicit in the aforementioned description of the messianic era from the zoharic corpus. The image of the female crowning the male portends the reversal of gender roles to be attained in the eschatological future. The crowning, however, betrays the deeper ontological significance of this reversal: the female is transformed into the corona of the phallus and thereby restored to the male. Needless to say, I am not arguing that every single occurrence of the term *aṭarah* in kabbalistic literature should be interpreted as a reference to the corona of the phallus. What I have suggested is that the fact that the term *aṭarah* signifies both the crown worn on the head and the penile corona allows for the philological convergence of the two meanings such that references to the former may imply the latter, a claim that is supported by a plethora of texts, and not by a psychoanalytic propensity applied anachronistically to the kabbalistic sources.<sup>90</sup> In this context, I will mention one passage from Moses Cordovero that expresses succinctly the interpretative stance adopted by a variety of kabbalists:

The [attribute of] *Malkhut* is called *aṭarah*. She is not called this except when she ascends to *Keter*, and there she is a crown on the head of her husband, the glorious crown (*aṭeret tif'eret*). Thus she is a crown on the head of every righteous person, and she is the crown on the Torah scroll.<sup>91</sup>

It would appear that the phallic interpretation of the crown is not embraced by Cordovero in this context,<sup>92</sup> even though it is present in the sources from *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* that served as the textual basis for his remark.<sup>93</sup> However, Cordovero himself refers the reader in the continuation of the above passage to

a discussion of the letter *zayin* in *Sha'ar ha-Otiyyot*, the chapter that deals exclusively with the mystical significance of the letters. From that context, it is abundantly clear that the *aṭarah* symbolically refers to the corona of the male organ. To cite the relevant part of the passage:

There are those who explain that the *zayin* is *Yesod*, and it is the secret of the covenant (*sod ha-berit*) and the secret of Sabbath (*sod ha-shabbat*), and just as Sabbath is the crown of the six weekdays, so in the *zayin* there is a crown on the *waw*, and this crown is the corona of the phallus (*aṭarah sheba-verit*) ... When [*Malkhut*] ascends to the head of every righteous man, she is the crown on the head of every righteous man. The intention is that the garment of the righteous in the world-to-come is from the side of *Malkhut* ... Indeed, this is from the side of *Malkhut* when she is below, exerting dominion in this world, but when she ascends above, from the side of *Binah* ... she is a crown on the head of the righteous one who is the foundation of the world (*tsaddiq yesod olam*). This is [the import of the rabbinic dictum] “In the world-to-come there is no eating etc., but the righteous are sitting and their crowns are on their heads,”<sup>94</sup> for the world-to-come is *Binah* ... Since the crown is on the head of the righteous man, the *yod* is on top of the *waw*, and this is the *zayin* ... Moreover, there is a crown on the top of the Torah scroll ... and this refers to her ascent by way of the gradations to *Ḥokhmah*, which is above, and this is the “crown of her husband” (Prov. 12:4). Then she is a *yod* on top of the *waw*, and this is the *zayin* ... Sometimes this *yod* sits on the head of the three Patriarchs and three crownlets (*ziyyunin*)<sup>95</sup> are made on the *shin*, and similarly with respect to *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*.<sup>96</sup>

In this passage, Cordovero articulates one of the fundamental ideas that has informed the eschatological teaching of theosophic kabbalists. The redeemed state is marked by the *Shekhinah* rising to the status of the crown, which is depicted by several distinct images, the crown on the head of the righteous, the crown of the husband, the crown on the Torah scroll, and the corona of the *membrum virile*. The ascent of the *Shekhinah* transforms her gender as she is reintegrated into the masculine.<sup>97</sup> More specifically, the feminine *Shekhinah* is transposed and assimilated into the male

organ. This transposition is related orthographically to the fact that the *Shekhinah* is depicted as the *yod* that sits atop the *waw* to form the *zayin*.<sup>98</sup> The completion of Sabbath, which is represented by the *zayin*, the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet whose numerical value is seven, is realized through the union of the *yod* and the *waw*. This orthography is an alternative way of expressing the idea that the *Shekhinah* is restored to the phallus (symbolized by the *waw*) in the form of the sign of the covenant (the *yod*). As I have argued in a number of studies, this restoration constitutes the ultimate redemption inasmuch as the gender binary is overcome and the unity of the divine is fully consummated. Significantly, Cordovero associates the same process with the elevation of the *Shekhinah* above the three central *sefirot* represented by the biblical Patriarchs. In her capacity as the crown of the Patriarchs, the *Shekhinah* is the *yod* that dwells upon the three-pronged *shin* in the form of the ornamental crownlets. In a passage from his massive zoharic commentary, *Or Yaqar*, Cordovero elaborates on this point in his reflections on the expression *aṭeret zahav gedolah*, “magnificent crown of gold,” in Esther 8:15:

Further on it is explained that [the crown] is called the angel of the Lord (*mal'akh yhw*h), and it is known that this refers to *Malkhut*. But this is problematic insofar as *Malkhut* is the garment (*ha-levush*) itself. The matter is, however, as it is explained in the *Tiqqunim* that *Malkhut* is beneath *Yesod*, and it is certainly lower than the *Tsaddiq*, “His footstool” (Ps. 99:5).<sup>99</sup> Therefore, from her the garment for the righteous is made, for they are on the level of *Yesod*, and *Malkhut* is the garment for *Yesod* since she is below him and he is hidden within her, as is known. But she has another aspect: She ascends to become a crown on the head of the righteous one, for on this aspect she is above *Yesod*, the fourth in relation to the three Patriarchs. Just as she is then called the crown on the head of the righteous one, on the spiritual plane this aspect becomes a crown for the righteous. And this is [the import of the dictum] “the righteous are sitting with their crowns upon their heads.” This aspect [endows the attributes of] of rising (*qimah*) and standing (*amidah*) to *Malkhut*. Therefore it says “as the angel of the Lord stood by” (Zech. 3:5) in relation to the *Aṭarah*.<sup>100</sup>

According to Cordovero's formulation, the attribute of *Malkhut* has two aspects, one that accords her the status of being below *Yesod* and the other that elevates her above the phallic gradation. Whereas the attribute of the garment that *Malkhut* bestows upon the righteous (just as she is a garment for *Yesod*) is related to the former, the image of the crown that is upon the head of the righteous is related to the latter. *Malkhut* attains the second characteristic when she joins the Patriarchs to complete the quaternity of the divine chariot. The gender metamorphosis implied by this process is alluded to in slightly different terminology in the concluding statement of the above citation: the aspect of the crown confers upon *Malkhut* the erect and upright status of rising and standing. These characteristics signify a vertical position associated with the masculine as opposed to sitting or reclining, the horizontal posture correlated with the feminine.<sup>101</sup> In virtue of this elevated state, the *Shekhinah* assumes the posture of the angel of the Lord, who is described as standing.<sup>102</sup> The elevation of *Malkhut* to the position of the crown of the Patriarchs signifies her transformation and assimilation into the male. The mystical significance of the motif of coronation of Sabbath consists of precisely such a dynamic in the divine pleroma, and in that respect this event is a prolepsis of the redemption.

