



Left Contained in the Right: A Study in Zoharic Hermeneutics

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# LEFT CONTAINED IN THE RIGHT: A STUDY IN ZOHARIC HERMENEUTICS

by

ELLIOT WOLFSON

Although there has been much in modern scholarship written about the historical and theosophical background of the Zohar,<sup>1</sup> scholars have paid little attention to the literary structure of the work and its relationship to the thematic content contained therein. There is, as far as I know, not one in-depth study of such a nature.<sup>2</sup>

This paper will attempt to unfold one recurrent theme which serves as the literary thread connecting the zoharic treatment of Exodus 1–20, i.e., the biblical account of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, their subsequent exodus,

1. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1961), pp. 156–243; idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 213–244. Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 2 vols. [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1971) [hereafter cited as *MhZ*]. See also Daniel Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Ramsey, N.J., 1983), esp. pp. 3–39.

2. See, however, Yehuda Liebes, "The Messiah of the Zohar" [Hebrew], in *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought: A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 87–236. This essay, which is rich in textual analyses and has indeed set the standard for all future research into the Zohar, contains many insights which may be useful to one interested in pursuing the issue of literary structure and its relation to thematic content in the Zohar.

and, finally, the Sinaitic revelation.<sup>3</sup> We will suggest that there is a common theme which the Zohar (exegetically) discovers within the biblical text. This theme, in turn, lies at the core of the zoharic understanding of the theological categories of exile, redemption, and revelation.

*Introduction: The "Left" and the "Right"*

As is well known to scholars in the field of Jewish mysticism, amongst the sources which exerted an influence upon the author of the Zohar are to be counted kabbalistic texts which derived from a "gnostic" school of Kabbalah which emerged in the second half of the thirteenth century in Castile.<sup>4</sup> One of the salient features of this school was the positing of a demonic realm morphologically paralleling the realm of the divine:<sup>5</sup> as there are ten holy emanations (*sefirot*), so there are ten "emanations of the left."<sup>6</sup> In the words of one of the members of this circle, Moses of Burgos: "There is a left [side] corresponding to the right, intended to perfect the right, to punish and chastise with 'chastisements of love' those who walk in a bad way in order to purify them."<sup>7</sup> To be sure, as Scholem has already pointed out, this dualism was never presented as absolute, for in order for a text to be accepted within the framework of normative Judaism, the dualistic

3. I am limiting myself in this paper to an analysis of texts which form part of the main body of the Zohar. For a discussion of the various literary strata in the Zohar, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 159–163; idem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 214–220. All citations and references to the Zohar will be taken from *Sefer ha-Zohar*, ed. Reuven Margalioṭ, 3 vols., 6th ed. (Jerusalem, 1984). References are to volume and page number. References to *Zohar Hadash* are from the Margalioṭ ed., 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1978) [hereafter cited as *ZH*].

4. See Scholem, "Kabbalat R. Ya'akov ve-R. Yiṣḥak ha-Kohen," *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 2 (1927): 193–197; Liebes, "The Messiah," pp. 124–128.

5. Scholem, "Kabbalat R. Ya'akov ve-R. Yiṣḥak"; J. Dan, "Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in Early Kabbalah," *AJS Review* 5 (1980): 17–41.

6. According to R. Isaac, the ten emanations of the left comprise "three worlds which were created and destroyed" (cf. *Gen. R.* 9:2, ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 68) and seven archons which do battle against the seven lower holy emanations. See Scholem, "Kabbalat," pp. 194, 248–251. The expression "emanations of the left" was not used by R. Isaac, but rather by his student, R. Moses of Burgos. See Scholem, "R. Moshe, Talmid R. Yiṣḥak," *Le-Ḥeker Kabbalat R. Yiṣḥak b. Ya'akov ha-Kohen*, in *Tarbiz* 4 (1933): 207–225.

