



BRILL

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF
JEWISH STUDIES 14 (2020) 215–263

European Journal of
JEWISH STUDIES
brill.com/ejjs

Heeding the Law beyond the Law: Transgendering Alterity and the Hypernomian Perimeter of the Ethical

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Abstract

This essay will examine the viability of a kabbalistic ethics from the vantage point of what I have identified in previously published studies as the hypernomian foundation of the nomos, the grounding of the law in the ground that exceeds the law of the ground. Contrary to Scholem, who put the emphasis on an antinomian impulse that is in conflict with the tenets of the tradition, I argue that the hallmark of religious nihilism is the promulgation of the belief that impiety is the gesture of supreme piety. In the ensuing analysis, I will explore the subject of hypernomianism by a close analysis of what may be called in Derridean terms the law beyond the law, which he identified further as the nonjuridical ideal of justice, the gift of forgiveness, the aspect of pure mercy in relation to which it is no longer viable to distinguish guilt and innocence.

Keywords

mysticism – piety – morality – transgendering – alterity – hypernomian perimeter – ethical

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R. Yose the Galilean used to say, “The one occupied with a religious duty is exempt from a religious duty.”

B. SUKKAH 26A

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There is heresy that is confession and confession that is heresy.

ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK, *Shemonah Qevašim*, 1:633



This excess with regard to the laws of nature, as well as to the laws of culture, is always an excess with regard to the whole, and I do not take the difficulty lightly. It is almost unthinkable, very close to impossible, precisely. [...] And can “declaring oneself Jewish,” in whatever mode (and there are so many), grant a privileged access to this justice, to this law beyond laws?

JACQUES DERRIDA, “Avowing—The Impossible: ‘Returns,’ Repentance, and Reconciliation”



This essay will examine the viability of a kabbalistic ethics from the vantage point of what I have identified in previously published studies as the hypernomian foundation of the nomos, the *grounding of the law in the ground that exceeds the law of the ground*. Contrary to the opinion of Gershom Scholem, who put the emphasis on an antinomian impulse that is potentially, and at times actually, in conflict with the tenets of the tradition, I have argued that the hallmark of religious nihilism is the promulgation of the belief that impiety is the gesture of supreme piety, that nullification of the law is the most pristine manifestation of compliance to the law.¹ Extended more broadly, the goal of mystical experience is not the dissolution of all form, as Scholem argued, since there is no way to the formless but through the forms conserved in the suspension of their formation, no seeing of the face but through the veil that unveils the face that is veiled. There is thus no epistemological basis for Scholem’s further surmise that the extreme expression of mystical nihilism, as we find in the case of Paul in late antiquity or in the radical wing of the Sabbatian movement and in later Frankism in the early modern period, entails the unequivocal rejection of all authority and the creation of new forms that displace the older ones.²

1 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 186–285; idem, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 161–199.

2 See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken, 1969), 11. Compare *ibid.*, 27–28; idem, “Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen,” in idem, *Judaica 4*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 134–135. On the fundamentally amorphous nature of mystical experience, see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 8.

The rabbinic slogan *biṭṭulah shel torah zehu qiyyumah*, “the abrogation of the Torah is its fulfilment,”³ epitomizes the hypernomian as opposed to the antinomian ideal as Scholem argued.⁴

In the ensuing analysis, I will explore the subject of hypernomianism by a close analysis of what may be called in Derridean terms *the law beyond the law*, which he identified further as the nonjuridical ideal of justice, the gift

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- The formlessness underlying the mystical experience of ecstasy potentially threatens to transcend the more restrictive forms of the institutionalized religion that provide the matrix wherein it took shape. The success of a mystical tradition in any particular religious framework is thus commensurate to the capacity of the mystic to hold the potential anarchy of the ecstasy in check. From Scholem’s perspective, the efficacy of mysticism as a historical phenomenon is tied to the ability to restrain the latent lawlessness of the new impulses from breaking through the shell of the laws of the established religious system. The novel interpretation of the old values, as opposed to the engendering of new values, secures the viability of the experience buttressing the mystical revolution. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1956), 8–10. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 7–11, formulated this aspect of the mystical as the dialectic of the conservative and the innovative.
- 3 b. Menaḥot 99b. The formulation of the dictum attributed to Reish Laqish according to the received text is *pe’amim she-biṭṭulah shel torah zehu yesodah*, “sometimes the abrogation of the Torah is its foundation.” However, the version cited by Scholem, *biṭṭulah shel torah zehu qiyyumah* (see following note for references) is attested in several extant sources. For example, see *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Judah Wistinetzki, second edition (Frankfurt am Main: M. A. Wahrmann, 1924), sec. 1313, 324; Eliezer Papo, *Pele Yo’eš* (Jerusalem, 1986), 69 (s.v. *halikhah*), 112 (s.v. *hesed*), 113 (s.v. *ḥasidut*), 115 (s.v. *heshbon*); Ševi Elimelekh Shapira, *Benei Yissaskhar ha-Shalem we-ha-Mevu’ar* (Jerusalem: Oz we-Hadar, 2012), vol. 5, 281; the commentary *Ramatayim Šofim* by Samuel of Sieniawa on *Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu* (Jerusalem: Meqor ha-Sefarim, 2012), ch. 4, 62n22.
- 4 Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 84. See also idem, *Major Trends*, 317 and 421n65; idem, *The Messianic Idea and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 84. It behooves me to note that Scholem was not always consistent on this point. For the most part, he adopted dichotomous language according to which the mystical impulse, when not restrained by convention, is in conflict with the tenets of traditional religion and hence necessitates a transvaluation of all existing values. On occasion, however, Scholem seems to occupy the borderline where religion and nihilism, faith and heresy, lawfulness and anarchy, are not irresolvable antinomies but rather opposites identical in the identity of their opposition. The point is underscored in the title of Scholem’s lecture “Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen,” delivered in Eranos in 1974 but not published until 1977. However, even in that lecture, nihilism is defined as emerging from the rejection of a reality whose value and meaning it considers worthy of destruction (Scholem, *Judaica* 4, 131). For my interpretation of the talmudic dictum, which highlights the hypernomian implication of fulfilling the law by its annihilation, see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 237–238. Finally, it is worth recalling the suggestion of Patrick B. Koch, *Human Self-Perfection: A Re-Assessment of Kabbalistic Musar—Literature of Sixteenth-Century Safed* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2015), 203, that Scholem distinguished two ideal types in the Weberian sense, the “strictly nomian” *šaddiq* and the “hypernomian” *ḥasid*. It must be noted, however, that Scholem himself never employed the terms “hypernomian” or “hypernomianism.”

of forgiveness, the aspect of pure mercy in relation to which it is no longer viable to distinguish guilt and innocence.⁵ The ideal elicited from kabbalistic sources has its conceptual basis in the rabbinic depiction of the suspension of the polarity of merit [*zekhut*] and demerit [*hovah*] in the messianic future,⁶ the axiological basis that upholds the system of reward and punishment required by biblical law and the talmudic application thereof. I will once again consider the hypernomian as it impinges on the construction of the other both internally in the guise of the Jewish woman and externally in the guise of the non-Jew. The two sites of the confabulation of otherness mirror one another and thus one cannot appreciate the status of the feminine or the status of the Gentile without considering both of these vantagepoints. Can we elicit from kabbalistic material a genuine overcoming of gender dimorphism and cultural prejudice? Is the darkness on the left obliterated or restored to the light on the right? Are the shells of impurity decimated or refurbished as part of the sacred? In my mind, this is the litmus test of whether or not it is appropriate to speak of the mystical worldview that has informed the thinking and practice of kabbalists through the centuries as propagating an ethical sensibility.

1 Infinitivity and the Polyontology of the Metaontological Void

In kabbalistic texts going back as early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, at the apex of the contemplative ladder one encounters the nothingness of infinity, the originary void that transcends all differentiation, the not-other of the other fluctuating between the potential actuality of nonbeing and the actual potentiality of being.⁷ By stating that the ground of the nonground exceeds all distinctions, even the distinction between distinction and nondistinction, I do not mean to imply that *Ein Sof*—the metaontological source of all that exists, the nonessence of the essence whose essence

5 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 167, and references to Derrida cited on 411n86.

6 *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah*, ed. Mordecai Margulies (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 18:1, 391.

7 See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Nihilating Nonground and the Temporal Sway of Becoming: Kabbalistically Envisioning Nothing Beyond Nothing," *Angelaki* 17 (2012): 31–45; and in much greater detail in idem, *Heidegger and Kabbalah: Hidden Gnosis and the Path of Poiësis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 97–136. Needless to say, other scholars have written about the kabbalistic *Ein Sof*. Of special note is the work of Sandra Valabregue-Perry, *Concealed and Revealed: 'Ein Sof' in Theosophic Kabbalah* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2010) [Hebrew]; idem, "The Concept of Infinity (*Eyn-Sof*) and the Rise of Theosophical Kabbalah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102 (2012): 405–430.

consists of not having an essence—is an invisible substance positioned outside the periphery of visibility, a something that is innately hidden. What I intend, rather, is that *Ein Sof* is the “light that does not exist in the light” [*nehora de-lo qayyema bi-nehora*], according to the seemingly illogical formulation in a passage from one of the most enigmatic sections of the zoharic compilation, the unit that deals with the mystery of the line-of-the-measure [*qaw ha-middah*].⁸ Although the precise terminology of *Ein Sof* is not used in this passage, the fuller context makes it clear that the author is speaking about the inscrutable origin that remains concealed in the inscrutability of the beginning: “The light that does not exist in the light engraved and issued the spark of all sparks, and it struck in the will of wills, and it was hidden therein and it is not known.” Lacking the appropriate language to name the nameless infinitivity that is neither something nor nothing, *lo yesh we-lo ayin*, the medieval kabbalist speaks paradoxically about a light too luminous to be characterized as light, a light so incandescent it sheds the garment of light in which it is attired. This light that is not light radiates in the core of the invisibly visible spectrality glimpsed within but at the same time removed from the panoply of the visibly invisibles that constitute the immanent realities of the cosmological chain of the four worlds posited by kabbalists—emanation [*ašilut*], creation [*ber'ah*], formation [*yeširah*], and doing [*asiyyah*]. The infinite does not betoken a transcendent being beyond being, a *hyperousios*, but rather the principle of falsification of any such being, the signifier of the absence of signification,⁹ the signifier that signifies neither presence of absence nor absence of presence but the presence that is absent in the absence of being present in the infinite number of actualities potentially contained in the nonbeing of the being beyond being and nonbeing.¹⁰ With respect to the infinite, therefore, actuality is the potential and potentiality is the actual; there is nothing more necessary than the pure contingency of necessity and nothing more contingent than the pure necessity of contingency. From this point of view, we could say that

8 *Zohar Ḥadash*, ed. Reuven Margalioṯ (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1978), 57a. Concerning the term *qaw ha-middah* and this section of the zoharic anthology, see the remarks in Elliot R. Wolfson, “Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery in the Zohar,” in *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan Press, 1990), 231–232n132 (English section).

9 The apophatic implication of the expression *Ein Sof* is often emphasized by kabbalists. For example, see Ḥayyim Viṯal, *Adam Yašar* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1994), 1; Joseph Ergas, *Tokhaḥat Megullah we-ha-Šad Naḥaš* (London, 1715), 3b–4a.

10 I have taken the liberty to repeat the analysis in Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 62. See *ibid.*, 66–67, 104, 109, 113–114, 138, 167–168, 212.

Ein Sof is concurrently metaontological and polyontological;¹¹ that is, the beyondness of its being beyond being implies a limitless and indeterminate multiplicity of limited and determinate beings. The infinite polyontology imparts the idea that difference is at the core of the same, which is to say, there is no core but the lack of a core, no essence but the essence beyond essence, the essence that is the exception to essence,¹² or expressed in the hermeneutic rules concerning the particular [*perat*] and the universal [*kelal*] attributed to R. Ishmael, often invoked by kabbalists, there is nothing in the particular that is not in the universal and nothing in the universal that is not in the particular and hence the individual needs the general as the general needs the individual.¹³

Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly I will illustrate the point by reference to the argument of the Sabbatian Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon (c. 1655–c. 1730) that the term *Ein Sof* connotes “an incomposite essence in the extreme of incompositeness [*ešem eḥad pashuṭ be-takhlit ha-peshiṭut*]”¹⁴ that relates to the emanation of the light of *Attiqa Qaddisha*, the cause of all things through the agency of its soul, the cause of causes [*illat ha-illot*], to which are applied¹⁵ the zoharic expressions the “soul of everything living,” *nishmeta de-khol ḥayyei*,¹⁶

11 The expression *polyontology* is used by David G. Leahy and some of his interpreters to describe the thinking now occurring. See David G. Leahy, “The Deep Epidermal Surface: The Cornerstone Construction Order, Minimum Order Tetrahedron Hypercube, & Absolute Dead Center Hypercube,” dgleahy.net/p40.html, where the “absolute discontinuity of the continuum” is described as the “absolutely polyontological reality.” See Lissa McCulloch, “D. G. Leahy,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Radical Theology*, eds. Christopher D. Rodkey and Jordan E. Miller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 271: “Revelation occurs not in this or that selective event or moment; rather, the history of thinking reveals in due time that existence itself is universally and essentially revelatory. Matter, the Body itself—this absolutely particular, absolutely differentiated, infinitely finite poly-ontological existence—is holiness itself.” On polyontology, see also Alina N. Feld, “Teilhard de Chardin and D. G. Leahy: Philosophical Foundations for Sustainable Living,” in *Knowledge and Enchantment: A World without Mystery? The Twenty-fourth Ecumenical Theological and Interdisciplinary Symposium, December 3, 2016* (New York: The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, 2017), 40–41.

12 I am indebted here to the formulation of David G. Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy: The Historical Impact* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 115: “The essence beyond essence—the exception to essence that *is* essence—of a categorically new logic would be the essence of the new. For the first time the essence of logic would be novelty” (emphasis in original).

13 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 222–225, 241n19, 253nn212–213.

14 Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in idem, *Oz le-Elohim* (Berlin, 1713), 2a.