Several scholars have focused on this image to underscore the centrality of the symbol of the feminine in kabbalistic speculation. To a degree, this is of course correct, but what I find lacking is a sophisticated and fuller comprehension of this symbolism in light of a sustained analysis of the issues of gender and eros in the kabbalistic orientation. My contention is that the image of the Sabbath bride is a symbol of liminality signifying the transition from separation (historical exile) to unification (redemption). Bridal imagery is thus appropriate to characterize the transition from the exilic to the redemptive state, but the latter is most fully represented by images that describe the reintegration of the feminine *Shekhinah* to the masculine potency. Even the image of the *Shekhinah* as a bride adorned for her wedding represents a transition from exile to redemption. The latter is fully represented when the bride enters the nuptial chamber and is transformed therein into the crown of the bridegroom. The point is expressed by Moses de León: "Therefore our rabbis, blessed be their memory, would say, 'Come forth, O Bride,'

when the Sabbath began and the day was sanctified, like one who waits for the bride to enter the nuptial chamber. But during the day [of Sabbath] the [layer of] dew surrounded their heads and they were crowned by ‘a crown of beauty and a diadem of glory’ (Isa. 28:5).<sup>103</sup> De León contrasts the ontic status of the *Shekhinah* on Friday night, the eve of Sabbath, and the day of Sabbath: in the former, she is like a bride waiting to enter the nuptial chamber, but in the latter, she has been transformed into the crown on the heads of the male rabbis. The citation from Isaiah suggests an eschatological understanding of this process. Sabbath is a prolepsis of the messianic redemption precisely because its mystical significance entails the masculinization of the feminine *Shekhinah*. As I have noted above, this is reflected in the very name *shabbat*, which is decomposed into the *shin* together with the word *bat*. The *shin*, which has three branches, is the masculine potency that is united with the *bat*, the daughter or the *Shekhinah*. The union of the *shin* and the *bat*, forming *shabbat*, transforms the *bat* into the crown of the *shin*.

The crowning represents the coronation of the Sabbath bride as she prepares to unite with the holy King. On the most basic level, this reflects standard regal symbolism: the *Shekhinah* is, after all, the Queen, and thus the image of her being crowned makes perfect sense. This imagery is enhanced, moreover, by the symbol of the Sabbath bride, for in the Jewish tradition the actual practice of the bridegroom and the bride wearing crowns is well attested. However, this symbolism has a deeper significance: the crowning represents the assimilation of the *Shekhinah* into the phallic *Yesod*, a metamorphosis that is related in zoharic literature to the sacred union of male and female. As I have argued in a separate study, the phallicization of the feminine is alluded to in the zoharic understanding of the biblical admonition to “remember the Sabbath day,” which is the scriptural basis for the ritual obligation to sanctify the Sabbath with a blessing over a cup of wine. According to the fertile imagination of the author of the *Zohar*, the word *zakhor* refers to the “secret of the masculine,” *raza di-dekhura*, the phallic attribute of *Yesod*. Sanctification of the Sabbath on Friday evening is thus an act of re/membering, for the union of the Queen and King above, which is facilitated by the actions of the Jewish people below, results in the transformation of the female into an aspect of the phallus, and in a most exact sense, the female is transposed into a part of the male member.<sup>104</sup>

In conclusion, I note that the eschatological implications of the phallic transformation of the Sabbath bride is the implicit meaning of the well-known hymn by the sixteenth-century kabbalist Solomon Alkabetz, *lekhah dodi*. The refrain, *lekhah dodi liqra't kallah penei shabbat neqabbelah*, "Come, my beloved, to greet the bride, let us receive the face of Sabbath," indicates quite clearly the leitmotif of the poem as a whole: the union of the male and female aspects of God, which appropriately takes place on Sabbath evening. Thus, the first stanza expresses this motif in terms of the two locutions for Sabbath observance given in, respectively, Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12: *shamor we-zakhor be-dibbur ehad hishmi'anu el ha-meyuhad yhwh ehad u-shemo ehad leshem u-letif'eret we-litehilah*, "The unique God caused us to hear 'observe' and 'remember' in one word, the Lord is one and his name is one, for fame, and splendor, and praise." The two words are heard simultaneously and, following the earlier rabbinic view, were miraculously spoken at once.<sup>105</sup> For the kabbalist, this alludes to the mystery of the holy union of the male and female, also represented by the eschatological image of God and his name being one. The culminating stanza of the poem returns to this motif: *bo'i ve-shalom ațeret ba'lah gam be-simḥah u-vetsahalal tokh emunei am segulah bo'i khallah bo'i khallah*, "Come in peace, crown of her husband, with joy and happiness, amidst the believers of the treasured people, come, O bride, come O bride." The meaning of this verse was well understood by the Polish kabbalist Jacob bar Raphael of Poznan, who wrote the following in his commentary on the words of Alkabetz: "By way of the mystical meaning, 'Come in peace,' for it is known that the attribute of *Yesod* is called peace (*shalom*) ... and he is the one that unifies the King and the Matrona, and then she becomes the 'crown of her husband,' according to the verse, 'a capable wife is a crown for her husband' (*eshet ḥayil ațeret ba'lah*) (Prov. 12:4)."<sup>106</sup> Through the phallic attribute of *Yesod*, the Sabbath bride is transformed into the crown of her husband, and the feminine is thereby reintegrated into the male. The bride of Sabbath is thus summoned to come forth in peace so that the holy union can be consummated, and she will be transformed into the masculine crown.

Many other texts could have been cited to support this interpretation, but for our purposes what I have cited is sufficient.<sup>107</sup> The imaging of God in gender terms is obviously one of the most

important elements of the kabbalistic tradition. And, as other scholars have noted, this imaging involves both male and female. What I have tried to accomplish in this study, as well as in my other work, is to understand the gender imagery in a proper cultural context. In a condition of exile, which is an ontological state marked by a separation of male and female, the path to reunification is through the sexual mating of a man and his spouse. In the exilic state, therefore, heterosexuality is the behavioral norm and erotic imagery of the feminine is appropriate. In the redemptive state, however, when the female is restored to the male, the heterosexual language must yield to the autoerotic discourse rooted in the myth of the male androgyne: the female is assimilated into the corona of the phallus. The ultimate erotic gratification is not derived from the desire for the other, because the other has become fully integrated into oneself. In the present historical condition the process is dialectic, and the redemptive state of Sabbath perpetually gives way to the fragmentation of the week. Hence, each and every Sabbath eve provides a temporal context for the reenactment of this mythic drama, the overcoming of differentiation. As the first and critical stage of this drama, the *Shekhinah* assumes the image of the beautiful bride who arouses the desire of the male. In the moment of union, however, the bride is transformed into the crown of her husband, the symbol that most fully expresses the overcoming of the gender dichotomy characteristic of the ultimate redemption.

### Notes

1. The point was well recognized by Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 132–133: “the Kabbalists strove from the very first to anchor the ritual of Rabbinical Judaism in myth by means of a mystical practice” (author’s emphasis).
2. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 293–294; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Messianismus und Mystik,” in *Gershom Scholem’s Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), pp. 20–21.
3. See Daniel Matt, “The Mystic and the Mizwot,” in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp. 367–404; Elliot R. Wolfson, “Mystical Rationalization of the Commandments in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 59, 1988, pp. 217–251; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 156–199; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1155–1213; Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later*