7. Scholem, "R. Moshe," p. 209. See also Todros Abulafia, *Ozar ha-Kavod* (Warsaw, 1879; reprint, Jerusalem, 1970), 3a: "Where dogs bark there the Angel of Death is to be seen, for [he] is emanated from the left side, which is an emanation in itself." This should not be understood in any absolute sense, but rather as meaning that the left comprises its own powers which parallel those of the divine. See *ibid.*, 23b, concerning the "worlds created and destroyed" (see n. 6 and below n. 22).

tendency had to be mitigated.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, these kabbalists struggled over the question, Whence arose the demonic, or left, side?<sup>9</sup> While they differed as to the exact moment within the emanative process which would account for the emergence of the left side, all agreed that at some moment this in fact occurred. The demonic side was thus accorded a “quasi” independence, said to have emerged from either the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, or the fifth, *Gevurah* (Strength) or *Din* (Judgment).<sup>10</sup> In either case, according to these kabbalists, the “emanations of the left” have their origin in and are sustained by the left side of the divine realm itself. That is to say, therefore, that the demonic has a root within the divine.

This gnostic theme is developed repeatedly in the Zohar; indeed, it forms one of the essentially characteristic doctrines of the work.<sup>11</sup> Like the kabbalists of the Castilian circle, the author of the Zohar posits a demonic realm, called by him *Sitra Aħra*, the “Other Side,” which structurally parallels the divine realm:<sup>12</sup> both realms are constituted by ten powers.<sup>13</sup> Further-

8. Scholem, “Kabbalot,” pp. 193–194. See also Shulamit Shahar, “Catharism and the Beginnings of the Kabbalah in Languedoc: Elements Common to Catharic Scriptures and the Book Bahir” [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 40 (1971), esp. p. 502, and p. viii of the English summary. Shahar concludes that despite the similarities between some of the doctrines of the Catharic sects in Languedoc in the twelfth century and the Kabbalah of the *Bahir*, with respect to the question of evil one must make a clear distinction between the two: the former were “entirely dualistic,” “making an absolute distinction between the good God and the principle of evil,” whereas the latter remained “completely monistic, since God is portrayed as the Creator of Chaos, and Satan is one of His attributes.” See n. 9.

9. Cf. Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:292, 295–298. As Tishby noted, the kabbalists’ concern with discovering the source for the demonic realm within the divine was an effort to mitigate the potential dualism of their doctrine concerning a left emanation. See below n. 12.

10. According to R. Isaac, the ten emanations of the left emerged from *Binah*, the third *sefirah*, whereas, according to R. Moses of Burgos, they emanated from *Gevurah*, the fifth *sefirah*, or the attribute of judgment. See Scholem, “Kabbalot,” p. 194; idem, “R. Moshe,” p. 210. Cf. also, Scholem, “Sitra Aħra: ha-Tov ve-ha-Ra ba-Kabbalah,” in *Pirkei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Kabbalah u-Semaleha* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 191–193. As Scholem points out (pp. 193 ff.), in the Kabbalah before the Zohar there was a third explanation for the origin of evil, viz., the last *sefirah*. This is reflected in the Zohar as well; see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:298.

11. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:288–292.

12. Ibid. 1:288–289. It should be noted that Tishby (p. 292) distinguishes between morphological and ontological parallelism. In other words, while it is true that there is a parallelism of structure between the two realms, they are not of the same ontological standing; the demonic realm is of a secondary nature in comparison with the divine, or, according to one of the metaphors employed in the Zohar, the relation of the two is like that of an ape to a human being (see II, 148b). According to Tishby, this distinction is one of the various attempts to mitigate the potential dualism of the doctrine of two realms. See above n. 9.