15 Ibid., 2d.

16 *Zohar* 3:141b (*Idra Rabba*): *nishmeta de-khol ḥayyei de-eilla we-tatta*. Compare Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 4a, 6b, 8b, 17a, 46c, 47c, 56c; *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, 5d, 23a, 51d, 52a. See idem, *Raza de-Yihuda* (Venice, 1711), 17b, where the *alef* is said to allude to the three knots

and the “hardened spark,” *boşina de-qardinuta*.¹⁷ We can retain the philosophical locution of an incomposite essence if we appreciate that this essence bespeaks the abolition of essence, the essence whose essence consists of having no essence. Positively expressed, the term *Ein Sof* denotes the diffusion [*hitpashshetut*] of the infinite light from the source that can be analogized to the flame of the candle, which is compared to the vessel that receives the emanation.¹⁸ Ḥayon thus summarizes his position:

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- of faith (*Attiqa Qaddisha*, *Malka Qaddisha*, and *Shekhinah*) and the soul of everything living is symbolized by the tittle [*qoş*] of the supernal *yod* of the *alef*. And see *ibid.*, 20a, where the “soul of all souls” [*nishmeta de-khol nishmatin*], which spreads forth and unifies all the potencies, is described as the “soul that has no partner” [*nishmata de-leit zug*]. In Ḥayon’s tripartite theosophical structure, *Attiqa Qaddisha*, which is beyond gender polarity, emanates the masculine *Malka Qaddisha*—the crown of lovingkindness [*hesed*]—and the feminine *Shekhinah*—the crown of power [*gevurah*]. See Ḥayon, *Raza de-Yihuda*, 4b; *idem*, *Oz le-Elohim*, 59b.
- 17 *Zohar* 1:15a, 18b, 86b, 172a; 2:133b, 177a, 233a, 244b, 260a; 3:48b, 49a, 138b, 139a, 292b, 295a, 295b; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 57a, 58a, 58d, 65c, 73b, 74b. Compare Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in *Oz le-Elohim*, 2d, and *ibid.*, 59b: “You have already been informed that *Attiqa Qaddisha de-khol Qaddishayya* is also called *Adam Qadmon*, and this is the import of the verse ‘The candle of the Lord is the soul of man’ [*ner yhw nishmat adam*] (Proverbs 20:27). That is to say, the one who illumines *YHWH*, which is the *Malka Qaddisha*, is the soul of *Adam Qadmon*. [...] Therefore, the soul is called *boşina de-qardinuta*, for the word *qardia* in Greek is heart, and *boşina* is candle; that is, the candle of the heart is the candle of *YHWH*, which is *Malka Qaddisha*, the heart of all hearts.” I have not found another source that traces the word *qardinuta* to the Greek *καρδιά*.
- 18 Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in *Oz le-Elohim*, 34a: “And thus this is the truth for it is impossible for there to be emanation if there is not a vessel delegated to receive the portion from the emanator. An analogy to this is if there is no candle, there could not be a flame. It is necessary that before there will be a candle and afterward the flame descends upon it.” On the image of the flame and the candle, see the passage from Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Naḥash Neḥoshet*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1900, 2a: “In the emanation there is complete unity [*aḥdut gamur*] like the image of the flame of the candle, for even though you see three colors of lights in it, a person does not have the capacity to divide and to separate one color from another.” (I note, parenthetically, that on the first folio of the manuscript copy of Ḥayon’s treatise in Amsterdam, Ets Haim Bibliothek, 47 B 8, the title is given as *Neḥash ha-Neḥoshet*, which is closer to the scriptural idiom in Numbers 21:9.) See also Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Shalvet Yah* (Amsterdam, 1714), 27a–b. The passage communicates Ḥayon’s willingness to respond to the criticisms levelled against him as we find in the polemical work of Ergas. See reference below, n. 20. Ḥayon applies to *Attiqa Qaddisha* what was usually applied to *Ein Sof*, including the act of constriction [*şimşum*]. The movement of constriction [*tenu’at ha-şimşum*] can only be explained if we assume the aptitude for boundary within the boundless, and this can only be assumed if we further posit the existence of both masculine mercies [*ḥasadim*] and feminine powers [*gevurot*] in the source of everything, the *Attiqa Qaddisha de-khol Qaddishayya*; the delimitation of the limitless light occurs as a consequence of the arousal of the female potency contained therein. See Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*,

Attiqa Qaddisha de-khol Qaddishayya was prior to everything, and his soul was within him, and he and his soul are one, for his soul was from within him [*mineih u-veih*] [...] and this soul is called the soul of everything living [*nishmeta de-khol hayyei*], and the light that disseminates from it is called the incomposite infinite [*ein sof ha-pashut*], for there is no end to its dissemination [*de-ein sof lehitpashtuto*]. In that light [...] there is no will at all because it is not the root but only a light that disseminates from the root like the light that disseminates from the candle.¹⁹

Ḥayon's perspective was notoriously criticized by Joseph Ergas,²⁰ but, in my assessment, the alleged heterodoxical interpretation in fact brings to light a conceptually nuanced understanding of infinitivity implicit in older sources.²¹ *Ein Sof* should not be treated as a reified substance, even if that substance is rendered in philosophical terms as the necessary of existence [*mehuyav*

in *Oz le-Elohim*, 2d, 5d. Compare the text entitled *Keter Elyon* appended to Ḥayon, *Raza de-Yihuda*, 30b: "It is called *Attiqa Qaddisha* because there is no beginning to your beginningness [*le-re'shitkha leit reisha*], for you existed before every existent, and when it arose in your will to bring forth your world, you constricted your light by means of your movement." I hope to deal more extensively with Ḥayon's interpretation of *šimšum* in a separate study.

19 Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 3b.

20 Ergas, *Tokhaḥat Megullah*, 3b–14a.

21 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 107–110. My interpretation of Ḥayon bears affinity to the claim that the revolutionary dimension of his kabbalah is centered on his innovation regarding the inverse relationship of *Ein Sof* and *Keter* proffered by Matanya Fischheimer, "Anyone Who Looks at the Brass Serpent Shall Survive"—A New Inquiry into the Thought of Neḥemiah Ḥayon," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 24 (2011): 241–261 [Hebrew]. According to Fischheimer, *ibid.*, 245, Ḥayon distinguished between two triads: the first triad is within the First Cause, which consists of *Nishmeta de-khol hayyei*, *Attiqa Qaddisha de-khol Qaddishin*, and *Ein Sof*; and the second triad or the three knots of faith [*telat qishrei meheimanuta*], which consists of *Attiqa Qaddisha*, *Malqa Qaddisha*, and *Shekhinah*. It is also noteworthy to recall the contention of Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995), 49–52 [Hebrew] that the controversy surrounding Ḥayon was related to the indiscriminate transmission and unfettered interpretation of secrets rather than to the substance of his teachings. See Yehuda Liebes, *From Shabbetai Tsevi to the Gaon of Vilna: A Collection of Studies* (Tel-Aviv: Idra, 2017), 374 [Hebrew]. Regarding Sabbatianism more generally and the breaking of the code of esotericism, see *ibid.*, 81. On Ḥayon's rejection of kabbalistic esotericism, see also Pawel Maciejko (ed.), *Sabbatian Heresy: Writings on Mysticism, Messianism, and the Origins of Jewish Modernity* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), xxviii, 88–89, and the passage from *Oz le-Elohim* translated, *op. cit.*, 91–101. For an historical survey of the eruption and the expansion of the Ḥayon controversy, see Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 75–159.

ha-mešit'ut] that is an incomposite essence [*ešem pashut*] whose oneness cannot be treated mathematically.²² The Sabbatian context of Ḥayon's thought is irrelevant with regard to this matter. He properly emphasized that the expression *Ein Sof* betokens the event of infinite emanation rather than the emanation of the infinite; that is, *Ein Sof* functions grammatically as a verbal noun that names a process rather than a substance. To paraphrase Ḥayon, infinitivity is not a thing [*davar*] to which the name *Ein Sof* is applied,²³ or as he puts it in another passage, "*Ein Sof* is not a thing [*mitla*] that exists to be known by others, for there is no volition in it, since it is diffusion and not an essence [*lefi she-hu hitpashshetut we-eino ešem*] [...] it does not produce an end because it is not a beginning and it does not produce a beginning because it has no end, for *Ein Sof* is the diffusion, and the diffusion, which is *Ein Sof*, comes forth from the inception that is the wellspring [*ha-nevi'u*]."²⁴

On the face of it, the application of the term *Ein Sof* to the emanation of the essentiality [*ašmut*] of the root seems both idiosyncratic and insubordinate. A careful examination of Ḥayon's view, however, indicates that his assertion that the mystery of the infinite [*raza de-ein sof*] is the hiddenness

22 Ergas, *Tokhaḥat Megullah*, 4b. The opening passage in Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 1a, addresses this very characterization of the infinite: "The word *Ein Sof* instructs that it is an incomposite essence [*ešem pashut*], and it is not comprehended [with respect to] how and why, and [it is] nothing." And compare idem, *Naḥash Neḥoshet*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1900, 2b (partially corrected according to MS Amsterdam, Ets Haim Bibliotheek, 47 B 8, 1b): "Know that the rabbis, blessed be their memory, said that 'he is his name and his name is he' [*hu shemo u-shemo hu*], and everything is one. The secret of the word *hu* [איה] is an abbreviation for *hu u-shemo ehad*. He and his name were prior to everything and he is the necessary of existence [*meḥuyav ha-mešit'ut*]." The purpose of the *šimšum* was to disclose the name, but the name was coeternal with the essence. Although the appropriation of philosophical terminology on the part of kabbalists has a long history, in the specific case of Ḥayon, it may reflect the approach of his teacher, Abraham Miguel Cardoso, to make use of the intellect to expound the secrets of the divine. See Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, 40–41. For the privileging of kabbalah over philosophy, see Ḥayon, *Shalhevet Yah*, 20b–21a. On Ḥayon's vengeful attitude to the philosophers who hated him, see Fischheimer, "Anyone Who Looks," 256–257. In contrast to Liebes's surmise, *On Sabbateanism*, 152, 224, that Ḥayon followed the speculative path of Cardoso as opposed to the more mythical orientation of Nathan of Gaza, Fischheimer, "Anyone Who Looks," 254, discerned a definite influence on Ḥayon of Nathan's central idea of the distinction within *Ein Sof* between the light that has thought [*or she-yesh bo maḥashavah*] and the light that has no thought [*or she-ein bo maḥashavah*].

23 Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in *Oz le-Elohim*, 1d.

24 Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 3b. Ḥayon's language is based partially on *Zohar* 2:239a, and parallel in *Zohar* 3:26b. Compare Ḥayon, *Shalhevet Yah*, 15b–16a.

[*šeni'u*] that is concealed in the light that emanates therefrom,²⁵ or the soul of all souls [*nishmeta de-khol nishmatin*] that dwells within *Attiqa Qaddisha de-khol Qaddishin*,²⁶ are efforts to avoid ontologizing infinity. For Ḥayon, this is the apophatic import of the zoharic statement “the infinite has no trace at all” [*ein sof leit beih rishuma kelal*];²⁷ it has no trace because it is nothing, literally, not a thing that can be said to exist autonomously.²⁸ Consider Ḥayon’s summation of his position in *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*: “For the word *Ein Sof* is

25 Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 4a. See *ibid.*, 5c, where Ḥayon asserts that one should not attribute the expression *Ein Sof* to the simple will, the hiddenness that is prior to the contraction of the light. Compare Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Sefer Ta’asumot*, MS London, Jews’ College 62, 28b: “For *Ein Sof* is the light that disseminates from the cause of all causes [*or mitpashet me-illat al kol illot*]. [...] For *Ein Sof* is the place filled from the light of that hiddenness [*šeni'u*] that is within it, the will of all wills in it. It is not a place filled from its light but the light that disseminates from it is its place [*or ha-mitpashet mimmennu hu meqomo*], and that light is called *Ein Sof* because it does not dwell in a place but it extends limitlessly [*mitpashet she-ein lo sof*]. Therefore, it is called *Ein Sof*, and that hiddenness is the mystery of the infinite [*raza de-ein sof*] because it is the root and the source of that light that is known. It was verily hidden in its ether whence there emanated the *Malka Qaddisha* and the *Shekhinah*.” See as well Ḥayon, *Naḥash Neḥoshet*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1900, 4a, and 87b: “What is the difference between the mystery of the infinite and the infinite [*u-mah bein raza de-ein sof le-ein sof*] as it is brought in the *Zohar*? [...] There is a light that is more exalted, inner, hidden, concealed, secreted, and buried within the infinite, and it is the essence of divinity, and it is called the mystery of the infinite, and it is the hiddenness [*šeni'u*] [...] and it withdrew itself above and left its place for the creation of the worlds.” Insofar as the flame issues from *Attiqa de-khol Qaddishin*, which is the *raza de-ein sof*, all our prayers are addressed to it. See Ḥayon, *Naḥash Neḥoshet*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1900, 80a. Compare Fischheimer, “Anyone Who Looks,” 245–246, 251.

26 Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 4b–5a.

27 *Zohar* 1:21a.

28 Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 32b; *idem*, *Sefer Ta’asumot*, MS London, Jews’ College 62, 28b; *idem*, *Naḥash Neḥoshet*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1900, 3b. In the last context, Ḥayon anchors his metaontological understanding of infinity in the claim that he has not found in all of the *Zohar* that either the glory of the kingship [*kevod ha-malkhut*] or divinity [*ha-elohut*] is attributed to *Ein Sof*. For this reason, Ḥayon is opposed to the custom of kabbalists who refer to the infinite as *Ein Sof barukh hu*, and he insists that his interpretation is a secret that will be fully revealed in the time of the messiah. Compare *ibid.*, 79a, where Ḥayon interprets the apophatic statements about *Ein Sof* in the zoharic compilation as an indication that we cannot even speak figuratively about the infinite, whence he concludes that there is no passage in that compilation that suggests that *Ein Sof* should be designated theistically as the God of gods or the King of kings, or that we should say of *Ein Sof* “blessed be his name forever” or that “he was, he is, and he will be,” or that *Ein Sof* is the “essence of the faith” [*iqqar ha-emunah*]. Compare Ḥayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 61b, where the essence of the faith is identified with the soul of all souls and the cause of all causes within the manifestation of *Malka Qaddisha*. Regarding the spiritual versus the political depiction of the messianic era according to Ḥayon, see Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, 50, and the different view offered by Fischheimer, “Anyone Who Looks,” 258–261.

the light that emanates [*ha-or ha-mitpashet*], and thus you find that *Ein Sof* numerically equals *or* [both have the sum of 207], and he and his name were concealed within his ether that has no end [*de-awireih de-ein lo sof*],²⁹ and through the movement of *Attiqa Qaddisha* within that light, the contraction came to be in that place whence it emerged, it issued from the concealed of the concealment, from the mystery of the infinite, and through its movement from place to place, one fissure broke through [*baqa beq'ah ahat*], and it is the vacuum [*halal*] in which the worlds are created.³⁰ Hayon's stance is not inconsistent with many kabbalists who lacked the suitable nomenclature to convey the notion that *Ein Sof* designates a being whose being consists of being without the pretense of being, the essence whose essence consists of not having an essence.

The perspective I am proffering resonates as well with the metaontological understanding of *Ein Sof* found in the theosophic ruminations of the Lithuanian kabbalist Solomon ben Hayyim Eliashiv (1841–1926). Eliashiv distinguishes five levels of disclosure: the first is called *Ein Sof*, and it is also designated the supernal emanator [*ma'asil elyon*] and the cause of all causes [*illat al kol ha-illot*]; the second is the contraction [*šimšum*] and the line [*qaw*], which is also called the supernal lustre [*tehiru ila'ah*] or the primordial ether [*awir qadmon*]; the third is the primal human [*adam qadmon*], also called the supernal crown that is hidden and concealed [*keter elyon satim we-ṭamir*]; the fourth disclosure is *YHWH*, the essential name [*shem ha-ešem*] in which the infinite emanator is revealed; the fifth disclosure is the name *Elohim*, the manifestation of divinity in the worlds of creation, formation, and doing.³¹ For our immediate purpose, what is noteworthy is Eliashiv's identifying the infinite as the first disclosure, which he depicts as well as the supernal emanator and the cause of all causes. Closer scrutiny of Eliashiv's depiction of *Ein Sof* indicates that despite the use of such terminology, he does not view the infinite as an autonomous substance. The first three disclosures—the infinite

29 Compare Hayon, *Shalhevet Yah*, 10a.

30 Hayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in *Oz le-Elohim*, 6d.

31 Solomon ben Hayyim Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo Aḥlamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim* (Jerusalem: Aaron Barzanai, 2006), 4,5, 33. On the descent of the name *Elohim* and the sin of Adam in Eliashiv, see Jonathan Garb, "Shamanism and the Hidden History of Modern Kabbalah," in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, eds. April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 191n68. The designation of the Tetragrammaton as the essential name was appropriated by kabbalists from Jewish philosophers such as Abraham Ibn Ezra and Moses Maimonides. See, most recently, Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *YHWH: The Meaning and Significance of God's Name in Biblical, Rabbinic and Medieval Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2019), 126–129, 145, 158–162, 204, 214, 235–236 [Hebrew].

and the worlds of the infinite [*ein sof we-ha-olamot de-ein sof*]³²—are denominated as the void [*efes*], the nothing [*ayin*], and the long suffering or the long faced [*arikh anpin*], which is also called *Reisha de-lo Ityeda Attiq*, the head that is not known refers to the first three gradations and the ancient one to the lower seven gradations. The three supernal and universal radiances [*ṣaḥṣaḥot ha-elyonim ha-kelaliyim*] can be considered disclosures only in relation to the hidden truth above them; in and of themselves, the thought [*maḥashavah*] and the will [*raṣon*] of the infinite are not disclosures in actuality but are rather concealed in the utmost concealment from all the lower worlds.³³ In identifying the encompassing light of the infinite [*or ein sof ha-maqqif*] that is prior to the contraction as the first disclosure,³⁴ Eliashiv did not have the proper language to communicate the incommunicable idea of a disclosure of the undisclosable, but we can infer from his words that he did not consider infinity a metaphysical substance. Explicating the passage in *Idra Zuṭa*, “When *Attiqa Qaddisha*, the concealed of all the concealed, desires to be adorned, everything was adorned in the manner of male and female,”³⁵ Eliashiv remarks that the characterization of *Attiqa Qaddisha* as the concealed of all the concealed [*setima de-khol setimin*] alludes to the light of infinity that is garbed and unified in the head that is not known [*or ein sof yitbarakh shemo ha-mitlabesh u-meyuḥad be-reisha de-lo ityeda*].³⁶ If we continue to speak of the nameless revealed in the concealment of the name, then it is a nondual essence outside the parameters of an ontotheology.³⁷

32 See Ḥayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim*, ed. and ann. Joshua Lipschitz (Jerusalem, 2016), 4:10, 275: “Moreover, the supernal root of the holy Torah is in the supernal of the worlds that are all the worlds of the infinite [*olamot ha-ein sof*], the secret of the hidden garment [*sod ha-malbush ha-ne’lam*].” The allusion here is to the Saruqian doctrine of the garment, but what is of immediate interest to us is that reference is made to the worlds of the infinite. Concerning this passage from *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim*, and its reliance on Saruq, see Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Ḥaqdamot u-She’arim*, *Haqdamah le-Sha’ar ha-Poneh Qadim*, 124. On the worlds of the infinite, see *ibid.*, *Sha’ar ha-Poneh Qadim*, 30, 165.