- Strata of the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 81–105; Charles Mopsik, *Les Grands Textes de la Cabale: Les Rites qui font Dieu* (Paris: Verdier, 1993).
4. My account of the sacrament is indebted to the rich and nuanced discussion in Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan, S.J. and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995).
  5. As I have pointed out in a number of previous studies, kabbalistic anthropology (following an orientation already articulated in the classical rabbinic corpus) identifies humanity in its ideal form with Israel. Hence, the word *anthropos* used here should not be construed in a generic sense as referring to humanity, but is limited rather to the Jewish people who truly (according to the kabbalistic sources) bear the image of God, both pneumatically and somatically. Even with respect to the Jewish people, the anthropology is more limited inasmuch as the title “human being” in the most exact sense can be applied only to Jewish males. See Elliot R. Wolfson, “Re/membering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness, and History in the Zohar,” in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach, David S. Myers, and John Efron (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), pp. 214–246. The attempt on the part of most scholars to render technical terms such as *bar nash* (or its Hebrew equivalent *ben adam*) in a gender-neutral manner cannot go unchallenged. A more exacting translation of this expression, which would reflect the context, is “Jewish male.”
  6. Regarding the motif of the coronation of the feminine and the masculine potencies of the divine on the Sabbath, see Elliot Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 74, 102, 112–115, 137–138. My understanding of the coronation as a gender transformation of the *Shekhinah* is not mentioned or explored by Ginsburg or any other scholar to the best of my knowledge.
  7. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 119a and Baba Qama 32a–b.
  8. *Genesis Rabbah* 10:9, p. 85.
  9. *Ibid.* 11:8, pp. 95–96.
  10. *Leviticus Rabbah* 27:10, p. 643, and parallels cited in note 7.
  11. *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, ed. Peter Schäfer, Margarite Schlüter, and Hans Georg von Mutius (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982), 850 and 852. See Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 103–104; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 130–131 n. 48.
  12. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 93, 98–105, 246; *idem*, *Along the Path*, pp. 180–181 n. 352.
  13. *Zohar* 1:244b.
  14. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 110–115, and references to other scholarly discussions given on pp. 227 n. 160 and 228 n. 168.
  15. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 371–372 n. 155. On the transmutation of heterosexual imagery into male homoeroticism to depict the texture of the mystical experience, see *ibid.*, pp. 369–372; *idem*, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 107–110; and my study referred to in note 26. This phenomenon has been discussed independently by Yehuda Liebes, “Zohar and Eros,” *Alpayyim*, 9, 1994, pp. 104–112 (Hebrew). While my position shares some basic elements with that of Liebes, we fundamentally disagree with respect to the question of the ultimate nature of the erotic impulse. In my opinion, the heterosexual, which is appropriate at the initial stage of overcoming the ontological separation of exile, gives way to the homoerotic. The final repair (*tiqqun*) consists of

the (ideally) ascetic bonding of the members of the mystical fraternity. In this bond, the actual and idealized feminine are expendable. For a recent criticism of the view of Liebes on this score, see Gil Anidjar, "Jewish Mysticism Alterable and Unalterable: On Orienting Kabbalah Studies and the 'Zohar of Christian Spain,'" *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society*, 3, 1996, pp. 118–125 (my thanks to Lawrence Fine for drawing my attention to this study). Although I am critical of Liebes' privileging of the heterosexual over the homoerotic, I cannot accept Anidjar's tendentious argument that Liebes refuses to acknowledge same-sex interactions on account of a deliberate refusal to acknowledge homoerotic sexuality between males, a hermeneutic posture that the author refers to as "distanctiation," which he relates to the broader phenomenon of what he calls (following the work of Edward Said) "Jewish Orientalism." According to my own work in this area, which is totally ignored by Anidjar, the homoeroticism is (at least ideally, as may be reconstructed from the relevant texts) predicated on sexual renunciation. I am not denying the possibility of male homosexuality (see *Circle in the Square*, pp. 223–224 n. 145, where I discuss the issue at length), but I am arguing that the dynamic of eros operative in the kabbalistic sources (primarily the zoharic and Lurianic material) presumes that the male homoeroticism takes shape within the framework of the mystical fellowship, participation in which is based on temporary sexual abstinence. Had Anidjar engaged my discussions of this matter (not to mention other scholars), his own "discursive space" would have been more inclusive, less discriminatory, and ultimately more generous. The overwhelmingly geocentric nature of Anidjar's analysis of contemporary kabbalistic scholarship (the three major figures he discusses are Scholem, Idel, and Liebes) clearly attests to a totalizing and exclusionary hermeneutics, a repetition of a pattern that renders marginal other scholars who have written on the relevant topics discussed by him. To be sure, occasionally in the notes, Anidjar does refer to scholarly voices that have not been sufficiently heeded, but these references cannot redress the imbalance he creates in the main body of his study. Thus, to cite but one of several pertinent examples, Anidjar credits only Idel and Liebes with emphasizing *contra* Scholem the experiential and ecstatic elements of Jewish mysticism (pp. 98–99). His failure to note my own work on this issue is inexcusable, not only on the grounds that I have emphasized the experiential underpinning of theosophic kabbalah in my own independent voice (traceable to studies that began to appear in 1987), but also because in my discourse I have presented a more balanced picture of Scholem's contribution (see, for example, Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 277–279).

16. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1215–1238; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*.
17. The kabbalistic symbolism, already expressed in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, is based on the discrepancy between the two accounts of the Decalogue: in Exod. 20:8 the locution is to "remember" (*zakhor*) the Sabbath, whereas in Deut. 5:12 it is to "observe" (*shamor*) the Sabbath. According to the kabbalistic symbolism, in some measure based on earlier rabbinic sources, the two terms refer, respectively, to the masculine and to the feminine aspects of the divine. See Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 142–143, 158–159; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1220–1223; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 107–108. Needless to say, the attribution of gender to Sabbath is already expressed in the classical rabbinic corpus, specifically in terms of the metaphorical images of king and queen (or bride). See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1951), pp. 53–62.

18. Wolfson, *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 118. Cf. "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 110. In that context, Moses de León relates the typological classification of Sabbath as *zakhor* and *shamor* to the rabbinic dictum that Sabbath is equivalent to all the commandments of the Torah (Palestinian Talmud, Berakhot 1:8, ed. Venice, 3c; Nedarim 3:14, 38b; *Exodus Rabbah* 25:12; *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 4:4), inasmuch as the Torah itself can be viewed in terms of the distinction between *zakhor* and *shamor*, the former corresponding to the positive commandments and the latter to the negative prohibitions. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1223; Wolfson, *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 63–71 (English introduction).
19. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 3:199; Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 57b; Rosh ha-Shanah 31a; Sanhedrin 97a; Avodah Zarah 3b; Tamid 33b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, version A, 1, p. 5; *Masekhet Soferim*, ed. Michael Higger (New York: Debe Rabbanan, 1937), 18, pp. 312–313; *Pirqei Rabbi Eli'ezer*, 19, 44a; *Midrash Otiyyot de-R. Aqiva*, in *Battei Midrashot*, ed. Solomon Wertheimer (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1980), 2:346. See Heschel, *Sabbath*, pp. 73–76; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 65, 72, 84, 95–100, 133, 145–146 n. 46. Worthy of note is the description in the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* XVII of the Sabbath, the seventh power of God, whose image is the aeon-to-come. See Shlomo Pines, "Points of Similarity between the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Sefirot in the Sefer Yezira and a Text of the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, 7, 1989, pp. 96–97, and my own analysis of this passage in relation to a text from *Sefer ha-Bahir* in *Along the Path*, p. 81.
20. Zohar 3:243b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*). David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, *Or Zaru'a*, MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 2203, fol. 39a, expresses this ontological transition in time in the following way: during the week the world is ruled by the dominion of the archons, whereas on Sabbath it enters under the domain of the Holy One.
21. Palestinian Talmud, Ketuvot 5:8, ed. Venice, 30b; Babylonian Talmud, Ketuvot 62b; Baba Qama 82a; Zohar 1:14a–b; 50a; 112a (*Midrash ha-Ne'elam*); 2:63b, 89a, 136a, 204b–205a; 3:49b, 78a, 81a, 82a, 143a; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 16, 38b; sec. 21, 57a, 61a; sec. 36, 78a; sec. 56, 90a. See note 12. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1232–1233, 1357; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 15.
22. The verse is speaking about the righteous man who is compared to a tree "planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season." I have modified the literal rendering to fit the context.
23. Babylonian Talmud, Beitsah 16a; Ta'anit 27b. Regarding this rabbinic motif and its evolution in kabbalistic sources, see Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 121–136.
24. *Heikhal ha-Shem* (Venice, 1601), 40a. Cf. Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Oraḥ*, 1:107.
25. See references cited in note 21.
26. For recent discussion of this motif, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Eunuchs Who Keep the Sabbath: Becoming Male and the Ascetic Ideal in Thirteenth-Century Jewish Mysticism," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 151–185.
27. For discussion of this theme, see Charles Mopsik, "The Body of Engenderment in the Hebrew Bible, the Rabbinic Tradition and the Kabbalah," in *Zone: Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (New York: Zone Books, 1989), pp. 48–73.
28. This ambivalence on the part of the kabbalists has been duly noted by David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 109–118.