13. III, 41b. See also II, 223b–224a; III, 70a. On occasion it is not the entire sefirotic realm but only the seven lower *sefirot* which are said to have a parallel in the demonic realm; see I, 194a. (See above n. 6.) Although there are several names for the demonic forces in the Zohar,

more, the demonic realm, which vis-à-vis the divine is considered to be the left, is itself constituted, as is the divine, by a left and right side, i.e., by a masculine and feminine dimension:<sup>14</sup> in mythological terms, just as there is male (= *Tiferet*) and female (= *Malkhut*) within the sefirotic world, so there is Samael and Lilith in the demonic world.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, just as the upper *sefirot* are arranged by means of three lines, i.e., the right side, or grace (חסד), the left side, or rigor (גבורה), and the median, or mercy (רחמים), so the lower *sefirot* are bound together by three knots.<sup>16</sup> Just as there is a complicated structure of palaces (היכלות) below the holy *sefirot*, so there is a corresponding structure below the demonic *sefirot*.<sup>17</sup> Finally, both realms can exert an influence upon and be influenced by human events. The human being stands in a reciprocal relationship to both realms, and it is the intention which directs the channel of energy from below which ultimately distinguishes one's attachment to the divine or to the demonic.

According to intention which one has in this world, so the spirit from above is drawn upon him. . . . If his will intends towards the upper holy matter, then

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the most common are: "lower crowns" (see, e.g., I, 95b, 167a; II, 21b, 35b, 39b, 64b, 85b, 94b; III, 14b, 48b, 69a, 95b, 111b, 119b, 208b, 209b); "lower grades" (see, e.g., I, 133b, 177a [but see remark of Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:288, n. 4], 194a; II, 244b); "impure crowns of magic below" (see, e.g., I, 167a; II, 30b; III, 41b); and, collectively, *Sitra Aħra* (see, e.g., I, 191b, 204b, 228a; II, 69a, and elsewhere).

14. I, 53a, 160a; II, 192b, 194b, 243a; III, 63a, 207a. Even though there is a right and left dimension in both realms, the demonic vis-à-vis the divine is known as the left, while the divine vis-à-vis the demonic is known as the right. See I, 195b; 211b; III, 259b. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:289, n. 2.

15. I, 148a (*Sitrei Torah*), 161b (*Sitrei Torah*). Cf. also I, 5a, 64a, 153a, 160b; II, 163b, 236b, 243a; see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:298–300. The pairing of Samael and Lilith as husband and wife in the demonic realm, corresponding to Adam and Eve, was already made by R. Isaac ha-Kohen in his "Treatise on the Left Emanation"; see Scholem, "Kabbalot," pp. 251–252, 260, 262. For a discussion of R. Isaac's historical and literary sources, see Dan, "Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in Early Kabbalah," pp. 17–40. (The relevant passage is translated on pp. 18–19.) See below n. 44.

16. II, 38a. (Cf. also I, 166b; II, 40b.) By means of the merit of the "three knots of faith," i.e., the three patriarchs and the *sefirot* which they represent, the Israelites were released from the "three knots of magic" by which the Egyptians had bound them; see below n. 41. Cf. Yehuda Liebes, "Sections of the Zohar Lexicon" [Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1976), s.v. קשרא, n. 2, pp. 394–395, n. 20, p. 400. For an extended discussion of the possible Christian influence on the Zohar with respect to the notion of the trinity, see idem, "Christian Influences in the Zohar" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2, no. 1 (1982/83): 43–74. Cf. also idem, "The Messiah," pp. 130–131, n. 182.

17. I, 211b; II, 244a, 263a.

that thing is drawn upon him from above to below. If his will is to cleave to the Other Side, and he intends it, than that thing is drawn upon him from above to below.<sup>18</sup>

The close affinity of theurgy and magic reflects the structural parallelism of the two realms.

Moreover, the author of the *Zohar*, like his Castilian predecessors, was concerned with the problem of the origin of evil and the etiological relation of the divine to the demonic. While there are various approaches to this problem in the *Zohar*, these may be subsumed under two basic categories, the one mythological in nature and the other philosophical. The former, which we may call the cathartic view, posits that evil results as a by-product of the process of elimination of waste from Divine Thought, a process which