33 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Ḥaqdamot u-She’arim*, 4:5, 33. Compare *ibid.*, 7:1.1, 69, where the five disclosures are said to correspond to the secret of the five configurations [*parṣufim*] in every world, an inference based on the principle that whatever is found in the generality [*kelalut*] will be found as well in the particularity [*peratut*] and in the particulars of the particularity [*peratei peratut*].

34 *Ibid.*, 7:1.2, 69.

35 *Zohar* 3:290a (*Idra Zuṭa*). For a more extended analysis of the gender implications of this zoharic passage, see Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 219–220.

36 Solomon ben Ḥayyim Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De’ah* (Jerusalem: Aaron Barzanai, 2005), part 1, 1.2.2, 16.

37 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 160–161.

As I have argued in a previous study, kabbalists fluctuate between understanding this nonduality either as the identity of difference, which implies a nonopposition of opposites, or as the difference of identity, which presumes an oppositionality of nonopposites.³⁸ The second option would safeguard the autonomy of the antinomical forces in the concurrence rather than the coincidence of contraries, and thus—following Laruelle—we could speak of *unilateral duality* in the infinite, the dual that precedes the bifacial duality of duality and nonduality; that is, the coupling of the two forces does not constitute a dyadic pair nor does the identity of the two constitute a synthetic unity of identity and nonidentity, the dialectical sublation of the bilateral difference in a totalizing aggregate.³⁹ If we interpret the nondual in the former way, however, the unity within infinity would have to be construed precisely as the totality whereby and wherein alterity is subsumed in the homogeneity of the same such that the otherness of the other is reducible to the identity of the non-other in which the array of discrete beings are unified. For the purposes of this study, what is noteworthy is that both interpretations challenge the conventional nomian and moralistic framework insofar as we can no longer differentiate between right and wrong or between permissible and prohibited, whether we imagine a nonrelational dual that precedes duality ($A + B$) or a correlational nonduality in which duality is surmounted ($A = B$).

38 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 98–105.

39 François Laruelle, “A Summary of Non-Philosophy,” *Pli* 8 (1999): 139–140, and esp. 143: “Of non-philosophy as unilateral duality. Non-philosophy is not a unitary system but a theoretical apparatus endowed with a twofold means of access or a twofold key, albeit radically heterogeneous ones since one of these keys is Identity. This is the ‘unilateral duality.’ Because of its radical immanence, which refuses all positing or consistency for itself, the vision-in-One is never present or positive, given within representation or transcendence, and manipulable in the manner of a ‘key.’ This duality is not one which has two sides: the Real does not constitute a side, only non-philosophy or philosophy’s relative autonomy does so. It is no longer a bifacial or bilateral apparatus like the philosophical one, but one that is *unifacial* or *unilateral*. A duality which is an identity but an identity which is not a synthesis: this is the very structure of Determination-in-the-last-instance. Non-philosophy thinks without constituting a system, without being unitary. For example, the subject in accordance with which it is produced (‘the Stranger’) is not something facing me, it is as a uniface and is for this reason a stranger to the World, a stranger to the law of bilaterality which is proper to philosophy and to the World, but not a stranger to the Real” (emphasis in original). Compare François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013), 55, and the succinct account of the concept of unilateral duality in Ray Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-Philosophy of François Laruelle,” *Radical Philosophy* 121 (2003): 27.

Through the course of many centuries, kabbalists have contemplated the infinitivity of the One that is not one, the one, that is, within which the henadological manifold is enfolded as the fractional generic of the fragmented whole, what Badiou would call the *multiple of multiples*, the pure multiple or the absolutely indeterminate that can never be specified as a determinate unity,⁴⁰ or, in Peircean terms, the plural singularity constitutive of the singular plurality that is the potentiality of the abnumeral multitudes indeterminate in their determinability and determinable in their indeterminacy.⁴¹ Speculation on *Ein Sof* in this vein has fostered the messianic consciousness that propels the mind to the path that exceeds all paths, the path that is genuinely no-path, the pathless path.⁴² Alternatively expressed, from a kabbalistic perspective, one must walk the path of Torah toward self-actualization whence one comprehends that the path leads to a hyper-lawfulness without the delineation of specific laws, a path that terminates in the breakdown of binary distinctions including the distinctions necessary to ratify both religious and moral order. Contra Scholem's emphasis on antinomianism, and a host of other scholars who have followed his lead, I have availed myself of the term *hypernomian* to underscore that the release from law is not attained by discarding the law but by executing the law with an intensity that pushes past its limit even as that limit is preserved in the act of defiance. The encroachment of boundary demarcates the threshold of the boundary to be encroached.⁴³ To get to the other side, as it were, requires the constant crossing of the border, indeed, a crossing that culminates with the crossing of the crossing, a process of overcoming that is seemingly endless in its undergoing.

2 Demarcating the Other Within and the Other Without

In this section, I will consider once again the hypernomian measure of justice as the immeasurable excess of measure displayed in the othering of the other

40 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 56, 59, 81, 265.

41 Charles S. Peirce, "The Logic of Continuity," in *Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Writings*, ed. Matthew E. Moore (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 185–186. For a more elaborate discussion, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Theosemiosis and the Void of Being: Kabbalistic Infinity through a Peircean Lens," in *Signs of Salvation: A Festschrift in Honor of Peter Ochs*, eds. Mark Randall James and Randi Rashkover (Eugene: Cascade Press, 2020).

42 Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 232, 262–263, 285.

43 *Ibid.*, 241–242, 268.

both externally and internally. *Prima facie*, one might presume that the obliteration of binaries would result both ideationally and practically in an egalitarian heterogeneity, a corrective to the gender inequality between male and female and the ethnic disparity between Jew and non-Jew. Lamentably, but not unpredictably, the situation is more complex. From kabbalistic literature, we may elicit the counterintuitive conclusion that eradication of difference can serve to fortify the very difference sought to be eradicated. Expressed in the celebrated language evoked by Paul in Galatians 3:28, when we proclaim that there is neither male nor female, it may be because the male incorporates the female, and when we profess that there is neither Jew nor Greek, it may be because the Jew is the ideal human that encompasses the Greek in the one body that is Christ Jesus. Lest there be any misunderstanding, I acknowledge that the baptismal formula can be read as an expression of a more genuinely democratic perspective, and this would include the elimination of the socio-economic difference that I left out, namely, the class distinction between slave and one who is free. The reading I have proposed, however, is equally plausible. More to the point, I invoke the text as a stratagem to shed light on the predominant—even if not exclusive—view that may be extracted from kabbalistic sources. Beholden to a hermeneutic that allows for such time inversions,⁴⁴ I do not feel it is an anachronism to read the Pauline text through the prism of the kabbalistic tradition. If it is the case, as I believe it is, that historical analysis is inescapably circumscribed within the temporal paradox of the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous—an instantiation of the larger neuroscientific paradigm of the enactive cognition of an embodied mind grounded in the groundlessness of the hermeneutic circularity endemic to the nature of life itself according to which organism and environment concomitantly, and not reciprocally, enfold into one another and unfold from one another⁴⁵—it is feasible to liberate oneself from the constraints of a monolithic linearity of time that can be read only unidirectionally, a conception of temporal irreversibility predicated on the spatial homogenization of time as a series of now points successively appearing and disappearing in a present strung between no longer now and not yet now.

I should add that I am aware, of course, that kabbalists endorse the containment of the masculine right in the feminine left as much as they subscribe to

44 Wolfson, *Language*, xv–xxxi. For a more recent discussion of hermeneutic circularity and the depiction of tradition as the genuine repetition of futural past, see idem, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 29–60.

45 Francisco J. Varela et al., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 217.

the containment of the feminine left in the masculine right. The mandate is to comprise the attribute of day in night and the attribute of night in day⁴⁶ with the goal of attaining the state in which there is neither day nor night insofar as the day subsumes the nocturnality of the night in its diurnality.⁴⁷ To mention one of many relevant zoharic passages, the union of Isaac and Rebecca is said to symbolize the unity of judgment [*dina*] and merit [*zekhuta*] so that there will be perfection. In the same passage, we read that the task allotted to the

46 *Zohar* 3:177b. The zoharic explanation is based on the comment of Rava on the wording of the liturgical blessing, derived from Isaiah 45:7, “who forms light and creates darkness,” in b. Berakhot 11b: “in order to mention the attribute of day in night and the attribute of night in day.” The dictum is attributed to Rabbah bar Ullah in b. Berakhot 12a. The theme is repeated in a number of zoharic passages. See *Zohar* 1:12b, 120b; 2:162a; 3:260b, 264a.

47 My language echoes the mystifying meditation of Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012) sec. 142, 207 (*Beiträge zur Philosophie [Vom Ereignis]*, GA 65 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989], 263): “The appropriating event and its joining in the abyss of time-space form the net in which the last god is self-suspended in order to rend the net and let it end in its uniqueness, divine and rare and the strangest amid all beings. The sudden extinguishing of the great fire—this leaves behind something which is neither day nor night, which no one grasps, and in which humans, having come to the end, still bustle about so as to benumb themselves with the products of their machinations, pretending such products are made for all eternity, perhaps for that ‘and so forth’ which is neither day nor night.” My thanks to Roger Friedland for reminding me of this passage. Heidegger returned to this issue in the seminar in Le Thor on September 2, 1968. See Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars: Le Thor 1966, 1958, 1969, Zähringen 1973*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 19; Martin Heidegger, *Seminare [GA 15]* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986), 301–302. In an effort to explain phenomenologically the experience [*Erfahrung*] of unity [*Einheit*] that is consequent to the disappearance of the power of conjoining [*die Macht der Vereinigung*], Heidegger proposed the following example: “‘Night falls, it is no longer day,’ and in this particular region where night brusquely succeeds the day, in such a way that the example directs us to the experience of a relation of strong opposition [*starken Gegensatzbeziehung*]. Where does the passage from day to night take place? ‘In what place’ does it take place? What is the unity whose splitting-in-two [*Aufspaltung in Zwei*] this transition [*Übergang*] presents? What is the Same [*das Selbe*] in which the day passes into the night? In such an experience, human beings stand in relation with something which is neither day nor night, even if not expressly thematized” (emphasis in original). Concerning this passage, see Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, foreword by William J. Richardson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 16, and on the theme of the nocturnal and the diurnal more generally, see Stanley Cavell, “Night and Day: Heidegger and Thoreau,” *Revue française d’études américaines* 91 (2002): 110–125. Heidegger’s words are carefully chosen: the site of the moment or the timespace in which day passes into night such that there is a transition to that which is neither day nor night is the Same, which in contrast to the Identical [*das Gleiche*], preserves the difference in the belonging-togetherness [*Zusammengehörigkeit*] of what is juxtaposed. Regarding this essential Heideggerian theme, see Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 9–13, 53n83, 265.

Sanhedrin was to join merit and judgment in order to prevent the force of the other side prevailing in the execution of the divine decree; this is also proffered as the mystical significance of Rosh ha-Shanah.⁴⁸ I chose this passage because, typically, the feminine is aligned with judgment, and it appears that in this case, Rebecca is connected to merit and Isaac to the left side. We should not be surprised, however, because the gender attribution is not necessarily correlated entirely with anatomical taxonomy.⁴⁹ Hence, Rebecca is somatically female but symbolically depicts a masculine trait, whereas Isaac is somatically male but symbolically depicts a feminine trait. Assuredly, this passage, and many others that could have been cited, validates the idea that perfection of the mystery of faith [*raza di-meheimanuta*] requires the pairing of the left in the right and of the right in the left. I contend nonetheless that there is an irreducible asymmetry between the two kinds of containment inasmuch as the ultimate goal is to ameliorate judgment by its inclusion in mercy and not to transform mercy into judgment—the former is unequivocally and consistently marked as the virtue of the righteous, the latter as the vice of the wicked.⁵⁰ To illustrate the point I will cite a portion from a zoharic homily on Qoraḥ:

Whoever makes the right left or the left right, it is as if he destroyed the world. Come and see: Aaron is the right, the Levites are the left. Qoraḥ wanted to change the right into the left, so he was punished. [...] R. Judah said, “Left is contained always in the right. Qoraḥ wanted to change the arrayment [*tiqquna*] of above and below, and thus he was eradicated from above and below.” [...] Whoever chases after something that is not his, it escapes him; and furthermore, what is his is lost to him. Qoraḥ pursued that which was not his, and that which was his was lost and he did not attain the other.⁵¹

To transmute the left into the right, or the right into the left, is detrimental, whereas the ideal is for the left to be contained in the right. Note that the same value is not conferred upon the containment of the right in the left. The disputation of Qoraḥ was that he wanted to reverse the order and turn the left into the right—alternatively, to upend the arrayment of above and below—by

48 *Zohar* 2:257a–b.

49 See my comments in Wolfson, *Language*, 459n250.

50 *Zohar* 2:178a: “If a person wants the holy king to illumine him in that world and to grant him a portion in the world to come, he should strive in this world to contain his actions in the right.”

51 *Zohar* 3:176a.

repossessing the authority of priesthood from Aaron. By pursuing what did not belong to him, he lost what was properly his own.

The zoharic orientation is well summarized by Isaac Luria (1534–1572) in one of the few documents that he actually composed, a commentary on the zoharic text *Sifra di-Şeni'uta*: “It was necessary for the supernal emanator to be arrayed as male and female so that all of the emanation will concatenate in this way and the judgments will be sweetened by mercy, for male is mercy and female is judgment as is known.”⁵² That this matter is not merely of theoretical concern but impinged on the kabbalistic understanding of ritual is attested in the following instruction of Ḥayyim Viṭal (1543–1620):

When a person dons his clothing, every time he gets dressed he should be careful to take the two sides of the garment with his right hand on his right side, and afterward he should take the left side of the garment with his left hand by way of the back. Afterward he should put on the right side of the garment with his right hand and then he should put on the left side of the garment with his left hand, and he should always intend to comprise everything in the right, and consequently the right will give to the left.⁵³

The onus is thus to make the female male and not the male female, and this applies even, nay especially, to the images that depict the future as the ascent of the female from the bottom to the top of the head of the male. To avoid misinterpretation, although this seems unavoidable, I will emphasize again that not only am I not denying the possibility of kabbalists' affirming the transgendering of the male into female but also I recognize that this is the eschatological telos that emerges from their theosophic speculation. The preference on the part of the male kabbalists, however, is the transgendering of the female as male so that judgment is ameliorated and converted into mercy rather than the transgendering of the male as female whereby mercy is denigrated and converted into judgment. Examination of the sources unfettered to identity politics and the need to anchor contemporary social change in a textual landscape produced in a vastly different environment—no matter how worthy that mission is—reveals that the empowering of the female is specularized from this vantagepoint. The feminine accorded agency is transvalued as masculine,

52 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yişḥaq, 2017), 166.

53 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Sha'ar ha-Kawwanot*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yişḥaq, 2019), 15.

a point unfortunately missed by the apologetic attempts to accord autonomy to the female persona, and this is so even when there is a reversal of the accepted hierarchy, either as the masculinization of the female or as the feminization of the male.⁵⁴ In the end, as I have tirelessly pointed out in my publications, the female is restored to the position of the diadem atop the head of the male, based on the scriptural metaphor “the woman of valor is a crown for her husband” [*eshet ḥayyil aṭeret ba’lah*]⁵⁵ as well as on the aggadic image of the righteous in the world to come sitting with their diadems on their heads.⁵⁶ To be sure, the transposal is also a transvaluation and thus the process of the elevation of the feminine is described variously as the elevation of the refined gold of Cain over the silver of Abel, as the restitution of the birthright to the Levites on the left from the Priests on the right,⁵⁷ and, perhaps most strikingly, as the attribution of the high priesthood to Qoraḥ in the future when good will be purified of evil and the powers [*gevurot*] of the feminine will be allocated a higher valence than the mercies [*ḥasadim*] of the masculine.⁵⁸

3 Female Encircling Male: Ascent of *Malkhut* to *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*

The most startling representation of this eschatological reversal is the depiction of the ascent of *Malkhut* to *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*, the return of the kingship at the base of the world of emanation to the head that is not known at the

54 Elliot R. Wolfson, “Phallic Jewissance and the Pleasure of No Pleasure,” in *Talmudic Transgressions: Engaging the Work of Daniel Boyarin*, eds. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert et al., in collaboration with James Adam Redfield (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 305–306.