29. The kabbalistic perspective is predicated on the belief that the holiness of the Sabbath is intrinsic to the day itself and thus to the constituent rhythm of time. The holiness of the Sabbath, therefore, is not dependent on theurgic action from below (in the language of zoharic symbolism, *it'aruta di-letata*), although the human agent obviously has a role to play in the cosmic drama. See, in particular, Zohar 3:94b. The point is stated clearly by Ḥayyim ben Solomon of Chernovitz in the opening section of his *Sidduro shel Shabbat* (Jerusalem, 1960), 9a–10b. In particular, this author draws an analogy between the creation of the world and the Sabbath: just as there was no one outside of God to incite the act of divine creativity, so on the Sabbath there is no need for arousal from below to bring about the holiness of the day.
30. MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 817, fol. 142b. Cf. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, *Or Zaru'a*, MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 2203, fol. 39b.
31. Cf. the characterization in Ḥayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot* (Jerusalem, 1963), 63a, of the holiness of Sabbath as the ascent of *Ze'ir Anpin* and *Nuqba*, the two lower countenances of the divine, to *Abba* and *Imma*, the two upper countenances.
32. The corporeal and sensual nature of restfulness on Sabbath is also reflected in the rabbinic understanding of the “delight of the Sabbath” (*oneg shabbat*), which involves, inter alia, the wearing of special garments and the eating of distinctive foods. See *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 3:1; Heschel, *Sabbath*, pp. 18–19; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 64–65. With respect to this basic issue in the phenomenology of religious experience associated with the Sabbath, the kabbalists were merely continuing the orientation expressed in classical rabbinic literature.
33. Naḥmanides, *Perushei ha-Torah*, vol.1, p. 30 (ad Gen. 2:3).
34. According to some scholars the author of this composition was Gikatilla. See Gershom Scholem, “Did Naḥmanides Write the Book Iggeret ha-Qodesh,” *Qiryat Sefer*, 21, 1944–45, pp. 175–186 (Hebrew); Seymour Cohen, *The Holy Letter: A Study in Medieval Jewish Sexual Morality* (New York: Ktav, 1976), pp. 8–18; Charles Mopsik, *Lettre sur la Sainteté: Le secret de la relation entre l'homme et la femme dans la cabale* (Paris: Verdier, 1986), pp. 20–29. The attribution of the text to Gikatilla was later modified by Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 66.
35. *Kitvei Ramban*, vol. 2, p. 327.
36. *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (Mantua 1558), 114b–115b. Immediately before the interpretation of Adam's sin there is a discussion of a variety of different visionary accounts in Scripture (see 113b–114a). The common denominator of these different contexts is that the object of vision was the *Shekhinah*, identified more specifically as the *aṭarah*, which corresponds to the corona of the phallus. The phallic understanding of the *aṭarah* is the underlying explanation for the prohibition of looking at the hands of the priests during the blessing and of looking at the rainbow. For other kabbalistic sources that support this reading, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 336–339. Gazing at the *aṭarah* is also applied to the sin of Lot's wife. Insofar as the *Shekhinah* is compared to salt, it follows that the just punishment for the one who looked at that attribute was to be changed into a pillar of salt. Finally, the vision of this attribute can have a positive religious application. The citation of the rabbinic dictum, “the one who prays should cast his eyes below and his heart above” (Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 105b), in this context (114a; cf. 132a–b), indicates that the *Shekhinah* is the object of the visual contemplation required as part of liturgical worship.

37. *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, 120a.
38. See, for example, Zohar 1:79a (*Sitrei Torah*). For the expression of this medieval commonplace in Christian sources, see the astute remarks of Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 130–132. The background for this misogynist attitude in Hellenistic and Jewish sources, which both influenced Christianity in its classical formulations, is treated by Jantzen, pp. 26–58.
39. Zohar 3:296a (*Idra Zuṭa*). Cf. Zohar 1:256a. On the use of the image of the growing of breasts, connected to the motif of becoming a bride, see the Lurianic text discussed by Ronit Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 115–116 n. 60 (Hebrew). On the phallic significance of breasts in kabbalistic symbolism, with particular reference to zoharic texts, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 102, 109–110, 218–219 nn. 124–125, 224 n. 151, 226–227 n. 156.
40. See Gershom Scholem, “On the Development of the Concept of Worlds in the Early Kabbalah,” *Tarbits*, 3, 1931, pp. 39–41 (Hebrew); Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 89, 99, 103.
41. Zohar 1:246b–247a; cf. 2:31a; Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* (Jerusalem, 1962), 14:4, 74c.
42. Cf. Zohar 3:243b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*): “The *shin* [comprises] the three colors of the rainbow and the sign of the covenant of the rainbow is the only daughter, the Sabbath queen.” According to this text, the combination of the *shin* and *bat* in the word *shabbat* signifies the androgynous nature of the phallic gradation, the rainbow (*qeshet*), which is composed of the three (masculine) colors and the (feminine) sign of the covenant.
43. In effect, the linguistic and the ontological are not ultimately distinct inasmuch as from the kabbalistic perspective the very nature of being is determined by the oral and written forms of the Hebrew language. For a list of some of the relevant scholarly treatments of language in kabbalistic sources, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, p. 155 n. 1.
44. Technically speaking, the *shin* symbolizes the three lines, which correspond to the Patriarchs or the central sefirotic emanations. However, inasmuch as these three lines are contained within *Yesod*, it seems valid to decode the *shin* as a reference to the day of Sabbath, generally associated with this gradation. Consider, for example, the passage cited in note 41. For a later text that betrays the influence of this orientation, see Samuel Vital, *Hemdat Yisra'el* (Munkacs, 1901), 129b–130a: “Afterwards he should say, ‘Come forth, O bride’ (*bo'i khallah*) two times corresponding to *Netsah* and *Hod*, and then he should say ‘Come forth, O bride, the Sabbath queen’ (*bo'i khallah shabbat malkhata*). The issue is that [the word] *bo'i* is numerically equal to *ehad* [i.e. they both equal 13], and the three together equal [the word] *tal* [i.e. 39] in the secret of YHW as it has been mentioned [i.e. the first three letters of the Tetragrammaton spelled out in full, *ywd he waw*, 10 + 6 + 4 + 5 + 1 + 6 + 1 + 6, equal 39]. He should intend in the first *bo'i* [the attribute] *Netsah*, in the second *bo'i* [the attribute of] *Hod*, and the third *bo'i* [the attribute of] *Yesod*. In the third, he says ‘Come forth, O bride, the Sabbath etc.’ to allude to the *shin bat*, for at that moment all three are comprised within *Yesod* corresponding to the *shin*, and then all three are contained [in *Yesod*].” Vital’s remarks are based on the teaching of Luria cited by his father, Ḥayyim, in *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, 66a.
45. Zohar 1:5b; “Sefer ha-Mishkal,” p. 111; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1224.
46. Zohar 2:143b.