18. I, 99b. See *ibid.*, 125b, 161a; III, 112b, 145a. On this basis, e.g., the *Zohar* (*Midrash ha-Ne'elam*) reinterprets the midrashic comment on Deut. 34:10, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like Moses": "In Israel none arose, but in the nations of the world there arose; and who was it? Balaam." See *Sifrei Devarim* 34:10, ed. Finkelstein, p. 430; for other rabbinic references, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1968), 6:125, n. 727. The author of the *Zohar* writes: "Moses' works are above, Balaam's below. Moses made [theurgical] use of the holy crown of the supernal King above, and Balaam made [magical] use of the lower crowns below which are not holy" (II, 21b). Cf. Moses de León, *Shekel ha-Kodesh*, ed. Greenup (1911), pp. 16–18. Cf. *ZH*, 58b; III, 193b. The motif of Balaam as a chief magician and protagonist of the demonic is repeated often in the *Zohar*. See e.g., *ZH*, 66a; I, 125b, 126a, 166b; III, 112b, 194a, 207b, 212a. The association of Balaam with magic is found already in rabbinic Aggadah; see Ginzberg, *Legends*, index, s.v. "Balaam, the magical powers of." Moreover, according to earlier sources, Balaam was considered to be the chief magician of Pharaoh; see *Sotah* 11a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:334–335. See II, 69a. See below, n. 41. The Aramaic *ܫܡܫܐ*, lit. "made use of," was used technically in a theurgical context already in the Mishnah; see *Avot* 1:13. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 358, n. 17, and *idem*, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), p. 54, n. 36. It is of interest to note that in this passage (I, 99b) the mystic (R. Abba) learns his wisdom from a book brought to him by "the children of the East." Now, according to the Midrash (see, e.g., *Eccles. R.* 8:23), the wisdom of the children of the East consisted of astrology and divination. See Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1965), p. 98. Moreover, according to the *Zohar* itself, the land of the East was the place whence Laban, Be'or, and Balaam learned all their sorcery, for it was the place into which the angels Azza and Azael fell. See I, 126a, 133b, 223a. The children of the East, therefore, were masters of magical knowledge. Yet here they are portrayed as bearers of the correct mystical (theurgical) knowledge. Hence, in this context, the line between theurgical and magical knowledge is difficult to draw. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:11, who distinguishes between the two in terms of the ultimate purpose for which the given act was performed, i.e., whether to influence the upper powers or whether to gain benefit for oneself. But see *ibid.*, p. 435, where the distinction is somewhat blurred. Cf. Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah* (Tel Aviv, 1948), pp. 143–144; Liebes, "The Messiah," p. 180, n. 319.

occurs during the very first stages of activity, indeed prior to the emanation of the sefirotic world from *Hokhmah* downward.<sup>19</sup> Before the process of emanation could unfold, it was necessary for God to rid Himself of the unbalanced forces of judgment, referred to mythically as “the primordial kings of Edom who died,”<sup>20</sup> or as “the worlds created and destroyed.”<sup>21</sup> According to the second category, which we may call the emanative view, the demonic realm as a separate force is viewed as a link in the continuous chain of being. Here too there is no uniformity of opinion in the *Zohar*, for the root of evil is said to be in one of three gradations: *Binah*,<sup>22</sup> *Gevurah*,<sup>23</sup> or *Malkhut*.<sup>24</sup> The common denominator of these views, however, is that the demonic left side has its root in the left side of the divine. Furthermore, it is an imbalance in the sefirotic world, a breaking of the harmony between right and left, which ultimately eventuates in the coming-to-be of an “autonomous” left realm.<sup>25</sup> Hence, while the demonic structurally parallels the divine, the former is ontologically posterior to the latter.<sup>26</sup> In the course of our analysis it will become clear how this question has a bearing upon the thematic under discussion.

19. See II, 254b–255a; III, 292b (*Idra Zuta*). For a discussion of the cathartic view, see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:150–151, 296; Ephraim Gottlieb, *Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Kabbalah* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 178–182; Liebes, “Sections of the *Zohar* Lexicon,” p. 147; Moshe Idel, “Ha-Maḥshavah ha-Ra’ah shel ha-El,” *Tarbiz* 49 (1980): 356–364.