55 Proverbs 12:4.

56 b. Berakhot 17a.

57 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Sefer ha-Gilgulim*, 2nd, revised edition (Jerusalem: Qoren, 2018), ch. 23, 89–93; idem, *Liqqutei Torah Nev'im u-Khetuvim* (Jerusalem: Or ha-Zohar, 2014), Yeḥezqel, 155.

58 Isaac Judah Yeḥiel Safrin of Komarno, *Heikhal Berakhah: Bemidbar* (Lemberg: Balaban, 1869), 107b–108a. The controversy of Qoraḥ with Moses and his desire to reclaim the priesthood from Aaron are resolved in the future when the rectification will be completed and the judgment of the female will prevail over the lovingkindness of the male. The overturning of the hierarchy is explained by the fact that the root of the soul of Qoraḥ is from the soul of Cain, which is superior to the root of the souls of Moses and Aaron from the soul of Abel. The future scenario is in diametric opposition to the zoharic explanation of Qoraḥ's rebellion. See reference above, n. 51. On the connection between Qoraḥ (related especially to Psalms 48) and the primordial Edomite kings, see Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Sefer Ta'asumot*, MS London, Jews' College 62, 15a–b.

summit.⁵⁹ At the conclusion of Viṭal's exposition of the zoharic image of the three heads,⁶⁰ we find an allusion to this secret in language that he received from Luria:

And this is what I heard from my teacher, blessed be his memory, in this matter, and know that it is as we have explained at first that there were nine original emanations together with the *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*, and they are the original ten *sefirot*, the roots for all the emanation. The matter of the reality of the emanation of *Malkhut*, however, was not yet revealed. Nevertheless, we will explain that the beginning of everything is this *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*, and through it you will understand the elevation of *Malkhut*, which is the "diadem on the head of the righteous,"⁶¹ and "it will be the chief cornerstone" (Psalms 118:22), and in the future its light will be greater than the sun.⁶²

The process to which Viṭal refers is a technical elaboration of an idea attested in much older sources—a reworking of the mythos of the ascending

59 On the elevation of *Malkhut*, the fourth leg of the divine chariot represented symbolically by David, to the source of everything [*shoresh ha-kol*], see Menaḥem Mendel of Shklov, *Mayyim Adirim* (Jerusalem: Hamesorah, 1987), 112.

60 *Zohar* 3:288a–b, 292b (*Idra Zuṭa*). Compare Luria's commentary to *Sifra di-Ṣeni'uta* in Viṭal, *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, 165–166. Combining the various relevant zoharic passages, Luria delineated the three heads of *Attiqa Qadisha* as the hidden wisdom that is not opened, the ancient holy one, which is the supernal crown, and the head that is no head, which is not known and which is called *Ein Sof*. See Viṭal's own elaboration on the image of the three heads in *Sha'ar Ma'amerei Rashbi*, 199–202. Especially noteworthy is the comment on p. 201 that even though the name *Attiqa Qadisha* comprises three heads, the intent is related to the essence found in all three. The third head is identified as "the hiding place of his might [Habakkuk 3:4] of the essence [*hevyon uzzo shel ha-ašmut*]." We can presume that the essence is both beyond and immanent within the three heads.

61 b. Megillah 15b.

62 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim* (Jerusalem: Barzanai, 2013), 13:2, 60d. Compare the passage from Viṭal's *Mavo She'arim* cited below at n. 90. See Safrin, *Heikhal Berakhah: Bemidbar*, 107b: "In the future, *Malkhut* will ascend to the *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*, and then all the desires and mercies will be nullified [...] for there is no bestowal of mercies, charity, or loaning and borrowing [...] but there is the governance of the gold in the extermination of all the shells and evil, and then there will be the governance of the gold and the empowerments of the kingship of heaven [*gevurot malkhut shamayim*], the diadem of her husband." On the redemptive status of the elevation of *Malkhut* to the supernal *Ayin*, see Isaac Judah Yeḥiel Safrin of Komarno, *Megillat Esther in Perush Ketem Ofir*, ed. Mattityahu Safrin (Jerusalem: Or Penei Yiṣḥaq, 2015), 254.

crown⁶³—related to the restoration of the last gradation *Malkhut* to the first gradation *Keter*.⁶⁴ The word *aṭarah*, as Moses Cordovero noted, applies to *Malkhut* because of its ascent to *Keter*.⁶⁵ This designation thus signifies that the lowest becomes the highest, an empowerment rooted in the assumption, as ludicrous as it might strike the ear, that the initial location of the feminine is in the corona of the phallus before there emerged an independent configuration that can be delineated as the female other, an othering that is closely linked with the death of the primordial kings of Edom, the source of impurity expunged from the economy of *Ein Sof*.⁶⁶ The cathartic process⁶⁷ is necessary for there to be alterity vis-à-vis the infinite in relation to which there is no otherness, or as kabbalists going back to Azriel of Gerona expressed it, *ein ḥus mimmennu*, there is nothing outside of it. Translating the theosophic symbolism psychoanalytically, the *ani* of ego consciousness rises to and is integrated

63 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 226–227, and reference to other scholars cited on 226n156 and 264n322. See also Arthur Green, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

64 On the ascent of the *Shekhinah*—symbolized as the crown—on the Sabbath as a prolepsis of the gender transformation of the endtime, see Elliot R. Wolfson, “Coronation of the Sabbath Bride: Kabbalistic Myth and the Ritual of Androgynisation,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997): 327–332.

65 See the text from Moses Cordovero’s *Elimah Rabbati* cited in Wolfson, “Coronation,” 336n91.

66 See the passages from Viṭal cited and analyzed in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 116–119; and see idem, *Language*, 310–311, 386–387.

67 Isaiah Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil and the ‘Kelippah’ in Lurianic Kabbalism* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1942), 54–59 [Hebrew]; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 267; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, 110–111; idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 129–131; Elliot R. Wolfson, “Divine Suffering and the Hermeneutics of Reading: Philosophical Reflections on Lurianic Mythology,” in *Suffering Religion*, eds. Robert Gibbs and Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 101–162, esp. 117–135. For an attempt to trace this motif to earlier kabbalistic sources, see Moshe Idel, “The Mud and the Water: Towards a History of a Simile in Kabbalah,” *Zutot* 14 (2017): 64–72. While I am sympathetic to Idel’s argument that the mythos in Lurianic material can be seen as an internal development of ideas expressed in older texts and not as a radical innovation, a methodology that I have adopted in my own scholarship, I do not think this diminishes the esoteric nature of the divine catharsis promulgated in the teaching of Luria, especially as it was explicated by disciples like Joseph Ibn Tabul. Just because there may be textual precedent for an idea, it does not mean that the idea does not preserve a profound secret and therefore should be treated esoterically. There is no reason to be skeptical about the marking of this matter as a profound mystery by the kabbalists themselves.

in the *ayin* of infinite nothingness.⁶⁸ The incorporation of the tenth in the first effectuates the circularization of the linear edifice of the divine: the supernal crown [*keter elyon*] is identified as the crown of kingship [*keter malkhut*], a transformation supported textually by the verse “I foretell the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10).⁶⁹ The matter can be cast as well in the terminological register of the capacity to receive and the potency to overflow; in the end, the former will rise higher than the latter, a supposition that goes beyond the claim that every attribute betrays the twofold nature of bestowing and receiving and therefore is androgynous.⁷⁰ The point here is the more radical assertion that receiving will be valorized as superior to giving, a mystery often linked exegetically to the words *neqevah tesovev gaver*, “the female will encircle the male” (Jeremiah 31:21).

These attempts to mark the eschatological transvaluation are the logical outcome of the assumption that in the beginning the female was comprised in the male as the diadem of the covenant and was not yet a distinct persona.⁷¹

68 That is, the words *ani* and *ayin*, which are linked respectively to *Malkhut* and *Keter*, are made up of the same consonants, and hence they are transposable. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 218. Compare Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 3:2, 17a: “Hence, it is called 'I [*ani*] and it is called 'nothing' [*ayin*], and this is the kingship of the primordial human [*malkhut de-adam qadmon*] and the crown of emanation [*keter de-ašilut*], and understand.” Concerning this passage and other related texts in the Lurianic corpus dealing with the symbolic identification of *ani* and *ayin*, see Yosef Ḥayyim of Baghdad, *Sod Yesharim*, in *Rav Pe'alim: Heleq Ḥoshen Mishpaṭ* (Jerusalem: Siah Yisra'el, 1994), part 4, sec. 1, 185–186, and more references to *malkhut de-adam qadmon* cited below, n. 76. On the gender implication of the restoration of *ani* to *ayin*, see Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto, *Adir ba-Marom*, ed. and ann. Mordekhai Chriqui (Jerusalem: Makhon Ramḥal, 2018), 364. The kabbalistic symbol of divine nothing has been addressed by a number of scholars. For a cogent explication, see the oft-cited study of Daniel C. Matt, “*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Robert K. C. Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121–159.

69 *Tiqqunei Zohar*, ed. Reuven Margaliot (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1978), introduction, 17a.

70 See the extended comments on this matter in Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 248–249n170.

71 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 218 and references on 248n170 to other scholarly works of mine where this theme is elaborated. The androcentric implication of the kabbalistic symbolism is attested in a conspicuous way in the following remark of Luria recorded by Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Sha'ar ha-Miṣwot*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yiṣḥaq, 2018), 171: “There are three aspects of *Malkhut*, the first is in the *aṭeret ha-yesod di-ze'ir anpin*, the second corresponds to *Yesod* itself, and the third corresponds to *Tiferet* that is within it or the aspect of the complete configuration [*parṣuf gamur*].” The first two aspects of *Malkhut* clearly relate to the masculine, the corona of the phallus of *Ze'ir Anpin* or the phallus itself, but even the third aspect, which signals her status as an independent configuration, is described in relation to her male consort *Tiferet*.

This is not to say that the status assigned to the feminine is lacking in potency. On the contrary, in Lurianic kabbalah and in subsequent texts based thereon, including Sabbatian literature, the aspect of the female incorporated in the male, designated as *malkhut de-ein sof*, signifies the demiurgic capacity for limit within the limitless, the very aptitude that facilitates the coming into being of entities indifferently differentiated from the differentiated indifference of infinitivity.⁷² Without this facet of the feminine lodged paradoxically in a world that is entirely masculine,⁷³ there would be no contraction and thus no othering of the infinite to create the other of that which is not-other, that is, that which both is and is not other in relation to itself.⁷⁴ To cite one of many texts that make this point, Joseph Ibn Ṭabul thus speculated on the status of *Ein Sof* antecedent to the emanation:

Know and understand that [with respect to] the supernal emanator, blessed be his name, prior to having created the lower world [...] he was one and his name was one [*hayah hu eḥad u-shemo eḥad*]; that is, “he” is his blessed self [*ašmo yitbarakh*], and “his name” the worlds [*ha-olamot*] [...] and all the worlds are called “his name,” for they all clothe him, the one above the other. [...] In the manner that his name is called the worlds for it is garbed in them, and when the matter is contemplated it is found that the blessed one is called his name, the Tetragrammaton, as is known, for everything is unified in relation to the name *YHWH* [...] and *Malkhut*, which is the garment, became the soul of all the worlds [...]. And all the worlds were submerged in him; that is to say, only he, blessed be he, was discernible, and his name indicated a slight disclosure [*me’at gilluy*], and it is the aspect of judgment, but his essence is entirely mercy, and everything was a complete unity, and everything was infinity [*ha-kol ein sof*], blessed be his name.⁷⁵

Prior to the emanation the infinite is marked by the scriptural idiom of God and his name being one (Zechariah 14:9). From the kabbalistic perspective, the prophetic description of the eschaton is applied to the primordial state in which the name—the Tetragrammaton—is coiled within the nameless. The name, moreover, is identified as *Malkhut* and as the delimitation of the worlds

72 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 165, 272–274, 293n153, 294n165.

73 Wolfson, “Phallic Jewissance,” 317–318.

74 Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 140, 197.

75 Joseph Ibn Ṭabul, *Derush Hefši Bah*, in Masoud Elḥadad, *Simḥat Kohen* (Jerusalem: Or ha-Sefer, 1978), 1a.

subsumed in the limitlessness of infinity. Paradoxically, the aspect of *Malkhut* is the quality of judgment in the domain of *Ein Sof* that is entirely merciful. Even though it is reasonable to presume that the infinite is beyond gender dimorphism, as kabbalists themselves sometimes emphasize, given the ubiquitous correlation of mercy and masculinity, on the one hand, and judgment and femininity, on the other hand, we can infer from this passage that *Malkhut* is the female potential incorporated in the completely male department of *Ein Sof*.

Eliashiv expresses a similar point in slightly varied language: “All of the disclosure and dissemination of the supernal knowledge, the intermediary line [*qaw ha-emṣaʿt*] that issues from the mystery of infinity [*me-raza de-ein sof*], which is the scale [*matqela*], is only for the sake of the need of the kingship of the primal human [*malkhut de-adam qadmon*], to construct her and to make her into the complete world, which is the world of emanation.”⁷⁶ The end is a

76 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De’ah*, part 2, 4.22.3, 259. It goes without saying that Eliashiv’s use of the expression *malkhut de-adam qadmon* reflects earlier Lurianic material. Compare Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 1:2, 12a; 1:5, 14d; 2:2, 15c; 3:1, 16c; 3:2, 16d–17a; 9:7, 46b; idem, *Adam Yashar*, 12, 90–91, 136 (in the note of Ya’aqov Şemaḥ). This is a topic that deserves a separate treatment, and many more texts could have been mentioned, but I briefly note that an especially important channel of influence may have been Naftali Bachrach, *Emeq ha-Melekh* (Jerusalem: Yerid ha-Sefarim, 2003), 6:48, 255. According to Bachrach, the kingship of the primordial Adam, the “beginning of the emanation” [*reisha de-ašilut*] and the “ancient of days” [*attiq yomin*], is identified as the eighth of the Edomite kings, Hadar, the one whose partner, Meheṭabel, is recorded, and the only one about whom it does not say that he perished (Genesis 36:39). Even though the reference is to the eighth king, the demiurgic capacity for rectification is related more specifically to the feminine aspect of *Malkhut*, which is linked to the name *Elohim* in the opening verse of Genesis (an association already made in Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 3:2, 16d). See *ibid.*, 8:10, 359, where Bachrach identifies the kingship of the primordial Adam with *Attiq*, or more specifically, with the wisdom of *Attiq* in which *Ein Sof* dwells. And compare *ibid.*, 8:11, 360–361: “And this is the secret of ‘[Such is the story of heaven and earth] when they were created’ [*be-hibar’am*] (Genesis 2:4), with [the letter] *he* they were created, for all of the created beings were in the aspect of the five configurations [*paršufim*], whether in [the worlds of] emanation creation, formation, or doing, and they are [referred to in] the diminished *he*, for they all came forth from the diminished *he* of the kingship of the primordial Adam [...]. And they are alluded to in ‘These are the kings who reigned [in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites]’ (*ibid.*, 36:31), for they are all sons of kings, since all the configurations issued from the kingship of the primordial Adam, in the secret of ‘In the beginning God created’ (*ibid.*, 1:1), which is the kingship of the primordial Adam that is called *Elohim*, and from her power the heaven and earth of emanation were created. From the beginning they were not rectified and the configurations were not made in the secret of the scale [*be-sod matqela*] until there came forth the eighth king, which is the king Hadar, which is *Yesod*, and he took his portion and the portion of *Malkhut*. [...] Then the emanation was rectified as well as the kingship of the primordial Adam itself,

reversion to the beginning, the state of conjunction [*devequt*] in the world to come, which is depicted more specifically by Eliashiv, based on a passage in the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Sifra di-Şeni'uta*,⁷⁷ as the elevation of *Malkhut* as *aṭeret ba'lah* to the diadem of *Binah*; the reunification of daughter and mother is the mystical significance of the rabbinic description of the righteous sitting with their crowns on their heads, that is, the crowns of *Malkhut* and *Binah*.⁷⁸ The seventh millennium, the period of desolation⁷⁹ that succeeds the messianic rectification of the secret of generality [*ha-tiqqun de-sod ha-kelilut*], is thus described by Eliashiv, "Then all [the worlds] will be contained in and will ascend to *Malkhut* of the [world of] emanation, and this is after the reign of the six extremities, which are the six thousand years. Indeed, when *Malkhut* itself is without the six extremities, she has no existence below at all, for her

which is the *Attiq Yomin* [...] Therefore, it is called *Ein Sof*, and it is called *Ayin* and it is called *Ani*, for from the aspect of *Binah* she is called *Ani*, as she is disclosed to the world, since nothing is more revealed in the *sefirot* than *Malkhut*, and from the perspective that it is the crown of emanation [*keter le-aşilut*], it is called *Ayin*, and she is the kingship of the primordial Adam and the crown of emanation, understand this." For the influence of Bachrach on Eliashiv, see references below, n. 86. I note, finally, that it would be worth comparing Eliashiv's explanation of *malkhut de-adam qadmon* and Hayon's application of this technical term to the cause of causes positioned in the head of *Arikk Anpin*, the hidden root of all being, the concealment of the will that precedes the primordial act of constriction. See Hayon, *Oz le-Elohim*, 5c, 15b, 16b.