47. The notion that the supernal chariot is constituted by the union of David and the three Patriarchs, which symbolizes the *Shekhinah* and the three central gradations, *Hesed*, *Din*, and *Raḥamim*, is widely attested in zoharic and related kabbalistic literature. For example, see Zohar 1:154b, 248b; 3:146a, 262b.
48. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1225, 1264–1265 n. 111; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 73–74.
49. See my study cited in note 26. The ideal of holiness (*qedushah*) is linked with abstinence (*perishut*) already in classical rabbinic sources. See Steven Fraade, “Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism,” in *Jewish Spirituality From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, pp. 270–271.
50. On the elevation of the *Shekhinah* (depicted by the symbol of the stone) to be crowned by the Patriarchs, see Zohar 1:231b.
51. Zohar 2:204a.
52. Zohar 1:248b.
53. See note 47. The expression *ha-merkavah meruba’at* is used to describe the zoharic view by Simeon Lavi, *Ketem Paz*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1981), 2:441b.
54. This symbolism is widely attested in zoharic and related kabbalistic literature. For example, cf. Zohar 1:15b, 156b; 3:264b (*Ra’aya Meheimna*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, pp. 8–9.
55. See Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 92–93, 178–180. The relationship of the father to the daughter assumes a definite erotic nature in the kabbalistic symbolism. This is epitomized in the following passage in Zohar 1:156b (*Sitrei Torah*): “The desire of the father is constantly towards his daughter, for the daughter, his beloved, is always near him since she is the only daughter amongst the six sons.” Cf. the parallel in *She’elot u-Teshuvot le-R. Mosheh de-Li’on*, p. 43. I have explored the erotic relation of the father and daughter in the engendering myth of kabbalistic theosophy in Elliot R. Wolfson, “Hebraic and Hellenic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,” *Poetics Today*, 19, 1998, pp. 161–162.
56. “*Sefer ha-Mishkal*,” pp. 110–111. Very similar language to Moses de León’s is used by Recanaṭi, *Perush al ha-Torah*, 46a (ad Exod. 20:7): “‘He who profanes it shall be put to death’ (Exod. 31:14), for it alludes to *zakhor* and *shamor*. There are some who explain the expression ‘he who profanes it’ (*meḥalaleha*) in relation to the Community of Israel, which is the midpoint, and surrounding it are the seventy nations, like a point in the middle of the circle, as it says, ‘I set this Jerusalem in the midst of nations’ (Ezek. 5:5). It says concerning her, ‘he who profanes it’ (*meḥalaleha*), that is, the one who enters her space (*ḥalalah*) to uproot something from her emendations and from all of her matters shall die.” See Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 90–91.
57. Cf. Zohar 1:6a. It is of interest to compare the kabbalistic application of the symbol of the midpoint to the *Shekhinah* with the following passage of Irenaeus summarizing the gnostic myth of Acamoth presented by Ptolemy, a student of Valentinus: “This mother they call also the eighth, wisdom (Sophia), land, Jerusalem, holy spirit, and ‘lord’ in the masculine gender. She occupies the place of the midpoint; and until the end, she is above the craftsman but below or outside the fullness” (translated in Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1987], p. 291). The series of symbolic associations related to Acamoth in the recounting of the gnostic myth are remarkably close to the kabbalistic descriptions of *Shekhinah*. Especially relevant to this study is the image of the midpoint, but also the fact that the gnostic source emphasizes the fact that Acamoth is addressed by the masculine “lord,” or “master,” rather than the appropriate feminine title

- “mistress.” In kabbalistic sources as well the title *adonai*, which means “lord,” is applied to the *Shekhinah* in her role as demiurge of the lower world. In terms of this role, the feminine *Shekhinah* is masculinized. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 103–106. The phenomenological affinity between the gnostic characterizations (especially from the Valentinian school) of Jerusalem as the feminine hypostasis of wisdom banished from the pleroma and the portrayal of Jerusalem in the early texts of theosophic kabbalah has been duly noted by Moshe Idel, “Jerusalem in Thirteenth-Century Jewish Thought,” in *The History of Jerusalem: Crusades and Ayyubids, 1099–1250*, ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1991), pp. 265–267 (Hebrew).
58. The masculine implication of the symbol of the point is also related on occasion to the homology between the tenth and the third emanations, *Shekhinah* and *Binah*, the daughter and the mother. See, for example, the following explanation of the opening passage of the Zohar in Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi* (Jerusalem, 1898), 3b: “Thus the Community of Israel alludes to the side, which is the point of the *yod*, and she is the bride of Moses (*kallat mosheh*), for just as there is *Da'at* from within in the secret of Moses and Israel, and *Tiferet* from without in the secret of Jacob, so there is the bride of Moses from within, which is the Community of Israel, and *Malkhut* from without in the secret of the *Shekhinah*, and this refers to Rachel, the wife of Jacob. Therefore, it says that the lily is the Community of Israel, the inner point, and there is another external lily on the outside, and it is amongst the thorns for the shells are near her ... The explanation of the verse, ‘Like a lily among thorns’ (Song of Songs 2:2), refers to the lower lily, whereas ‘so is my darling’ refers to the upper lily, which is ‘among the maidens.’ She is called ‘my darling’ for she is in the likeness of the supernal mother, which is *Binah*, ‘like mother, like daughter’ (Ezek. 16:44), in the secret of this inner point. With respect to this aspect it is said that Moses merited the [attribute of] *Binah*, for he merited to unite with this inner aspect called the bride of Moses.”
59. Support for my interpretation is found in later kabbalistic writings where the implicit symbolism of the earlier sources is drawn out explicitly. Consider, for example, the following passage of Hayyim Vital, *Ets Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1910), 39:14, 78c, which in part is an elaboration of a passage in Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 1:118: “The bottom foot of the *waw* is very subtle, and it is the point of the corona of the phallus (*neqqudat ha-atarah shel ha-yesod*), the image of a small *yod* ... And this point enters the vagina of the feminine (*yesod ha-neqevah*), which is the *he* of the Tetragrammaton, the point of Zion that is in her. Consequently, the intercourse is called complete.” See also *Adam Yashar* (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 44: “The point of the feminine was in the end of the aspect of the corona of the phallus itself (*be-sof behinat ha-atarah atsmah shel ha-yesod*) ... the diadem on the head of the righteous (*atarah be-rosh tsaddiq*), which is *Yesod*. We have already said above that this point was in the aspect of the crown (*keter*) that is within her, and thus she is called *atarah*, for [the words] *keter* and *atarah* have the same connotation ... Thus when the feminine was in the aspect of the corona (*atarah*) there was not yet a female in relation to a male.” A parallel to this passage is found in *Ets Hayyim*, 34:2, 46b–d, and compare the text cited in note 100. The relevance of this comment lies in the fact that here the attribution of the symbol of the point to the feminine relates very explicitly to the corona of the phallus, the aspect of the feminine that is contextualized in the masculine. From that perspective, the symbol of the corona signifies the transcendence of gender dimorphism, which