20. See II, 176b (*Sifra di-Zeni’uta*); III, 128b (*Idra Rabba*), 135a, 142a, 292a (*Idra Zuta*). The biblical basis for this mythical conception is Gen. 36:31 ff. Cf. Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:138, 150. For a discussion of the possible source for this conception in the Castilian circle, and particularly Todros Abulafia, see Liebes, “The Messiah,” pp. 219–221. Moreover, as Liebes points out (p. 219), this conception was probably suggested to the kabbalists by the midrashic claim that God at first considered creating the world with judgment and only afterwards decided to combine judgment and mercy together. See, e.g., *Gen. R.* 12:15.

21. See II, 34b. The source for this mythical conception was R. Isaac ha-Kohen; see above n. 6. Cf. Scholem, “Kabbalat,” pp. 194–195.

22. See, e.g., I, 31a, 151a; II, 64a, 83a, 175b; III, 15b, 39b, 65a, 99a, 118b, 262b. Cf. Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Oran*, ed. Joseph Ben-Shlomo (Jerusalem, 1981), 1:235.

23. See Scholem, “Kabbalat,” p. 194; idem, “Sitra Aḥra,” p. 200; Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:296–298.

24. See I, 16a; II, 149b; III, 148a. See above n. 10.

25. See I, 17a–b. With regard to the question, What creates the imbalance in the sefirotic world? there are basically two approaches: it results either from an internal process or as a result of human sin. See Scholem, *Pirkei Yesod*, pp. 202–204.

26. Here I have made use of Tishby’s terminology; see n. 12.

*Exile*

The biblical narrative concerning Israel's sojourn in Egypt and its subsequent exodus represents one of the many exegetical bases upon which the author of the *Zohar* develops the gnostic drama. Egypt, according to the symbolic map of the *Zohar*, represents the demonic left side.<sup>27</sup> This symbolic correlation is based in the first instance upon a close textual reading of the scriptural account of the first three divine manifestations of power in Egypt. The preliminary miracle performed by Aaron before Pharaoh, the casting down of the rod which was then transformed into a serpent (see Exod. 7:9 ff.) and the first two plagues, the turning of the waters into blood and the spreading forth of the frogs (ibid. 19–22, 8:1–3), it will be recalled, are matched by the magicians of Egypt.<sup>28</sup> It is clear from the Bible, then, that the spiritual power of Egypt was that of magic. This factor was already elaborated upon by the rabbis of the Talmud. Thus in one place we read: "Ten measures of magic descended upon the world; nine were taken by Egypt."<sup>29</sup>

The intrinsic relationship of Egypt to magic was developed at length by the author of the *Zohar*.<sup>30</sup> The old aggadic theme, however, is transformed by the theosophic symbolism of the Kabbalah. That is, Egypt's special relation to magic underscores Egypt as the seat of demonic power, for according to the *Zohar*, magic is the force of the demonic, the *Sitra Ahra*,

27. For references, see below n. 31. See Tishby, *MhZ*, I: p. 81 of the Introduction. Tishby suggests that many of the passages in the *Zohar* which deride Egypt are in reality intended against Islam and the Arabs.

28. The power of the magicians is from the outset rendered impotent in comparison with the power of God. Hence, we are told that the rod which Aaron cast down, and which became a serpent, swallowed up the rods which the magicians cast down (Exod. 7:12). Moreover, the magicians' use of secret arts could match the divine power only for the first two plagues (ibid. 8:18–19). Finally, the magicians themselves are affected by the plague of boils, causing them to disappear. For a succinct discussion of these issues, see M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 71–72. The impotence of the Egyptian magicians vis-à-vis God was a favorite theme in rabbinic Aggadah. See, e.g., *Sanhedrin* 67b, *Exod. R.* 10:7, *Tanhuma, Va-Era* 14. See also Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:335, 352; 5:429, n. 185.

29. *Kiddushin* 49b. See also *Menahot* 85a, *Exod. R.* 9:6. For other references in aggadic literature to this theme, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, index, s.v. "Egyptians, masters of astrology and magic."