77 *The Commentary of the Gaon Rabbi Elijah of Vilna to Sifra di-Zeni'uta*, ed. Bezalel Naor (Jerusalem, 1998), 38 [Hebrew]. Commenting on the words of the *Sifra di-Şeni'uta*, "Six thousand years are dependent on the first six ones [the six alluded to in the word *bere'shit* decoded as *bara shit*, he created six], and the seventh is above them, fortified alone" (*Zohar* 2:176b)—a theosophical recasting of the teaching of Rav Qatţina in b. Sanhedrin 97a: "The world will exist for six millennia and one [millennium] shall be desolate, as it is written 'None but the Lord shall be exalted on that day' (Isaiah 2:11)"—the Vilna Gaon writes, "The seventh millennium is dependent on the word *bere'shit*, which is above them [...] and it is *Binah* [...] and she is the secret of the annulment of the world [*hashvatat olam*] in the secret of Saturn, which is the gradation of *Binah* as is known, and *Binah* is the secret of the end [*aḥarit*] for everything will return to its root, which is the fire, as it is written in *Sefer Yeşirah*, and thus the secret of one shall be desolate. The matter is that the six millennia are the six days that act through the six extremities and the seventh is *Malkhut*, and *Malkhut* is dependent on *Binah* and she returns to her root [...]. The world to come is in the secret of *Aṭarah* that returns to *Binah*, and she is the *eshet ḥayyil aṭeret ba'lah*, and then *Binah* rules and they all return to *Binah*, the womb of their mother." On the nexus between Saturn, *Binah*, and the messiah in kabbalistic sources, see Moshe Idel, *Saturn's Jews: On the Witches' Sabbath and Sabbateanism* (London: Continuum, 2011), 54–64, and on the ouroboric image of *Binah* as the beginning and the end, see the text of Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi cited on 116–117, and compare 179n74.

78 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Ḥaqdamot u-She'arim*, 127.

79 See the teaching of Rav Qatţina cited above in n. 77.

essence is from *Keter*, in the secret of *ani* and *ayin*,⁸⁰ and her place and her reality are in *Binah* the mother, which is the potency and comportment of the feminine [*koah u-tekhunat ha-nuqba*] contained in *Keter*, and there is the place of *Malkhut*.⁸¹

The existence of the three lower worlds is facilitated by the descent and constriction of *Malkhut* in the six extremities, which correspond to the *sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Yesod*. In this posture, she is called the corona of the phallus [*aṭeret ha-yesod*], which is the crown of kingship [*keter ha-malkhut*], and she is disclosed below. After the sixth millennia—the time of the dominance of the six extremities—there is the time of the dominance of *Malkhut* in the seventh millennium. When *Malkhut* returns to the womb of *Binah*, she is in the secret of *eshet hayyil aṭeret ba'lah*, the woman of valor who is a crown of her husband: “For in all of the six millennia she was a diadem in his end [*aṭarah be-sofo*], which is the *aṭeret ha-yesod*, but in the seventh millennium she will be a diadem on his head [*aṭarah be-ro'sho*], and this is the secret of the diadem of the mother that crowns *Ze'eir Anpin*. [...] She returns immediately to the mother *Binah*, for there is her place, and this is because *Malkhut* does not have an autonomous existence or place at all [*ein le-ha-malkhut meš'ut u-maqom bifnei ašmah kelal*], for she is the disclosure of the light of the king himself, and her essence in *Keter* is revealed in *Binah* in her diadem.”⁸² *Malkhut* has no ontological autonomy; her potency is derived exclusively from the fact that she discloses the light of the king. The locus of her ascent is *Binah*, but the latter is itself identified as the potency and comportment of the feminine contained in *Keter*. Hence, the eschatological moment is a reinstating of the tenth gradation in her original place in the first as manifest in the third.

We can ascribe primacy to the causal agency of *malkhut de-adam qadmon*, the potential for femininity in the domain that lacks an autonomous female—the point of differentiation within the nondifferentiation of infinity—inasmuch as the will to overflow requires a vessel to receive the infinite beneficence.⁸³ From this vantagepoint, the aspect of *Malkhut* above in *Keter* can be demarcated as the source of all the gradations.⁸⁴ The ultimate

80 See above, n. 68.

81 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De'ah*, part 2, 3, 7, 68.

82 Ibid.

83 On the autoerotic mythos in kabbalistic theosophy and the engendering of the male androgyne, see Wolfson, “Phallic Jewissance,” 295–296, 313–325; idem, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 98–104.

84 Compare Elijah ben Solomon, *Sefer Yeširah im Be'ur ha-Gra* (Jerusalem: Birkat Yišḥaq, 2018), 1:4, 25c: “Do not say that their beginning is from *Hokhmah* and not from *Keter*, which is *Malkhut* of the world above it, and concerning this Elijah said *keter malkhut* [see

empowerment of the feminine as the topographical latency within the world of the masculine is related to the fact that the trace [*reshimu*] of light that remained after the withdrawal and constriction of the light is identified as *malkhut de-malkhut*, the kingship of the kingship, “for the essence of the light of *Malkhut* ascended and was withdrawn, and in the inner point of that *Malkhut*, which is *malkhut de-malkhut*, there was revealed the aspect of place [*sham nitgalleh li-vehinat maqom*] [...] It thus follows that the will [...] is the aspect of *malkhut de-ein sof*, and in the inner point of that *Malkhut*, which is the *malkhut de-malkhut*, there is the constriction and the place, which is the trace of the light of the infinite that bears everything. [...] Thus is all of this constriction and the place, which is called by the name primal ether [*awir ha-qadmon*] and supernal lustre [*tehiru ila'ah*], which is the inner point of *malkhut de-ein sof*, and this is the *malkhut de-malkhut* mentioned above. And all of this was revealed and came to be by means of the aspect of the delight [*sha'ashu'a*] [...] and this delight is the aspect of movement that produces the constriction from himself to himself.”⁸⁵ We willingly admit that the feminine plays a critical role in the drama of the *sha'ashu'a*—the jouissance of the erotic rhapsody and noetic bliss—that sets into motion the constriction of the infinite light to create the place wherein the worlds extrinsic to that regarding which there is nothing extrinsic will be engendered.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, a careful assessment of the role assigned to the female in the aspect of *malkhut de-ein sof*, or *malkhut de-malkhut*, as the inner point, the primal ether, or the supernal lustre, only underscores that the autoeroticism implied in this psychosexual fantasy is concocted from an androcentric perspective.⁸⁷ At the highest recesses of the divine, the stimulation of the male without a discernible arousal of a distinctly feminine persona [*ha-zakhar levado hayah mit'orer me-elaw el ha-ziwug [...] ki lo yesh adayin hekker nuqba bi-feratut*], an impetus that is without the external provocation of the female waters [*gam she-lo hayah mi she-ya'aleh mayyin*

reference above, n. 69], such that there would only be nine. Furthermore, *Keter*, which is in *Arikkh*, is divided into two, the skull [*gulgalta*] and the membrane [*qeruma*]. And the skull is *Malkhut* that is above and it is the source of the ten *sefirot* and the membrane is *Keter* below.”

85 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim*, 129.

86 On the kabbalistic myth of *sha'ashu'a*, see Wolfson, *Language*, 182–183, 277–279, 281–282, 285, and references cited on 510–261. Eliashiv follows the Saruqian version of this motif transmitted through a number of channels including the *Emeq ha-Melekh* of Naftali Bachrach. See Lilach Bar-Bettelheim, “The Concept of *Zimzum* in the Kabbalah of the Early Twentieth Century” (PhD dissertation, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2012), 130–137 [Hebrew]; Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 99–103.

87 Wolfson, *Language*, 310 and 386–387.

nuqvin], troped in the traditional idiom of when it arose in his will to create,⁸⁸ must still be evaluated from the perspective of the phallic construction of gender. Indeed, the clutch of the phallogocentrism is made tighter by the depiction of the female as the potential for otherness comprised in the infinity that knows no other, the totality that is inclusive of even that which is excluded, indeed, the very principle of exclusivity included in the all-inclusive inclusivity of *Ein Sof*.

The elevation of the feminine from the bottom to the top and the overturning of the order that it portends are still operating within the semiotic framework of the phallus as the ultimate inscriptional space of signification.⁸⁹ The diadem of the woman that is the crown of the husband is the repositioning of the feminine as the corona of the phallus, as we see in the following words of Viṭal:

The aspect of *Malkhut* is revealed by itself and it is not found in *Arikh Anpin* itself except in the aspect of the corona of the phallus [*aṭeret*

88 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Mavo She'arim*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yiṣḥaq, 2016), 2.3.9, 127. Compare *ibid.*, 3.2.12, 203, where it is stated that the *Malkhut* of *Keter* is not revealed "because in *Arikh Anpin* the aspect of the feminine is not openly discernible [*ein beḥinat nuqba nikkeret bo be-gilluy*]." For a similar depiction of the exclusively male nature of the supernal will without any discernment of an independent female, see Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 39:2, 67d, and compare the texts cited and discussed in Wolfson, *Language*, 181–186. And see the explication of the reference in *Idra Zuṭa* (*Zohar* 3:288a) to the three heads of *Attiqa Qaddisha* in Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Oṣerot Ḥayyim*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yiṣḥaq, 2018), Sha'ar Attiq, 2, 131: "Know that this *Attiqa Qaddisha* mentioned here is not speaking about the male that is made from the aspect of [the name whose numerical value is] forty-five, but rather about the feminine of *Attiq* and *Arikh Anpin*, which are made from the aspect of the emanation of *Keter* of the name of fifty-two of the points of the kings who died."

89 The subtleties of the gender transvaluation that I have discussed in my scholarly publications are obscured in the lopsidedly polemical attacks by Moshe Idel. His arguments are not worthy of pointed rebuttal as they are based either on an inability to understand the theoretical presuppositions of my thinking or on textual nitpicking that obfuscates the conceptual import of my poetic prose, not to mention its aesthetic contribution. Idel has misled the reader into believing he has offered a legitimate criticism when, in fact, his condemnations have little to do with my work. To write in a serious way on gender requires a philosophical sophistication into this mode of discourse and not simply marking every place in the texts where mention is made of male or female, a tendency that Idel shares with a number of other Israeli scholars. Paraphrasing Neḥemiah Ḥiyya Ḥayon, *Beit Qodesh ha-Qedoshim*, in *Oz le-Elohim*, 1d, I will not lift rejoinders to my lips so as not to inconvenience the pen. In lieu of a detailed response, I remind the reader of the memorable wisdom of Rinzai Gigen, one cannot drive a nail into empty space. Alternatively, as Hakuin Zenji reportedly remarked, an adept Zen teacher does not peck, for the moment he does, all is lost.

ha-yesod] that is in it, for this is entirely masculine [*ki kol zeh hu dekhura*] [...] but the actual feminine [*nuqba mammash*] is not found. [...] Similarly, in *Attiq Yomin*, there is found no autonomous feminine, but rather the corona of the phallus of *Attiq* is the feminine like *Arikh Anpin*. Afterward, however, *Malkhut* is revealed from the secret of that head, supernal to all, that is not known, which is called *Attiq Yomin*, for it is above all the nine *sefirot* of *Arikh Anpin*, and this is the secret of “a woman of valor, diadem of her husband” (Proverbs 12:4), which in the future will be greater than the sun, and “it will be the chief cornerstone” (Psalms 118:22). When *Malkhut* is revealed below, it will be revealed from the secret of this *Reisha de-lo Ityeda*.⁹⁰

In the transvalued state of the end, the unity of the emanative scheme assumes the appositive form of *keter malkhut*, the crown of kingship, such that the first modifies and is thus subservient to the last. The grammatical construct illumines an altered ontic state—what was considered secondary becomes primary, the crown derives its potency from the attribute of kingship. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the transposition at the end is a retrieval of the beginning wherein *Malkhut* was discernible in the *Reisha de-lo Ityeda* as the secret of the corona of the phallic potency.⁹¹

4 Neither Israel nor Edom: Posthuman Repercussions of the Messianic Transvaluation

The dynamic that applies to the other from within can be applied equally to the relation to the other from without. In spite of strict ontological barriers separating Jew and non-Jew, kabbalists have been cognizant of the theoretical and actual possibility of the boundaries being trespassed by conversion; the non-Jew becoming a Jew is a realignment of a Jewish soul with a new body, whereas the Jew becoming a non-Jew is a descent of the godly spark into the snare of the satanic.⁹² Interestingly, both processes stabilize rather than subvert the esoteric truths that may have served as a pathway for the potential convert to venture to the other side; the very secrets that impelled the

90 Viṭal, *Mavo She'arim*, 3:3.1, 137.

91 See the passage from Menaḥem Azariah of Fano cited in Wolfson, *Circle*, 119–120.

92 See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 265–271. On the repercussions of the zoharic depiction of conversion as the othering of the other in Sabbatianism, see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 165–185.

individual to assume an ostensibly different identity are curiously sustained in their very subversion.⁹³ The eschatological underpinning of the social practice of conversion portends the effacing of difference and a narrowing of the chasm separating Jew and non-Jew; the transmogrification is realized most theatrically in the soul of the Jew assuming the material garment of the non-Jew, as the descent is the means to achieve the ascent, the liberating of the sparks from the demonic and their restoration to the divine. On a deeper register, one understands that the descent is the ascent, and deeper still that the bridging of difference enhances the difference that is bridged, the esoteric import of the talmudic dictum that in the days of the messiah proselytes will not be received;⁹⁴ that is, they will not be received because the surmounting of the boundary reinforces the boundary that is surmounted. Exemplifying the attitude cultivated and proclaimed by masters of Jewish esoteric lore for centuries, we read in *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*, a mystical-apocalyptic commentary on Psalms composed in the latter decades of the fifteenth century, most likely in Salonika, by the Spanish kabbalist Joseph ben Solomon Ṭaitāṣaq,⁹⁵ that the time for David to reveal the arcane matters that have been hidden has come because previously the

kingdom of heaven was concealed in the mystery of mysteries on account of the external powers [*ha-koḥot ha-ḥiṣoniyot*], the goat demons and the like, they and their kingdoms are the secret of profanation [*sod ha-ḥillul*], which is the mundane [*ha-ḥol*]. And inasmuch as the holiness, which is Israel, was imprisoned, subjugated beneath the angels and

93 My thoughts here cohere with the argument proposed—admittedly about an earlier historical period—by Shalom Sadik, “When Maimonideans and Kabbalists Convert to Christianity,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24 (2017): 145–167. I have long maintained that appropriation of the other tradition is predicated on the assumption that the external resonates with something internal such that crossing the border—whether in the domain of thought or in the actual event of converting—is facilitated by the recognition of sameness in the divide of difference. See the discussion of setting the boundary and the proximity of the other in Elliot R. Wolfson, “Textual Flesh, Incarnation, and the Imaginal Body: Abraham Abulafia’s Polemic with Christianity,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, eds. David Engel et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 190–194.

94 b. Avodah Zarah 3b; b. Yevamot 24b. The exoteric explanation is that the sincerity of the motivation for the conversion can be doubted since it occurs at a time when Israel will be prosperous.