amounts in kabbalistic writings to the reconstitution of the male androgyne. For some other passages in the writings of Vital that embrace this symbolism, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 117–118. For a later application of this symbolism, see Elliot R. Wolfson, “*Tiqqun ha-Shekhinah*: Redemption and the Overcoming of Gender Dimorphism in the Messianic Kabbalah of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto,” *History of Religions*, 37, 1997, pp. 289–332. The masculine nature of the symbol of the corona of the penis (*ateret yesod*) is underscored in one passage in *Sha’ar ha-Kawwanot*, 65b, where it is identified as the locus of the attribute of mercy. The eschatological effacement of the feminine is implicit in another image that Vital employs to depict the messianic era: the culmination of the process of purification (*berur*) occurs when all the holy sparks are elevated in the form of the female waters from their entrapment in the demonic shells. When that process is completed the shells will be abrogated – an idea exegetically linked to the verse “He will destroy death forever” (Isa. 25:8) – since there will be no vitality to sustain them. See *Ets Hayyim*, 39:1, 65c–66a, 66c–d. The task of redemption, therefore, consists of purifying the female waters and restoring all the sparks of holiness to the foundation of the feminine aspect of the divine (*yesod nuqba di-ze’eir anpin*). This task is facilitated by sexual intercourse (*ziwwug*) between a man and his wife, but with the completion of the process that act loses its mystical significance. The point underlies Vital’s distinction in *Ets Hayyim*, 39:4, 69a, between the “lower physical copulation” (*ziwwug gufaniyyot tahton*), which involves phallic penetration of the vagina (*lehiztawweg bi-vehinat ziwwug ha-tahton di-yesod dileih bi-yesod dilah*), and the “supernal spiritual copulation” (*ziwwug ruhani elyon*), which entails the union brought about through the kisses of the mouth. (On the contrast between the “spiritual supernal copulation,” *ziwwug ha-elyon ruhani*, and the “physical lower copulation,” *ziwwug tahton gufani*, cf. *ibid.* 39:9, 73b–74b. In that context [73d], even the latter is described in terms of the upper displacement of the genitals: “They are joined together in the aspect of the kisses, the male gives from his supernal foundation [*yesod shelo ha-elyon*], which is the tongue in his mouth, one spirit within her supernal foundation [*yesod shelah ha-elyon*], which is placed in the mouth of the female.”) The purpose of the “lower copulation of the genitals” (*ziwwug tahton di-yesod*) is to purify the sparks and hence it is temporary, since one can envision a time when all the sparks will be liberated from the demonic and restored to the divine, whereas the “supernal copulation of the kisses” (*ziwwug elyon di-neshiqin*) is continuous, reflecting a permanent ontic situation wherein the male and female (related, more specifically, to the configurations of *Abba* and *Imma*, father and mother) are bound together in a spiritual bond.

60. The same symbolic intent of the image of the midpoint, designated the “holy of holies” (*qodesh qodashim*), seems to be implied in Zohar 1:229a–b, 231a. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, p. 225 n. 152. I would like to take this opportunity to correct my suggestion that the holy of holies according to that zoharic passage corresponds to the clitoris, which is anatomically homologous to the penis. It is more likely that the medieval kabbalists accepted the commonplace assumption that the interior penis of the female anatomy was identified as the uterus or the vagina, for the specific imaging of the clitoris as the male organ in the female becomes prevalent at a later date in the Renaissance. See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 4, 26–28, 33–35, 63–65, 78–93, 97–8, 137–141. The implicit zoharic symbolism is made

explicit especially in the later Lurianic kabbalah. See, for example, Vital, *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, 33c: "Know that just as a man produces semen and places a drop of the male waters in the feminine, and they derive from his brain, so too in the case of the woman the drop of the female waters is derived from her brain until the foundation (*yesod*) that is in her, which is her womb (*beit ha-rehem*), and this drop is called the female waters (*mayyin nuqvin*). From these two types of drops, the male waters and the female waters, which derive from the brain of the male and from the brain of the female, and which are all placed in her foundation wherein they are united, the foetus is formed." The designation "holy of holies" is also applied to *Binah*, which is the palace that contains the supernal point of *Hokhmah*. Cf. Zohar 1:2a, 200a; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, pp. 8–9, 29. It must be pointed out, however, that in the words *yehabbeq lah ba'lah uvi-yesoda dilah de-avid nayyeḥa lah yehei kattish kattishin* in Luria's poem, *azammer bi-shevaḥin* (in *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, 72c, the first word is *asader*), *yesod* does seem to refer to the clitoris of the divine feminine, which is stimulated by her male counterpart.

61. The phallic symbolism of the attribution of the point to the feminine is underscored in the identification of that point as the sign of the covenant (*ot berit*) by the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Cf. Zohar 1:24b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 18, 36b; sec. 21, 57b; sec. 29, 73a; sec. 37, 78a. The phallic intent of the symbol of the midpoint as it is employed in the Zohar is drawn explicitly by Vital in the following passage in *Ets Hayyim*, 32:4, 37b (cf. the parallel in *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, 31c): "At first you must know that the term 'point' (*nequddah*) rightfully applies only to the aspect of *Yesod*, whether it is *Yesod* of the male or *Yesod* of the female, although its essence is in *Yesod* of the female. Remember this principle to understand the language of the Zohar with respect to the matter of the point, and she is called the midpoint for the aspect of the point of *Yesod* is in the middle of the body." Finally, let me note that the symbolic homology of the phallus and an aspect of the female genitals is to be contrasted with another recurring theme in kabbalistic literature: the localization of the feminine as the corona of the male organ. Here I cite one example of this widespread phenomenon from Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Me'irat Einayim*, p. 44: "You already know that the secret of circumcision alludes to [the attribute] *Tsaddiq*, and the Sabbath to [the attribute] *Aṭarah*, and the corona (*aṭarah*) that is disclosed as a result of the cutting of the foreskin alludes to *Aṭarah*, and all the rest [of the organ] alludes to *Tsaddiq*." For other examples of this symbolism, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 358–359, 362–363; idem, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 20, 41, 45–46, 88–89.
62. According to one passage (Zohar 1:226a), Zion, which is one of the designations of *Yesod*, is identified as the central point wherein the *Shekhinah* resides. It is not unreasonable to assume that the attribution of the symbol of the midpoint to the *Shekhinah* itself is related to a similar phallic posture. Cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 18, 36b. On the land of Israel, which is symbolic of the *Shekhinah*, as the midpoint, which corresponds to the supernal point, see Zohar 1:209b. On Jerusalem as the midpoint, see Zohar 2:184b; 3:171a. In the latter context, the point within Jerusalem is assigned the task of overflowing with water, an evident phallic function, which is compared to the mother who nurses her son. On the phallic connotation of breast-feeding, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 102, 108–109. The phallic implication of the symbol of the point attributed to the *Shekhinah* is also implied in the characterization of that attribute as the foundation stone that is the ground of all existence. Cf. Zohar 1:71b.