30. See, e.g., I, 81b, 83a, 249a; II, 30b, 35b, 38a, 191a, 192b; III, 50b, 69a, 70a. See below nn. 35–45.



which corresponds to the divine.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the ten lower *sefirot* are called specifically the “ten crowns of magic [of] impurity below.”<sup>32</sup> In another place we read that all the magicians (חרשי) of the world are called נחשים because “all types of magic of the world are bound to and emerge from that primordial serpent [נחש קדמוני] which is the spirit of impurity.”<sup>33</sup>

Employing this symbolic correspondence between Egypt and the demonic, the author of the Zohar interprets the verse “And Abram went down to Egypt” (Gen. 12:10): “This verse hints at wisdom and the levels down below, to the depths of which Abraham descended. He knew them but did not become attached.”<sup>34</sup> The descent of Abraham to Egypt thus symbolizes, as one writer put it, “his exploration of *Sitra Ahra*, ‘the Other Side.’”<sup>35</sup> In yet another place, the Zohar writes that when Joseph came to Egypt, “he

31. See, e.g., I, 167a; II, 30b; III, 41b, 70a, 192a. This is also the underlying meaning of a repeated claim in the Zohar concerning the special relation between the feminine and magic. That is, the demonic realm vis-à-vis the divine is considered to be feminine (although there is both a feminine and masculine dimension within the left side; see above n. 14); accordingly, all magic (i.e., the demonic) is related to the feminine. See *ZH*, 92b; I, 126a.

32. III, 41b. See also II, 223b–224a.

33. I, 125b. See also II, 215b. The “primordial serpent” in the Zohar frequently refers to the feminine counterpart to Samael in the realm of the Other Side (based on the aggadic image that Samael rode upon the serpent; cf. *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 13), but it can also refer to this whole realm or to the masculine potency alone. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:304–305.

34. I, 83a (trans. by D. Matt, *Zohar*, p. 63). Cf. *ibid.*, 133b, where the author of the Zohar elaborates upon the talmudic interpretation of Gen. 25:6, “And to the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts,” i.e., Abraham transmitted to them a “name of impurity” by which to do magic (*Sanhedrin* 91a, and the commentary of Rashi, *ad loc.*). According to the Zohar, Abraham gave the sons of his concubines the names of the impure forces which are the lower grades; that is to say, Abraham imparted to them knowledge of the demonic realm. See *ibid.*, 223a. This interpretation likewise presupposes that Abraham had significant knowledge of the demonic realm. See below n. 45.

35. See Matt, *Zohar*, p. 220. Matt goes on to say: “This dangerous psychic journey is the crucible of Abraham’s spiritual transformation.” That is, as the passage from the Zohar itself (I, 83a) emphasizes, it was necessary for Abraham to descend into Egypt (the “Other Side”) before entering the land of Israel (the portion of the Holy One) so that he would be purified. That is also the mystical significance of Israel’s enslavement in Egypt: spiritual purification by means of contact with the unholy. See also II, 184a: “The words of Torah reside only there [i.e., in the desert, which is the abode of the demonic force], for there is no light except that which emerges from darkness. When that [‘other’] side is subdued, the Holy One, blessed be He, ascends and is glorified. And there is no divine worship except amidst the darkness, and no good expect within evil. When a person enters an evil way and forsakes it, then the Holy One ascends in his glory. Thus the perfection of all is good and evil together, and afterwards to ascend to the good. . . . This is the complete worship.” See n. 45.

learned their wisdom concerning the lower crowns.”<sup>36</sup> Or again, elaborating upon a saying of the rabbis in the Talmud (see above), the author of the Zohar writes:

It is taught: Ten types of wisdom descended upon the world, and all were absorbed by Egypt except for one, which spread out in the world. And all of these were types of magic, and from them Egypt knew magic [better] than the rest of the world.<sup>37</sup>

Egypt, therefore, epitomized the place of impurity. “R. Yose said: All the streets of Egypt were filled with idolatry; and, moreover, in every house were to be found implements by which they [the Egyptians] were bound to those lower crowns below and which aroused a spirit of impurity amongst them.”<sup>38</sup> Contained here is the mystical explanation for Moses’ command to the Israelites, “And take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin” (Exod. 12:22), namely, “in order to remove the spirit of impurity from amongst them.”<sup>39</sup>

On the symbolic level, therefore, Israel’s being in Egypt represented their being under the force of the demonic: they were bound by “the knots of magic.”<sup>40</sup> Pharaoh, king of Egypt, symbolized in turn the dominating power of this demonic side.<sup>41</sup> The Zohar, accordingly, elaborates upon a metaphor employed in Ezekiel 29:3, “Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great crocodile that crouches in the midst of his streams.”<sup>42</sup> The

36. III, 207a.

37. *Ibid.*, 70a.