95 On the time and place of the composition of *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*, see the discussion in Joseph ben Solomon Ṭaitāṣaq, *Pan of Incense: Kabbalistic Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, critical edition, introduction, notes, and sources by Aryeh Ne’eman Ben Zvi (Tel-Aviv: Idra, 2018), 13–26 [Hebrew]. Ben Zvi, p. 22, suggests a date of composition between 1485–1490.

archons, when the time comes that the Lord 'is roused from his holy habitation' (Zechariah 2:17), then 'the moon shall be ashamed, and the sun shall be abashed, for the Lord of hosts will reign [on Mount Zion and] in Jerusalem, and the glory [will be revealed] to his elders' (Isaiah 24:23), and these are the two powers, the power of Edom and Ishmael.⁹⁶

On the one hand, the two rivals of Israel in its *Heilsgeschichte*, Christianity and Islam, designated respectively as Edom and Ishmael, will be defeated in the endtime, a point alluded to symbolically by the scriptural images of the humiliation of the sun and the embarrassment of the moon, but, on the other hand, the endtime is marked by the revelation of the divine glory to precisely these powers.⁹⁷ The messianic future thus foreshadows both the Jews' dominion over Christians and Muslims and the prediction that these two Abrahamic faiths will acknowledge the theological supremacy of Judaism. Reading between the lines of Ṭaitāṣaq's comment, one discerns that the spanning of the gap between the light of the divine and the darkness of the demonic prolongs

96 Ibid., 255.

97 The negative portrayal of both Edom and Ishmael is a recurrent theme in *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret*; see, for instance, Ṭaitāzāk, *Pan of Incense*, 216–217, 451. On the characterization of the Gentile nations [*goyyim*] as beasts, see *ibid.*, 567. See Moshe Hallamish, "The Attitude toward Christianity and Islam in *Kaf ha-Ketoret*," *Da'at* 43 (1999): 53–76 [Hebrew], and on the particularly harsh demonization of Christianity, see the analysis of Ben Zvi in Ṭaitāzāk, *Pan of Incense*, 119–127. See, in particular, the dichotomy between the pure wine of the holy nation, the hidden light of the secret of the supernal sun or the great fire, and the wine of Samael, the "foaming wine fully mixed," *yayin ḥamar male mesekh* (Psalms 75:9), which is the secret of darkness and the foreskin that prevents one from knowing the truth, in Ṭaitāzāk, *Pan of Incense*, 162–163. That passage concludes with the description of the time of retribution when the sins of Edom will be avenged. Compare *ibid.*, 432, where the end [*qes*] is described as a time of curse and affliction to be inflicted on the Gentiles by the agency of God's attribute of judgment [*middat ha-din*]. On the contrast between the supernal wine of holiness and the physical wine of Samael, see *ibid.*, 171–173. The ruthlessly punitive stance towards Edom and Ishmael was expressed in older kabbalistic sources that surely influenced Ṭaitāṣaq, and especially pertinent are passages in *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*. See Amos Goldreich, "Clarifications in the Self-Perception of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*," in *Massu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, eds. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1994), 474–475 [Hebrew]. See also the zoharic attitudes towards Edom and Amaleq explored in Oded Yisraeli, *Temple Portals: Studies in Aggadah and Midrash in the Zohar*, trans. Liat Keren (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 134–156, 168–185. A related but separate issue is the portrayal by the author of *Kaf ha-Qeṭoret* of philosophy—signified emblematically by the figure of Aristotle—as the wisdom of Samael, set in diametric opposition to the wisdom of Torah and kabbalah. See Hallamish, "Attitude," 62–65, and Ben Zvi in Ṭaitāzāk, *Pan of Incense*, 110–118.

the distance of that which is made more proximate. According to an arresting image utilized in another passage from this work, in the middle of the moon, which is symbolic of the *Shekhinah*, there is the secret of darkness, also referred to as the secret of the deficiency of the moon or as the secret of the menstrual forces that are contiguous to the last of the sefirotic gradations. These forces are depicted as the leprous prostitute who penetrates the space of *Malkhut* and consumes the residual drops of her effluence.⁹⁸ The drama, which is based on earlier kabbalistic texts, including the zoharic compilation, attests to the tension between the monistic and dualistic perspectives: the divine is the one source of vitality from which even the demonic must be nurtured, and hence darkness is described as being in the heart of the moon, but there is still an insurmountable fissure separating holy and unholy.

In his characteristically lucid manner, Eliashiv explains this tension by noting that in the worlds below good and evil are in conflict based on the principle of *zeh le'ummat zeh* (Ecclesiastes 7:14), the one against the other, but above in the world of emanation there is no evil. Even so, the root of evil must be sought in that realm to avoid an ontological dualism. The root of evil is thus located in the attribute of power [*gevurah*] or judgment [*din*]. “The root of evil from what is created is found above, and it is the aspect of the powers [*gevurot*], for the powers are the root of evil. [...] Thus, the disclosure of the powers and their dominion above, which are the root for the creation of evil below, is that they are made by the concealment of the face of the light of the infinite [*hester panim me'or ein sof*], for he conceals his light and removes his disclosures, and then there emanates from him the forces of the powers [...]. But when the light of the infinite is revealed and shines below ‘in the light of the face of the living king’ (Proverbs 16:15), then all the powers are ameliorated and they are transformed into flames of mercy.”⁹⁹ The forces of judgment above that emerge from *Binah*, which are the source of evil below, are identified as the Edomite kings that reigned before the kings of Israel (Genesis 36:31–39).¹⁰⁰ The first seven, who are mentioned without any female partners, are said to have died—the unbalanced forces of judgment also identified as the worlds that God created and destroyed¹⁰¹—whereas the

98 Taitazak, *Pan of Incense*, 188–189. On the use of the image of menstrual blood as symbolic of the demonic impurity of Christianity in zoharic literature, see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 138–142; and compare Sharon Faye Koren, *Forsaken: The Menstruant in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 84–97, 144–171.

99 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim*, 173–174.

100 *Ibid.*, 175–176.

101 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Sefer ha-De'ah*, part 1, 1. The source for the image of God creating and destroying worlds is *Bere'shit Rabba*, eds. Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965), 3:7, 23.

eighth, Hadar, does have a spouse, Meheṭabel. Two points are significant for our purposes. First, *Binah* is identified as the land of Edom, the place where all judgments exist, the root for all multiplicity and discreteness.¹⁰² Second, the beginning of the rectification, the pairing of male and female, which is characteristic of the spiritual destiny of Israel, occurs in the last of the kings of Edom, which corresponds to the secret of the androgynous phallus, *Yesod* and *Aṭarah*.¹⁰³

The obfuscation of the line separating Israel and Edom contains the mystery of the amplification of the light of holiness by means of transgression:

This is the matter of the eighth king, which is the king Hadar, mentioned in the Torah, who was also from the Edomite kings, and he was also from the kings of impurity and the shell. [...] For he was from the aspect of the supplementary light [*or ha-nosaf*] that was added to the shell by means of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, and this corresponds to the light [of the] forty-five [numerical value of the name]¹⁰⁴ of holiness. And thus what is written “and his wife’s name was Meheṭabel” (Genesis 36:39), she corresponds to the good and evil of the fifty-two [numerical value of the name]¹⁰⁵ of holiness. As we said above, the supplementary light of the shell, which was added by means of the sin, is from the light of the rectification [*me-ha-or de-ha-tiqqun*]. Therefore, the name of his wife was mentioned in relation to him, which was not the case in all of

102 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De’ah*, part 1, 1–2. The characterization of the land of Edom as the mystery of the place in which judgments are bound is derived from *Zohar* 3:135a (*Idra Rabba*), but in that context, unlike Eliashiv, that place is not identified explicitly as *Binah*.

103 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Ḥaqdamot u-She’arim*, 175. See idem, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De’ah*, part 2, 5.3.6, 381, where the eighth king is described, on the basis of the Vilna Gaon, as “in the secret of *Aṭarah* and *Malkhut* upon whose unity all of the rectification depends.” The precise language in *The Commentary of the Gaon Rabbi Elijah of Vilna to Sifra di-Zeni’uta*, 35, is “The eighth king Hadar is the corona of the phallus [*aṭeret yesod*] of *Malkhut di-Ze’eir Anpin* and it is not the *Malkhut* of the ten *sefirot*, the *Nuqba* of *Ze’eir Anpin*, because he is not included in the kings. And this is what is said that *Yesod* divides into two in the world of chaos [*be-olam ha-tohu*] and there reigned two kings. [...] If so, what is [the meaning] of ‘his wife’s name’ (Genesis 36:39)? This is *Malkhut di-Ze’eir Anpin*, the corona of his phallus [*aṭeret ha-yesod shelo*].” The phallic nature of the last of the Edomite kings is underscored by the assumption that *Yesod* divides into two, comprising itself and *Malkhut* as the *aṭeret berit*. See Eliashiv’s comment, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Ḥaqdamot u-She’arim*, 177, “Thus there are these seven kings, who were eight, because *Yesod* divided into two [...] and we said that seven died and were broken and the eighth, which is *Malkhut*, was not broken.”

104 That is, the Tetragrammaton written as נ”ה ו”א נ”ה ד”י (10+6+4+5+1+6+1+6+5+1).

105 That is, the Tetragrammaton written as ה”ה ו”ו ה”ה ד”י (10+6+4+5+5+6+6+5+5).

the first seven kings, for all of the first seven kings were only from the aspect of the seven points of the shell that were prior to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, and they were without any rectification at all. And this is from the aspect of the other god who is castrated and cannot produce fruit. Therefore, the name of a wife was not mentioned in any of them because they were without a partner. [...] But the king Hadar was from the light of the rectification in the shell after it was fixed by the sin, and this is the residue of the light of knowledge of holiness by means of which there is cohabitation. Therefore, the name of his wife is mentioned in relation to him.¹⁰⁶

The eighth of the Edomite kings symbolizes the beginning of the rectification of the amalgamation of the holy and unholy that arose as a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. According to a tradition reported by Viṭal, the rabbinic interpretation of Ezekiel 34:31, 'For you, my flock, that I tend are men,' *we-atten ṣ'oni ṣ'on mar'iti adam attem*, as 'You are called human, but the idolaters are not called human,'¹⁰⁷ implies that originally all the souls comprised within Adam were the souls of Israel and had Adam not sinned the nations of the world would have never been created.¹⁰⁸ Extrapolating from this tradition, Eliashiv presumes that the first seven Edomite kings, the emasculated males that had no female counterpart, are aligned with the seven demonic forces that were prior to the sin. By contrast, Hadar was from the aspect of the supplementary light that was added to the shell as a consequence of the transgression, the residue of the light of knowledge from the side of holiness, and thus he had a counterpart Meheṭabel. The rectification, however, will be complete only in the future when there will be no more distinction between Jew and non-Jew because the latter will be reincorporated into the posthuman form that like the prelapsarian Adam is neither Edom nor Israel insofar as there is no autonomous evil in opposition to the good.

106 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De'ah*, part 2, 1.7.3, 24–25.

107 For references, see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 42n107, 43–44, 46, 52n151, 53, 63, 89, 112, 160.

108 Ḥayyim Viṭal, *Sefer ha-Liqqūtim* (Jerusalem: Sitrei Ḥayyim, 2015), Psalms, 32, 476. Compare idem, *Sha'ar ha-Pesūqim*, ed. Meir Yoḥanan Elkoubi (Jerusalem: Sha'arei Yiṣḥaq, 2017), 19–20.

5 Law beyond Law and the Metaethical Ground of the Ethical

In this last section, I will discuss the ethical implications of the disposition of the messianic Torah as the law that surpasses the demarcation of the law. I commence by citing a crucial passage wherein Eliashiv distinguishes the two manifestations of the Torah:

Thus, all the Torah is also in accord with these two general disclosures. The first is his disclosures in the [world of] emanation, which is in the light of the principle of the name *YHWH*, blessed be he, and it is called the Torah of Emanation [*torat ha-ašilut*]. And the other is his disclosures in the worlds of creation, formation, and doing, for they are the light and manifestation of the name *Elohim*, and it is called the Torah of Creation [*torat ha-ber'ah*]. If not for the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the primal Adam would have merited the Torah of Emanation. For all the Torah in its entirety would have been given to him [...] and this is the Torah of Emanation whose essence concerns the unity of the supernal lights, which are the inwardness of the entire Torah and the commandments. Concerning this they said in *Avodah Zarah*, fol. 3,¹⁰⁹ that the blessed holy One is occupied with the Torah, for the light of the interiority of the Torah is the power of all the creation in its entirety, in general [*bi-khelal*], in particular [*u-vi-ferat*], and in the particularities of the particularity [*u-vi-feratei peratut*]. All the realities that alternate and are created in each moment and all their contingencies that are in each second, it all issues forth from the disclosures of the light of the interiority of the Torah that is disclosed in each moment in novel disclosures from the occupation of the blessed holy One with it each day. This is the matter of the Torah that would have been given to primal Adam had he not sinned. And it also would have been given to us had we merited the first tablets, as it is written, "I have said you are divine" [*ani amarti elohim attem*] (Psalms 82:6). [...] The Torah of Emanation is the Torah of the holy blessed One that is illumined and revealed by means of the disclosures of the light of the name *YHWH*, blessed be he, as has been mentioned.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ The precise reference is b. *Avodah Zarah* 3b.

¹¹⁰ Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim*, 34. In preparation of this study, I have also utilized idem, *Sefer Haqdamot u-She'arim im Liqqut Me'ir ha-Leshem*, ed. and ann. Yehoshua Lipschitz (Jerusalem, 2014), 75. Discrepancies between my translation and the Barzanai text indicate my decision to accept the emendations of Lipschitz.

The textual foundation of Eliashiv's musings is the well-known distinction made by the anonymous author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* between the Torah of Emanation and the Torah of Creation.¹¹¹ According to Eliashiv's interpretation, the first Torah is the disclosure of *YHWH* in the world of emanation and the second Torah is the disclosure of the name *Elohim* manifest in the worlds of creation, formation, and doing. Had Adam not sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he would have received the Torah of Emanation in its entirety, the essence of which consists of the unity of the ten sefirotic gradations. The inwardness of the Torah and the commandments is thus constituted by the luminal darkness of the truth of his hidden essence [*amittat ašmuto ha-ne'elemah*], the univocity of being fracturing through the *šimšum* into the plurivocality of beings in the same manner that the essential name *YHWH* partitions into a multiplicity of names.¹¹² This is the mystical import of the longstanding identification in kabbalistic literature—with roots in older Jewish mystical sources—of the Tetragrammaton and the Torah. From various zoharic texts where this identification is made explicitly, Eliashiv

111 *Zohar* 3:124b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, introduction, 4b–5a; sec. 22, 64a. Compare Scholem, *Major Trends*, 211; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, 66–70; idem, *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676* trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 319–324, 809–810; Ephraim Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, ed. Joseph Hacker (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1976), 545–550 [Hebrew]; Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, trans. David Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), vol. 3, 1101–1108; Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 59–63, 126–127; Israel C. Malka, *On the Paths of the Kabbalah: Mystical Dimensions of Jewish Law in the Ra'aya Meheimna* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 2004), 108–109 [Hebrew]; Yehuda Liebes, “Zohar and Tiqqunei Zohar: From Renaissance to Revolution,” *Te'uda* 21–22 (2007): 270–279 [Hebrew]; and more recently, Hagai Pely, “The Conception of Halakhah in the Writings of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 34 (2016): 253–296 [Hebrew]. I concur with the author's reassessment of the role of law in the worldview of this kabbalist, which is the reason I have argued that it is better to replace Scholem's use of the term *antinomianism* with *hypernomianism*. The latter, as opposed to the former, proffers that exceeding the law requires one to uphold the law that is exceeded. Unfortunately, Pely, “The Conception of Halakhah in the Writings of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*,” 256n9, thinks the two words are synonymous and hence I am erroneously accused of following Scholem. For a review of the question of antinomianism in these strata of zoharic literature, see Biti Roi, *Love of the Shekhina: Mysticism and Poetics in Tiqqunei Zohar* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017), 28–29 [Hebrew]. On the messianic implications of the distinction between the types of Torah according to the anonymous author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, see Goldreich, “Clarifications,” 475–477; Liebes, “Zohar and the *Tiqqunim*,” 292–294; Roi, *Love of the Shekhina*, 234–235.