63. Wolfson *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 333–334. In his commentary on Ezekiel's chariot vision, *Sha'ar Yesod ha-Merkavah*, MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 283, fol. 169b, Moses de León refers to and elaborates on the relevant discussion in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*.
64. The erotic overtone of the kabbalistic understanding *hillul shabbat* is drawn explicitly in *Tiqunei Zohar*, sec. 21, 45b; sec. 30, 73b; sec. 36, 77b. On the explanation of the desecration of the Sabbath (*hillul shabbat*) in terms of allowing the demonic shell to enter the space of holiness, see *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, 63b and 66d.
65. For references, see David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988), p. 404; and Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 118 n. 48.
66. Zohar 3:250b.
67. This zoharic understanding of the condensation of the point, which results from the feminine attribute of judgment, played a critical role in certain versions of the Lurianic doctrine of *tsimtsum*, the primordial withdrawal of divine light, which occurs in the central point of the vacated circular space. Cf. *Ets Hayyim*, 1:2, 11c; *Mavo She'arim* (Jerusalem, 1904), 1b–c. As Vital makes clear, especially in the latter context, the midpoint of the Infinite is the potency of the root of judgment, which is disclosed at a subsequent stage of the emanative process. See Yoram Jacobson, "Moses Hayim Luzzatto's Doctrine of Divine Guidance and Its Relation to His Kabbalistic Teachings," *Italia Judaica: Atti del III Convegno internazionale* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1989), p. 43 n. 96 (Hebrew); idem, "The Aspect of the 'Feminine' in the Lurianic Kabbalah," in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), p. 246.
68. The zoharic idea of the compression of the feminine into a point as a necessary condition for sexual union with the male is related to the notion explicitly stated in the rabbinic literature (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 22b) that intercourse transforms the woman into a vessel. That is, from the kabbalistic vantage point, the image of a vessel conveys the sense of limitation and containment, characteristics associated with the feminine potency of judgment. The punctiform nature of the feminine symbolizes the opening of the external orifice of the vagina, which transforms the woman from a closed virgin to an open vessel ready to receive the seminal drops of the male. Cf. *Ets Hayyim*, 39:10, 74d–75b. According to another symbolic interpretation, the aspect of the point attributed to *Malkhut*, which is compared to a *yod* insofar as it comprises the ten potencies, is identified with the rib or side of Adam whence the feminine is constructed. See *Sha'ar ha-Pesuqim* (Jerusalem, 1912), 4b; *Liqqutei Torah* (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 11. See, by contrast, *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, 70a: "The intent of [the prayer] 'You have sanctified [the seventh day]' ... It is known that on the eve of Sabbath the aspect of the consciousness (*mohin*) for *Malkhut* is produced. And it is known that every aspect of the consciousness is from the side of *Hokhmah*, which is called 'holy' (*qodesh*). This is the import of what is said 'You have sanctified the seventh day' (*attah qiddashta et yom ha-shevi'i*). Regarding the matter of the standing prayer (*amidah*) of the evening service, you should have in mind that up to now *Malkhut* was the aspect of a small point beneath *Yesod*, face-to-face. Now she has grown and she has become a countenance (*partsuf*) in all the length of *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod* of *Ze'ir Anpin*, which disappeared, stood up, and ascended above together with the middle three [gradations] of *Ze'ir Anpin*. It follows that the

- goal of this standing prayer is for the sake of unifying Rachel and Jacob.” A similar explanation is offered in *Peri Ets Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1980), p. 395.
69. The kabbalistic understanding of Sabbath on this score was well understood (intentionally or not) by Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), pp. 310–315, 420. The affinity of Rosenzweig’s understanding of Sabbath and the view developed in kabbalistic sources is briefly noted by Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, p. 161 n. 140, and discussed more extensively in Elliot R. Wolfson, “Facing the Effaced: Mystical Eschatology and the Idealistic Orientation in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig,” *Journal for the History of Modern Theology*, 4, 1997, pp. 56–57, 68–70.
  70. *Sha’ar Ma’amerei Rashbi*, 19b.
  71. In *Liqqutei Torah*, p. 20, Vital describes the sin of Adam in terms of the “male changing into a female,” *ha-zakhar nehepakkh le-nuqba*.
  72. Zohar 2:88a–b.
  73. As already noted by Meroz, “Redemption,” p. 119 n. 69.
  74. *Sha’ar Ma’amerei Rashbi*, 18b.
  75. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 51a; Shabbat 118a.
  76. *Sha’ar Ma’amerei Rashbi*, 18b–c.
  77. *Sha’ar ha-Kawwanot*, 24b.
  78. For a fuller discussion of this motif, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 110–116.
  79. See Yehuda Liebes, “‘Two Young Roes of a Doe’: The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria Before His Death,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 10, 1992, pp. 124–125 (Hebrew).
  80. Cf. Zohar 1:257a. That Jer. 31:21 symbolically implies for the kabbalist the masculinization of the feminine is made clear in the following remark of Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 60: “The supernal world [*Binah*] is indeed the secret of the king to whom peace belongs [Babylonian Talmud, Shavu’ot 35b], and this peace [*Yesod*] is the cause of the ‘woman encircling the man,’ through his cause and his matter. In fact, she [*Binah*] is feminine and all of her limbs are in this status except when peace is aroused and he transforms all the limbs to be masculine on account of his cause. It is known to the enlightened that this is the holy covenant (*berit qodesh*.)” The feminine *Binah* is thus masculinized on account of the phallic *Yesod*, a process that is linked exegetically to the biblical locution of the woman encircling the man. This posture signifies that the female has assumed the ontic status of the male. The meaning of de León’s statement is made clear from a parallel remark in the untitled fragment of one of his works extant in MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek 47, fol. 366a (concerning this work see Gershom Scholem, “Eine unbekannte mystische Schrift des Mose de Leon,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 71, 1927, pp. 109–123): “The secret of his existence from *Hokhmah* and below is not discernible or revealed except when existence rises from the supernal world [*Binah*], which is the jubilee, and this is the secret of ‘a woman shall encircle a man,’ inasmuch as the supernal world is the origin of life for everything, the source of the rivers that come forth like a woman who produces fruit according to its species. However, she encircles the man through the power of the cause of the one righteous being [*Yesod*] who stands beneath her. For you shall find that all of the limbs are in the status of the feminine until the covenant comes, which is a limb that is singular and unique, and it transforms all the limbs into being male. According to this secret, the supernal world [*Binah*] is ‘a woman that encircles a man,’ and the lower world [*Malkhut*] is the

female that stands in perpetual femininity (*naqvut olamit*), for by no means is she ever transformed into a male.” The last comment, that the lower world or *Malkhut* is the feminine that is not transformed into a male, is contradicted by other passages in the Zohar and the Hebrew writings of de León wherein a gender transformation is clearly attributed to this divine gradation, indeed, in emulation of the supernal world or *Binah*. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 98–106. The passage from the untitled fragment of de León has been recently cited by Charles Mopsik, *Le Sicle du Sanctuaire: Chéqel ha-Qodech* (Paris: Verdier, 1996), pp. 174–175 n. 462 (the author inadvertently gave the source as fol. 366b, which should be corrected to fol. 366a). Instead of embracing the paradigm of a gender transformation of the female into male, Mopsik refers to *Binah* as “la sefira féminine qui possède un membre masculin.” However, it makes sense to speak of a female with a penis only if we posit a masculinization of the feminine. In other kabbalistic sources (including works of de León), Jer. 31:21 is applied to the relationship of *Binah* to *Hokhmah*. For a selective list of references, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 182 n. 353. See also Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, ed. Gershom Scholem, *Qovets al Yad*, 8, 1976, p. 332.

81. *Midrash Tehillim* 73:4, 168a.
82. *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, 5a–b.
83. The phallic connotation of the crown in zoharic literature (as well as other kabbalistic texts that draw upon a similar symbology) is underscored by the fact that the verbal form “to be crowned” is used to denote sexual intercourse or the union that ensues from such intercourse. Cf. Zohar 1:50a, 153b, 172b; 2:58a, 261a; 3:4b, 25a–b, 96b, 98a. This particular usage is related to a more general connotation of this phrase to refer to a unitive experience of the soul and a divine attribute. Cf. Zohar 1:80a, 84a, 110b (*Sitrei Torah*), 119b, 144b, 163b, 194b, 197a, 206a; 2:97b, 205a, 216a, 244a, 245a, 253b; 3:34b, 81a, 89b, 111b (*Piqqudin*), 150b, 264b, 269b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 21, 56a. On the use of the image of the crown to denote mystical union, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 284, 357–368. The kabbalistic symbolism of the crown is related to the metaphorical use of this symbol to denote the contemplative ideal of intellectual conjunction (*devequt*). For a recent discussion of this motif, see Adena Tanenbaum, “The Adornment of the Soul: A Philosophical Motif in Andalusian *Piyyut*,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 66, 1995, pp. 236–238.
84. This is another example of the larger phenomenon that characterizes much of the kabbalistic literature: the ascetic impulse is rooted in erotic desire. This confluence of asceticism and eroticism is prevalent in many religious cultures, as a variety of scholars have noted. Here I mention a few exemplary studies that explore this nexus: Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York: Walker, 1962); Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Annemarie Schimmel, “Eros – Heavenly and Not So Heavenly – in Sufi Literature and Life,” in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid-Marsot (Malibu: Undena, 1979), pp. 119–141; Julius Evola, *Eros and the Mysteries of Love: The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1983); Bernard McGinn, “The Language of Love in Christian and Jewish Mysticism,” in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 202–235; and, most recently, Jeffrey Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).
85. This title is used to refer to those passages that begin with the idiom, *ta hazei*, “come and see.” See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 387 n. 33; idem, *Kabbalah*,

- pp. 217–218. It is possible that these textual units were composed by the anonymous author of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Compare the view of Cordovero cited in *Gershom Scholem's Annotated Zohar* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), p. 1032. Scholem supports Cordovero's opinion by reference to MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 204.
86. Zohar 1:257a.
  87. Similar language appears in Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Me'irat Einayim*, p. 2, translated in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 359.
  88. *Heikkhal ha-Shem*, 30a.
  89. *Arba Me'ot Sheqel Kesef* (Cracow, 1886), 27c–d.
  90. Such a criticism against my interpretation of the symbol of the crown has been made by Colette Sirat in her review of *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* published in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 39, 1996, p. 169. Sirat's claim that in the Middle Ages the crown was "more a symbol of power than of sexuality" completely neglects the preponderance of textual evidence that I cite to show that the term *aṭarah*, "crown," is applied more specifically to the corona of the penis. Her charge that my reading is skewed by a Freudian perspective and current feminist criticism rings hollow in the face of the texts themselves. Moreover, as I have indicated above (see note 83), in zoharic literature, the predicate "crowning" is sometimes used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, a usage clearly related to the fact that the crown stands for the corona of the male organ.
  91. *Pardes Rimmonim* 16, 34a, s.v. *aṭarah*.
  92. By contrast, in the parallel passage in the unpublished section of *Elimah Rabbati*, MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 2174, fol. 61b, the phallic implication of the attribution of the term *aṭarah* to the *Shekhinah* is made explicitly: "*Malkhut* is called *aṭarah*, and she is not called in this way except when she ascends to *Keter*, and from there she is a crown on the head of her husband, a glorious crown (*aṭeret tiferet*). Similarly, [she is the] crown on the Torah scroll, and the crown on the head of every righteous man, that is, the corona on the phallus (*aṭarah al yesod*). These aspects are in the aspect of the *yod* that is in her, and from the side of the aspect of *Keter* she is the crown (*aṭarah*)."
  93. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 19–20.
  94. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 17a.
  95. Babylonian Talmud, Menahot 29b.
  96. *Pardes Rimmonim* 27:10, 61d–62a.
  97. Occasionally, Cordovero does emphasize that the feminine *Malkhut* assumes a higher ontic status than the masculine when she rises to the status of the crown on the head of the male. See, for example, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar* (Jerusalem, 1973), 2:1: "The highest [of all levels] is that she becomes the 'crown of her husband' (*aṭeret ba'lah*), for [in] this [aspect] she is certainly above him and he draws from her, and she is made into a crown for his head." On the elevation of *Malkhut* to *Abba*, that is, *Ḥokhmah*, whence she is bound to *Keter*, see *Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar* (Jerusalem, 1987), 15:236. In that context, three elevations are attributed to *Malkhut*: the first involves her ascent to the bosom of *Tiferet*, which elevates her above *Netsah* and *Hod*; the second entails her ascent to the status of a "capable wife who is a crown for her husband" (Prov. 12:4), which is depicted as the *yod* on top of the *waw*; and the third relates to her ascent to *Ḥokhmah*, which binds her to *Keter*.

98. This motif is repeated on a number of occasions in the later strata of zoharic literature. See Zohar 2:158a (*Ra'aya Meheimna*); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Introduction, 16a; sec. 10, 24b; sec. 13, 27b; sec. 19, 41a; sec. 21, 44b, 62b.
99. Regarding this imagery in the later strata of the Zohar, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Images of God's Feet: Some Observations on the Divine Body in Judaism," in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 161–162.
100. *Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar* (Jerusalem, 1986), 14:109.
101. See Zohar 1:132b, 133a, 156b (*Sitrei Torah*), 246a; 2:183a; 3:97b (*Piqqudin*), 120b, 261b, 284b; Wolfson *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 79; idem, *Along the Path*, p. 240 n. 108.
102. Cordovero's comment reflects the particular formulation in Zohar 3:169b: "As the angel of the Lord stood by' (Zech. 3:5). What is [the meaning of] 'stood by?' This is the crown that is called the angel of the Lord, and it stands on the heads of the righteous."
103. "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 115, previously cited in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 275 n. 14. In this connection, it is of interest to note the comment of Jacob Emden, *Siddur Amudei Shamayim* (Altona, 1745), 339b: "One says silently 'Come forth, O bride, the Sabbath queen' (*bo'i khallah shabbat ha-malkah*), for it is in the secret of *Da'at*, which unifies them. At first when she prepares herself to enter she is called the 'bride' (*kallah*), but when she enters the nuptial chamber and she is united [with the male] she is called the 'queen' (*ha-malkah*)." The transition from bride to queen noted by Emden parallels the distinction I have drawn between bride and crown. On the transformation of the feminine (*neqevah*) to the bride (*kallah*) through the agency of the male, see *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, 65a.
104. Wolfson, "Re/membering the Covenant."
105. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 3:252.
106. *Shevah Imrei Hen* (Jerusalem, 1987), p. 19. A similar explanation can be found in Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz, *Siddur Qol Ya'akov* (Slavuta, 1804), Kawwanat Shabbat, 11a: "Come in peace, crown of her husband.' This verse is speaking about the additional soul that is received now in the field according to the secret of the supplementary Sabbath. It comes from *Malkhut*, which is called 'glorious crown' (*ateret tiferet*), and everything is through *Yesod*, which illuminates her. And this is [the meaning of] 'come in peace,' the secret of *Yesod*, which is the secret of the domestic welfare (*shelom bayit*), the soul that comes forth from *Malkhut*, which is called 'crown of her husband' (*ateret ba'lah*)."
107. The coronation of the *Shekhinah* as an intrinsic feature of the Sabbath is emphasized in other kabbalistic sources wherein it is clear that a phallic transformation is implied by this act of crowning. For example, see the following description of the *Shekhinah* in the hymn *el mistatter be-shafirir hevyon*, composed by Abraham Maimin, in Abraham Abba, *Emunat Avraham al Zemiroi Shabbat Qodesh* (Eshdod, 1996), p. 59: *na haqem malkhut david u-shelomo ba-atarah she-itte'rah lo immo keneset yisra'el kallah qeru'ah vi-ne'imah ateret tiferet be-yad y'hw'w*. Significantly, in several places in his hymn *azammer bi-shevahim*, Luria describes the condition of *Malkhut* on Friday evening in terms of the imagery of being crowned from the masculine potency.