112 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlahamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim*, 10.

elicits the conclusion that the one who is meritorious with respect to the Torah is meritorious with respect to the name, since he and his name are one and the same.¹¹³ This is the meaning as well of the aggadic tradition that God is occupied with the Torah before creation; that is, all that will unfold through the course of time is a disclosure of the light of the interiority of the Torah. One detects here the temporal paradox that undergirds Eliashiv's phenomenology and ontology—two branches of thought that cannot be disentangled—the novel disclosure of the light that unfolds in each present is an iteration of what has been enfolded in that light from the eternal past, forging thereby a sense of the future through repetition of the same in which the same is the replication of difference.¹¹⁴ In every moment, therefore, to borrow Merleau-Ponty's formulation, the flesh of the world is simultaneously *toujours neuf* and *toujours la même*¹¹⁵—always new precisely because always the same and always the same precisely because always new.

I have discussed this topic in a number of previous publications¹¹⁶ and thus instead of going over familiar territory, I will return to the main point concerning the characterization of the materiality of being as the incarnation of the immaterial light, an incarnation that takes the form of the dual Torah, one that corresponds to *YHWH* and the world of emanation and the other that corresponds to *Elohim* and the worlds of creation, formation, and doing. The interplay between the dissimulation of the light of *Ein Sof* in the guise of *YHWH*, on the one hand, and the dissimulation of *YHWH* in the guise of *Elohim*, on the other hand, sets up the dialectic paradox of concealment and disclosure¹¹⁷ that characterizes the nature of reality: the dynamic of nothing

113 Ibid., 34.

114 The reader will undoubtedly detect the influence of Deleuze in my depiction of repetition as the return of the same that is conceived on the basis of the different. See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 48; idem, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 23–24, 41, 90–91, 242–243.

115 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible suivi de Notes de travail*, ed. Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 315; idem, *The Visible and the Invisible Followed by Working Notes*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 267.

116 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 59–87; idem, "Retroactive Not Yet: Linear Circularity and Kabbalistic Temporality," in *Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism: That Which is Before and That Which is After*, ed. Brian Ogren (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 15–50, esp. 30–37; idem, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 35–40, 261–262.

117 In contrast to the dialectic, at least understood in a Hegelian sense, which entails a sublation of the difference between antinomies and their resolution in a higher synthesis, the neologism *dialetheia*, in defiance of the logical principle of noncontradiction and the law

becoming being in the being that is nothing advances through the dual process of progression [*hitpashsheṭut*] and egression [*histallequt*]; insofar as every act of *šimšum* is a concealing that gives boundary to the boundless, it follows that every bestowal perforce is a withdrawal, every act of giving a withholding, everything manifest is a manifestation of the nonmanifest and hence a nonmanifestation of the manifest.¹¹⁸ The profoundest concealment of godliness is not to know that the concealment is concealed in the worldly garments in which it is disclosed; true gnosis consists, therefore, of knowing that the disclosure is a concealment of the concealment.¹¹⁹ Through the occlusion of

of the excluded middle, signifies that there are true contradictions and thus a statement can be both true and false at the same time and in the same relation, the contradictory nature of which is syllogistically diagrammed in the form of “ α and it is not the case that α .” See Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3; idem, *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–6. For an extended discussion of dialetheism and the problem of truth and falsity, see *ibid.*, 53–72. On the shift from dialectic to dialetheic to explicate the paradox in kabbalistic lore, see Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, 31, 48–49n10, 66–67, 160.

- 118 Solomon ben Ḥayyim Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-Kelalim* (Jerusalem: Aaron Barzanai, 2010), 112–113. On *šimšum* in Eliashiv’s writings, see Mordechai Pachter, *Roots of Faith and Devekut: Studies in the History of Kabbalistic Ideas* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2004), 136–144; idem, “The Gaon’s Kabbalah from the Perspective of Two Traditions,” in *The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples*, eds. Moshe Hallamish, Yosef Rivlin, and Raphael Shuchat (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 124–134 [Hebrew]; Bar-Bettelheim, “The Concept of *Zimzum*,” 97–174; Raphael Shuchat, “*Šimšum* Taken Literally—An Investigation into the Thinking of Emanuel Ḥai Ricci and R. Solomon Eliasov,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 37 (2017): 271–301 [Hebrew]; Yisrael Vilik, *Sefer ha-Šimšum we-ha-Mešit’ut: Berur Ḥadash be-Inyenei ha-Šimšum u-Mešit’ut ha-Sefirot* (Beit Shemesh, 2018), 120–136. See also Eliezer Baumgarten, “History and Historiosophy in the Teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Elyashov” (M.A. thesis, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2006), 25–88 [Hebrew], and Ron Wacks, “Chapters of the Kabbalistic Doctrine of Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv” (M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 11–27 [Hebrew].
- 119 The wisdom of the kabbalah, expressed by many voices through the centuries, was first captured in the teaching reported in the name of Israel ben Eliezer, the Ba’al Shem Ṭov, by Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Toledot Ya’aqov Yosef* (Korzec: Tzvi Hirsch and Shmuel Yissaskhar Ber Segal, 1780), 7a: “It is written in the *Tiqqunim* [*Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 26, 71b], ‘I am the Lord, I have not changed’ (Malachi 3:6), but with respect to the wicked the blessed holy One does change and he is occluded, for there are several garments, several coverings, and several shells, which are the formlessness, the void, and the darkness etc. And this is what is written ‘I will hide my countenance from them’ (Deuteronomy 32:20) [...] thus there are several garments and coverings in which the blessed holy One is occluded. I have heard, however, from my teacher, may his memory be a blessing in the life of the world to come, that if a person knows that the blessed holy One is occluded there, this is not an occlusion [...]. And this is what is written ‘Yet I will keep my countenance hidden on that day’ [*we-anokhi haster astir panay ba-yom ha-hu*] (Deuteronomy 31:18), that is to

the nameless, the nameless is revealed in the ineffable name, and the latter is revealed in the cloak of *Elohim*. The immaterial light is thus furtively manifest in the façade of the material. The dynamic implied by this relational nexus leads to the conclusion that the imageless can be seen only through the veil of the image, and if this is so, then there is no absconding from the intractable snare of metaphoricity. Insofar as human beings have no experience of the immaterial except through the vestment of the material, we can presume that the vestment is the manner in which the immaterial materializes, whence it follows that truth is inherently parabolic and, as such, the expression thereof of necessity embraces what is untrue.¹²⁰

Despite Eliashiv's admonition against interpreting Lurianic concepts metaphorically, a view that he attributes to Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto,¹²¹ he is

say, he will hide from them and they will not know that the blessed holy One is there in this occlusion." The text is found as well in *Keter Shem Tov*, ed. and ann. Jacob Immanuel Schochet (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2004), sec. 85, 49. Compare Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Ben Porat Yosef* (Korzec: Avraham Dov of Melnyk, 1781), 55a, 88a. The homiletical exegesis is inspired by the rhetorical repetition *haster astir*: when one does not know that the divine is concealed, there ensues a double concealment, a concealment of the concealment, but when one knows that the divine is concealed, then the concealment is revealed as concealment and hence there is no concealment. Alternatively expressed, the occlusion of the occlusion is a pneumatic state of diminution [*qatnut*] in which one is so diminished that one is not cognizant of being diminished. See Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Soḥnat Pa'aneah*, critical edition with introduction and notes by Gedalyah Nigal (Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Hasidic Literature, 1989), 1, 162. The state of mindlessness or the lack of knowledge is on occasion marked as forgetfulness and slumber. See *ibid.*, 177, and Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Ketonet Passim*, critical edition with introduction and notes by Gedalyah Nigal (Jerusalem: Peri ha-Areṣ, 1985), 239. Compare *Keter Shem Tov*, sec. 184, 101–102. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye also reports having heard from the Beshṭ that, therapeutically, the one who is ignorant of one's malady is submerged in the double concealment and hence there is no hope for recovery. See Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Ben Porat Yosef*, 21d. For a similar approach to the concealment of concealment in Naḥman of Bratslav, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 325–326n174.

120 My thesis concurs with the analysis, framed in less controversial terms, in Ya'aqov Moshe Hillel, *Ad ha-Gal ha-Zeh* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2005), 97–131; *idem*, *Petaḥ Sha'ar ha-Shamayim: ha-Derekh we-ha-Mavo le-Ḥokhmat ha-Qabbalah* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2008), 59–62. The hermeneutical problem to which I allude is explored in great philosophical depth in Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014).

121 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De'ah*, part 1, 5,8, 162–163. This perspective was also enunciated by Ergas, *Tokhaḥat Megullah*, 6a, who argued that not only is the secret of *šimšum* not to be taken literally [*ki-feshuṭo*], but all of the wisdom of Luria must be interpreted figuratively [*derekh mashal we-dimyon*]. Eliashiv's complex relationship to Luzzatto, including the question of whether to interpret *šimšum* literally or figuratively, is

led inevitably to precisely this position: not only is the emanator annulled [*meshullal*] of all attribution in the utmost nullification [*be-takhlit ha-shelilah*], but even with respect to the world of emanation these attributions are posited by way of analogy [*erekh*], since this world is superior to the worlds of creation, formation, and doing.¹²² No one in these worlds can comprehend the world of emanation and certainly not the emanator. Adopting a nominalist perspective, Eliashiv goes so far as to say that it is only with respect to the name that there is any equivalency between the first world and the lower three worlds in the cosmological chain of being. Hence, matters in the world of emanation “are only by way of metaphor [*be-derekh mashal*]. The import is in accord with our apprehension of these matters, for certainly there is no analogy or likeness [*erekh we-dimyon*] at all between the true reality that is in them and our comprehension and apprehension of the matter.”¹²³ Just as we analogize the substance of the soul that inhabits the body in bodily images even though the soul is an incomposite light, so we cannot comprehend the light of emanation, except through metaphorical language that reveals by concealing and conceals by revealing. The sefirotic configurations [*paršufim*] can be envisioned only by way of metaphor, “for the entirety of the emanation in relation to us is in the aspect of naught and nothing [*efes wa-ayin*]. [...] In all of these matters themselves, there is no metaphor at all, but rather they are truly everything that is said and repeated with respect to them, everything in actuality [*ha-kol mamdash*] without any figurative speech [*melišah*] or another elocution [*lashon*], and without another intention [*kawwanah*].”¹²⁴ No metaphor can be applied appropriately to the divine potencies—deemed ontically real and not imaginary—but there is no access to them except through metaphor. Pedagogically, the secrets about these potencies must be revealed as a concurrent disclosure and concealment; that is, they are revealed in a language that keeps them hidden,¹²⁵ not only in relation to the unworthy but for the worthy as well. There is no unmasking of the secret that is not at the same time a masking of the unmasking, no

explored in detail by Baumgarten, “History and Historiosophy”; see also Wacks, “Chapters of the Kabbalistic Doctrine”; and other references cited above, n. 118.

122 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Sefer ha-De'ah*, part 1, 5-7, 161.

123 *Ibid.*, part 1, 5-7, 162,

124 *Ibid.* I concur with the remark of Alan Brill, “The Mystical Path of the Vilna Gaon,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993): 134n10, “R. Eliashiv acknowledges that even though *zinzum* is literal, it is impossible to grasp God’s essence, therefore it is only an analogy (*mashal*) for us.” See below, n. 131. Compare the lengthy discussion of the use of bodily metaphors to describe the incorporeal sefirotic emanations in the anonymous *Taharat ha-Qodesh* (Jerusalem: Meoroth, 1989), 146–160.

125 The more typical attitude is expressed in both critical scholarship and devout literature. See, for instance, Hillel, *Petah*, 54–55, 62–63.

disclosure of truth that is not concomitantly a concealment of truth in the mantle of untruth.

In a letter to Naftali Herz Halevi, Eliashiv insists that when it comes to the wisdom of truth [*hokhmat ha-emet*] we cannot rely on human intellect alone—an idea that has been invoked by kabbalists through the centuries—but we must base our speculation on ideas derived from sources infused with the holy spirit, to wit, the *Zohar*, the *Tiqqunim*, Luria, and the Vilna Gaon.¹²⁶ I have no doubt that Eliashiv sincerely believed that the words of Luria and the Vilna Gaon were a result of the inspired commentary on zoharic literature. The task of critical scholarship, however, is to inquire about the soundness of this opinion, not simply to codify it as if it were a truth beyond reproach. With respect to the question at hand, can we really say that anyone—even if privy to divine inspiration—is afforded direct knowledge of the divine realities? Can speaking about the unspeakable be anything but metaphorical approximation? Is it possible to flee from the predicament that the imageless can be seen only through the veil of the image? The radical shattering of all idolatry, including icons of the aniconic, does not preclude the necessity of the formless donning the form of formlessness. Eliashiv emphatically rejects the classification of the experience of the sefirotic emanations as prophetic vision [*mar'ot ha-nevu'ah*], since this would challenge the premise that the wisdom of truth must apply to what is above in parallelism to what is below, and cannot simply apply to a vision that has no ontic standing outside the imagination. Following a much older tradition, Eliashiv does locate the agency of prophecy in the attribute of *Malkhut* because through her all the visions, forms, and images of the supernal being are seen below. What he objects to is interpreting these images strictly as prophetic in nature because that would diminish the ontic status [*meši'ut mammash*] of the spiritual lights [*orot ruhaniyyim*]. However, he readily grants that epistemologically the supernal beings cannot be apprehended except through the intermediary of the image.

With this in mind, we can circle back to the notion of the Torah of Emanation. For Eliashiv, even this Torah must be garbed in the Tetragrammaton by which *Ein Sof*, the infinite beyond all names, is arrayed. There is no access to the light but through the garment of light and this is true even in the future when the light will be revealed without any obstacles or barriers.

126 Moshe Schatz, *Ma'yan Moshe: Mavo Kelali le-Torat ha-Sod* (Jerusalem, 2011), 244. On Eliashiv's relationship to and communication with Naftali Herz Halevi, see Baumgarten, "History and Historiosophy," 99; Bar-Bettelheim, "The Concept of *Zinzum*," 97.

The matter of his will, blessed be his name, is the existence of his light itself, and therefore we said that the one who is conjoined to his will is verily conjoined to him. However, we have already said that the entire Torah is also verily the light of his will, and it is the light of his holiness that is within it, but only through knowledge [*bi-yedi'ah*] and not through comprehension [*be-hassagah*]. And we do not comprehend it except by means of our comprehension in every aspect of the will, which is the will and not the reality [*meš'ut*], even though in truth the light of his holiness itself was in his will. [...] When all the contamination will be destroyed and all the viscosity and the barriers that separate us from the essential light of his holiness that is above in [the world of] emanation will be purified, then the light of his holiness itself will also spread forth below, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all the flesh (Isaiah 40:5), and as it is written "Your master will no longer be covered and your eyes will see your master" (ibid., 30:20). For now, it is only a residue of the illumination, and on account of the viscosity and the contamination, a wall of iron separates Israel and their Father in heaven. We do not comprehend the light of the holiness of his will but only the comprehension of the will. In the future, however, when all the barriers will be destroyed, then all of the will in the light of his holiness that is within it will also be verily revealed and will be seen, and this is the truth of his will as he is. It follows that all of the disclosure of him that we have now, there is no value to it in quantity or in quality compared to the essential and true will that will be disclosed then. This is [the import of] what they said¹²⁷ that all of the Torah that a person learns in this world is worthless before the Torah in the world to come.¹²⁸

When compared to the present, the future revelation of the Torah promises to be more disclosive. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that even that disclosure is through the veil of the will, which is the name. There is no way to the nameless and concealed truth of the infinite but through the name that is the disclosure of that essence in the will that is manifest in the Torah and its commandments, and thus by fulfilling the Torah one is conjoined to and unified with the will as it is concretized in the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.¹²⁹ Eliashiv would have concurred with the characteriza-

127 *Qohelet Rabbah* 2:1, in *Midrash Rabbah im Kol ha-Mefarshim*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Wagshell, 2001), Megillah Qohelet, 33.

128 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Ahlamah: Haqdamot u-She'arim*, 13.

129 Ibid.

tion of the Torah, the embodiment of the divine wisdom, on the part of the Ḥabad-Lubavitch masters as the primordial parable [*meshal qadmoni*] that reveals what cannot be revealed except in language that is other than what is revealed. As parable, the Torah conceals what it reveals in the revelation of what it conceals.¹³⁰

This is not the place to enter into the complex historical question of Eliashiv's relation to Ḥasidism in general or to Ḥabad in particular. Bezalel Naor has argued that in an exchange of letters written by Eliashiv and Pinḥas ha-Kohen Lintop, two divergent perspectives emerge: Lintop viewed the theistic orientation of Eliashiv as heresy or as atheism, whereas Eliashiv viewed Lintop's pantheism as a mistake approximating idolatry.¹³¹ The epistolical record is surely not insignificant, but in my estimation, the proximity of Eliashiv and Ḥabad is a matter worthy of closer inspection.¹³² In a letter written to Naftali Herz Halevi, Eliashiv proclaims that he understands *šimšum* as well as the vacuum [*halal*] created thereby literally and he defends his affirming that in

130 On the image of the Torah as the primordial parable in Ḥabad thought, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 58–65, 97–98; idem, "Revealing and Re/veiling Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson's Messianic Secret," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 26 (2012): 56–63; idem, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu—The Trace of Transcendence and the Transcendence of the Trace: The Paradox of *Šimšum* in the RaShaB's *Hemshekh Ayin Beit*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 30 (2013): 98–99.

131 Bezalel Naor (trans., ed., ann.), *Kana'uteh de-Pinhas (The Zeal of Pinhas): Letter from Rabbi Pinhas Hakohen Lintop of Birzha to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook of Jaffa Critiquing the Recently Published Work of Rabbi Solomon Elyashev of Shavel, Hakdamot u-She'arim (1909)* (Spring Valley: Orot, Inc., 2013), 20 [Hebrew]. On Eliashiv's critique against pantheism, see in more detail, 68–70. Naor, *Kana'uteh de-Pinhas*, 20, notes that Lintop objected to Eliashiv's following the school of the Vilna Gaon by interpreting the act of *šimšum* literally against the figurative interpretation of Luzzatto and Ḥabad. A partial rejoinder to Naor was offered by Joey Rosenfeld, "A Tribute to Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, Author of *Leshem Shevo v-Achloma: On His Ninetieth Yahrzeit*," *The Seforim Blog*, March 10, 2016, <https://seforimblog.com/2016/03/a-tribute-to-rav-shlomo-elyashiv-author/>. Challenging Naor on the question of the literal versus the figurative interpretation of *šimšum* in Eliashiv's thought, Rosenfeld, utilizing my language to describe the nature of nontruth inherent to truth, applies a third way such that the contraction of the infinite light is "literally figurative because figuratively real." Rosenfeld's citation of my words as well as the source are not given accurately and I have corrected both in accord with the text in Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 202. More pertinent would have been a reference to my discussion of the literal versus the figurative interpretation of *šimšum* in Ḥabad sources in Wolfson, "Nequddat ha-Reshimu," 77–81. On the use of nonliteral language in Lurianic kabbalah, at times even going against what is considered to be the truth, see the survey of relevant sources in Hillel, *Petaḥ*, 59–61.

132 See the letter of Eliashiv to Naftali Herz Halevi, written in 1883, cited in *Kana'uteh de-Pinhas*, 120n68, who considered his views aligned with Ḥabad.

the world of emanation one can find the root for all the specificity that exists in the other worlds, while at the same time denying that there is any comparison or similitude between what is found in the world of emanation and in the lower words; any resemblance is due solely to language.¹³³ Other kabbalists who accepted the literal interpretation are named, but the question that needs to be asked is post-textual: what does it mean to speak of *šimšum* as literal? Is the literalness here not, *ipso facto*, figurative? Do we not have to claim the middle excluded by the logic of the excluded middle and see therein that the literal can be nothing but figurative and the figurative, nothing but literal? The contraction is the means by which the light is hidden and bounded, and the measure of the expansion of this power is called the vacuum, the place of the worlds, in which the light is concealed and it is seen as if it were not seen. The thickness that remains from the withdrawal is the aspect of the contraction and the aspect of the vessels—both can be viewed as expressions of the secret of divine judgment. But we still face a paradox that demands an imaginal leap to a space where the thing both is and is not, or in Eliashiv's words, the light is seen as if it did not exist. How is this phenomenologically possible? To see the invisible as visible or the visible as invisible is one thing, but this is not the same as seeing a phenomenon as if it did not exist. How does one see something as if it were not? We have moved to a place—topologically and logically—where the image is real because what is real is the image. In this place, as Heidegger emphasized in *Sein und Zeit*, self-showing coincides with a presence that does not show itself. Appearance, on this score, means that what does not show itself announces itself through something that does show itself, and hence appearing is a *not showing itself*.¹³⁴ Toppling the epistemological bias that informed centuries of Western philosophical speculation, Heidegger asserts in his youthful masterpiece that in its self-showing, appearing “indicates the nonmanifest [*Nichtoffenbare*]—as what comes to the fore in the non-manifest itself, and radiates from it in such a way that what is nonmanifest is thought of as what is essentially *never* manifest.”¹³⁵

As Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh master of the Ḥabad-Lubavitch lineage, put it, basing himself on dozens of texts penned or voiced by his predecessors, beyond the name there is the “interiority of the name” [*penimiyut de-yhwh*], the hiddenness that is the “interior and essential

133 The letter of Eliashiv is produced in Schatz, *Ma'yan Moshe*, 244–245. The same defense is offered in another letter, op. cit., 253–254.

134 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), § 7, 28 (emphasis in original); idem, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 29.

135 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 7, 28–29; idem, *Sein und Zeit*, 30.

drawing forth from the interiority and essentiality of the infinite verily [*ham-shakhah penimit we-ašmit mi-penimiyut we-ašmīyyut ein sof mammash*].¹³⁶ This interiority, which Schneerson identifies with repentance, the hypernomian principle par excellence insofar as it transcends in its immeasurability and limitlessness the polarity of guilt and innocence demanded by the strictures of law,¹³⁷ can only be signposted allusively by a hint [*remez*] that the depth of intellect cannot garb in letters.¹³⁸ Is it possible to venture beyond this investiture? Can the mind dispense of the sign of the lack that signifies the lack of the sign? Can the Torah be divested of all garments and remain a Torah? Is there a way to the nameless but through the name?

Eliashiv suggests that the first tablets that Israel would have merited had they not worshipped the Golden Calf instantiate this interval between the name and the nameless: “Thus he gave them the Torah, for the Torah is from the foundation of the father [*yesod de-abba*] that split and it went outward [...] and the tablets are the two crowns of knowledge [*itrin de-da’at*] that were hidden within it. [...] Therefore, those who merited the first tablets aroused high above to draw down the concealed light so that it is disclosed below. And this is the mystery of the scale [*ha-raza de-matqela*] that unified everything.”¹³⁹ The first tablets are the two crowns of knowledge hidden within the phallic potency of the father, the divine wisdom that embodies the concealed light of *Ein Sof* and as such the tablets were expressive of a law that cannot be constricted within the confines of the law that distinguishes permissible and forbidden. The Torah revealed at Sinai is a prolepsis of the messianic Torah that similarly will be a law that is beyond the law to the extent that the binaries essential to the structure and application of lawfulness will no longer be viable. That this hypernomian perspective was not only promulgated by radical Sabbatians, but found its way into other sources, is testimony to the fact that it is one of the more consistent themes that informed kabbalistic spirituality. I will conclude the paper with several examples from Ḥasidic texts that have not been considered in this light. Rather than focusing on the blatantly antinomian potential

136 Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Torat Menahem: Sefer ha-Ma’amarim 5731* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2018), 306.

137 Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 55–56, 166–171, 180–182, 274, 279–281; idem, “Revealing,” 27–28, 67. That redemption is dependent on repentance, according to the rabbinic dictum (b. Sanhedrin 97b), also implies that it is outside of the normal temporal demarcation, since repentance happens “in one moment and in one second,” that is, inside time as that which is outside time. See Wolfson, “Revealing,” 84.

138 Schneerson, *Torat Menahem: Sefer ha-Ma’amarim 5731*, 306.

139 Eliashiv, *Leshem Shevo we-Aḥlamah: Sefer ha-De’ah*, part 2, 5.3.6, 381.

of the idea of pious transgression,¹⁴⁰ I will concentrate on the hypernomian ideal of the messianic Torah as the law that divests itself of the serpentine garb of lawfulness. My first example is from Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl:

It is true that the Torah was in the days of Abraham our patriarch, peace be upon him, but it was garbed in the garments of the skin of the serpent [*melubeshet be-khotnot or ha-naḥash*], as it says “And [the Lord God] made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). Adam and Eve are the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. For prior to his transgression Adam was not a material entity, and so it is with every human being. And the essence of receiving the Torah was that the pollution [of the serpent] ceased and the [*or* with an *ayin*] became *or* with an *alef* [that is the garments of skin became garments of light], and they saw the light and the interiority of the Torah, “and the Torah is light” (Proverbs 6:23). This is what must be received every Pentecost, to comprehend the vitality and interiority of the Torah, as it says “Open my

140 For discussion of this theme, see Shaul Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica/Radzin Hasidism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 207–216. In the same work, 216–225, Magid uses the term “soft antinomianism” to characterize the tension between the experience of spiritual illumination and the authority of halakhah in the teaching of the leaders of this dynasty, Mordecai Joseph Leiner and his grandson Gershon Henoch. On 220, Magid equates the expression “soft antinomian” with “hypernomian” and characterizes the former in terms that bear an affinity to my own account of the latter: “In order to be antinomian inside Judaism, one must be a pietist. To live outside the law one also has to live beyond the letter of the law.” Magid then quotes the same line from Bob Dylan’s “Absolutely Sweet Marie” that served as the epigraph to my *Venturing Beyond*, “To live outside the law you must be honest.” I would argue that the hypernomian ideal presumes not only that one live beyond the letter of the law but, more paradoxically, that surpassing the law demands of one to preserve the law that is surpassed. My coinage of the term *hypernomian* is acknowledged by Magid, *op. cit.*, 352n20. The example that he provides, which he says that I do not mention, concerning the Lurianic custom of wearing two types of phylacteries (Rashi and Rabbenu Tam) does not illustrate the phenomenon of hypernomianism that I have discussed and it is for this reason that it does not figure as part of my analysis. Hypernomianism does not refer to amplifying halakhic stringency by adopting additional rituals but rather defying ritual practices as a means to obeying them. For a more recent study of this theme, see Benjamin Brown, “Theoretical Antinomianism and the Conservative Function of Utopia: Rabbi Mordekhai Yosef of Izbica as a Case Study,” *Journal of Religion* 99 (2019): 312–340. My understanding of the hypernomian ideal as defying the law to observe it is encapsulated in the couplet of Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj in *Hallaj: Poems of a Sufi Martyr*, trans. Carl W. Ernst (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 102: “I rejected the religion of God; infidelity is my duty, / because it is detestable to Muslims.”

eyes that I may perceive the wonders [of your Torah]" (Psalms 119:18), for one must comprehend every day the new vitality from our holy Torah.¹⁴¹

Bracketing the underlying conception of time as the constant renewal of that which never was at play here and the reworking of an older aggadic motif regarding the original state of human corporeality connected to the expression *kotnot or*, read either with an *ayin* or with an *alef*,¹⁴² I want to focus on the far-reaching description of the Torah in the time of Abraham being garbed in the garments of the serpent's skin. Based on the rabbinic tradition that at Sinai the serpentine pollution with which Eve was inseminated will cease,¹⁴³ Menaḥem Naḥum presents the transformation of the Torah itself from being garbed in garments of skin to garments of light, a transformation that reflects the change in the status of the human body from base materiality to refined corporeality. The hypernomian Torah was revealed proleptically at Sinai together with the nomian Torah, which is appropriate for an exilic state wherein the forces of light and dark are in competition.

The radical implications of the passage from *Me'or Einayim* are made explicit in Ṣadoq ha-Kohen Rabinowitz of Lublin:

It appears to me that the root of the souls of converts in the Torah is in this section of *Yitro*, for he caused the covering of the eyes of Israel [*kissuy einayim de-yisra'el*]. [...] Thus, the giving of the Torah was written in the section that is called by his name, and the name *Yitro* refers to the surplus [*yittur*] of the section that is external to the Torah [*ḥuṣ la-torah*]. The giving of the Torah is the essence of the Torah, but the matter of the Torah scroll written with ink on parchment is also from the perspective of this world, which conceals and hides the true light [*ha-ma'alim u-mastir or ha-amitti*]. With respect to the future to come it says "I will inscribe them on the tablet of their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33), and hence there will be no need for a teacher. In this world, wherein the [the word] *or* [with an *ayin*] was exchanged for [the word] *or* [with an *alef*], as in the garments of skin [*kotnot or*] of the primal Adam, which replaced the garments of light that he possessed before the transgression, so the Torah of this world is from the side of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, impure and pure, admissible and invalid, it is garbed in the garments of

141 Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl, *Me'or Einayim* (Benei-Beraq: Ma'ayanot ha-Beshṭ, 2015), 259.

142 *Bere'shit Rabbah*, 20:12, 96.

143 b. Shabbat 146a.

skin and parchment. And so all the commandments are garbed in the matters of the actions of this corporeal world, and this is the essence of the Torah and the eternal life he implanted within us. Even though this is only a garment for the interior, nevertheless in this world the garment becomes for a person a garment from the side of the Torah, and this is from the side of the shell that surrounds the fruit in this world.¹⁴⁴

Noteworthy is the incredibly daring claim that the very section of the Torah in which the narrative of the revelation of the Torah is recorded is characterized as something that is extrinsic to or the surplus of the Torah. To appreciate the boldness of speaking of a section of the Torah, indeed the section in which the Torah is revealed, as being outside the Torah, consider the more expected use of this locution in the statement of Joseph ibn Shushan cited by Samuel ben Isaac di Uceda: “There is nothing outside the Torah but deceit [*she-ein ħuṣ la-torah ella sheqer*].”¹⁴⁵ According to R. Şadoq, the paradoxical demarcation of a portion of the Torah as being outside the Torah is explained by appeal to the older kabbalistic idea, which was also instrumental for Sabbatian ideology, that the Torah that prevails in this world—the material Torah scroll written with ink on parchment—is from the Tree of Knowledge and thus it embodies the binaries of good and evil, pure and impure, permissible and forbidden. The interiority of the Torah, the Torah to be etched on the heart in the messianic future, is beyond those polarities and thus no longer dons the garment of the shell. Lest the insurgent repercussion of this ḥasidic master’s words be overlooked, let me reiterate the claim that the nomian character of the Torah—represented in both positive and negative commandments—is explained by the fact that the Torah in this world is clothed in the serpentine shell, an image that resonates with the gnostic myth of the exile of spirit in matter.

Describing the Sinaitic revelation in another passage,¹⁴⁶ R. Şadoq explains that when the Israelites heard the command “I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2), the obligation to study Torah was fixed in their hearts, and when they heard “You shall have no other gods beside me” (Exodus 20:3), the evil inclination was removed from their hearts. As a consequence, the words of Torah were engraved on their hearts in anticipation of what would be in the future, an idea

144 Şadoq ha-Kohen Rabinowitz of Lublin, *Taqqanat ha-Shavin* (Beit-El: Yeshivat Beit-El, 1988), 6:54, 66.

145 Samuel ben Isaac di Uceda, *Midrash Shmu’el* (Benei-Beraq: Me’orei Or, 1989), 49 (ad Avot 1:12).

146 Şadoq ha-Kohen Rabinowitz of Lublin, *Peri Şaddiq*, 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Mesamḥei Lev, 1999), vol. 4, 47 (*le-ħag ha-shevu’ot*, sec. 6).

supported exegetically by “I will put my teaching into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33) and “write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3). Perhaps recoiling from the hypernomian implications of his own exegesis, R. Şadoq emphasizes in the continuation of the passage that at the time of the giving of the Torah the two tablets were placed in the hearts of everyone from the Israelite nation, one tablet in the right heart corresponding to the positive commandments, whose root is “I the Lord am your God,” and the other tablet in the left heart corresponding to the negative commandments, whose root is “You shall have no other gods.” We can discern an attempt to retain the nomian nature of the Torah inscribed in the heart, thereby circumventing a dichotomy between the exteriority of the law and the interiority of the spirit, a strategy that would be consistent with the time-honored rabbinic response to the polemic condemnation of Christian thinkers. Nevertheless, one could make a strong case that a dichotomy along these lines is indeed implied in R. Şadoq’s words, a suggestion enhanced by the passage that we discussed above, which explicitly refers to the Torah comprised of prohibitions and prescriptions originating from the Tree of Knowledge and garbed in the shell of the demonic. The future Torah will shed this shroud and will consist of the true light that is no longer subject to the dichotomy of holy and unholy. This Torah embodies the hypernomian margin that demarcates the center of the nomian, the limit beyond the law that is the foundation of the law, the metaethical destabilization that grounds the possibility of an ethical imperative. Just as the female is incorporated in the male that is both and neither male nor female, and the non-Jew is incorporated in the Jew that is both and neither Jew nor non-Jew, so the unholy is incorporated in the holy that is both and neither holy nor unholy, and evil is incorporated in the good that is both and neither good nor evil.