38. II, 35b. Cf. *ibid.*, 38a; III, 50b.

39. *Ibid.* Cf. *ibid.*, 41a, 80b.

40. II, 25a, 38a, 52b, 69a; III, 212a (it was by means of the magic of Balaam that the Egyptians bound the Israelites; see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:27, n. 156). On the usage of the word “knot” (קשרא) as a magical bond in the Zohar, see Liebes, “Sections of the Zohar Lexicon,” p. 397. This linguistic association is indeed quite old. For a survey of ancient Near Eastern materials, including relevant biblical texts, relating to magical bonds and knots, see Michael Fishbane, “Studies in Biblical Magic: Origins, Uses and Transformations of Terminology and Literary Form” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1971), chaps. 1 and 2.

41. I, 195a; II, 28a, 37b, 52b, 67b. According to rabbinic sources, Pharaoh was a magician par excellence; see *Moed Katan* 18a (cf. *Shabbat* 75a), *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, Exod. 7:15. See also Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:335, 352, 358; 3:13; 5:428, n. 175.

42. The attribution of the metaphor “the great crocodile” in Ezek. 19:3 to the Pharaoh in the time of the exodus can be found already in the Midrash. See *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, trans. J. Lauterbach (Philadelphia, 1976), vol. 2, p. 175; *Exod. R.* 9:4. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:66, 6:27, n. 156.

“great crocodile” names the demonic force, and “his streams” are “the gradations which emanate from him.”<sup>43</sup> The knowledge of this “great crocodile” is alluded to as well in the verse “Go in to Pharaoh” (Exod. 10:1). That is, the esoteric meaning of God’s injunction to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh,” is that God implored Moses to plumb the inner depths of the divine secrets concerning the demonic side. The Holy One, blessed be He, “must do battle” against this “great crocodile” and “not against another.”<sup>44</sup> Moses, therefore, was granted “the mystery of the wisdom of the great crocodile that crouches in the midst of his streams,” a wisdom that is granted only “to the just who know the secrets of their master.”<sup>45</sup> It was necessary for Moses

43. II, 34a. In the continuation of this section, the Zohar makes use of the rabbinic myth concerning Leviathan and his mate, i.e., a male and a female sea-monster. See *Bava Batra* 74b based on Isaiah 27:1; Ginzberg, *Legends*, index, s.v. “Leviathan.” According to the author of the Zohar, Leviathan and his mate correspond to Samael and Lilith, who, in turn, correspond to the Holy One and the Shekhinah. The Zohar was here influenced by the writings of R. Isaac ha-Kohen; see Scholem, “Kabbalat,” pp. 262–263, and the translation of this passage in Dan, “Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil,” pp. 38–39. See above n. 15. According to this passage (II, 34a–b), there is the great crocodile, i.e., Samael, and ten streams, i.e., vessels which contain the demonic forces: “in each stream there wanders about one crocodile” (ibid., 34b). The ten crocodiles, collectively, are the ten “lower crowns” which correspond to the ten *sefirot*. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:303. Cf. also I, 52a. On the historical influence of R. Isaac upon the author of the Zohar, see Scholem, “Kabbalat,” p. 195. According to Scholem, however, the “great crocodile” represents Samael, while the streams, in the midst of which he crouches, are the remaining nine lower crowns. The text, in my opinion, seems to bear out the interpretation of Tishby.

44. II, 34a.

45. Ibid. There is, according to the Zohar, an especially esoteric nature to this knowledge. With regard to this, the author of the Zohar was influenced by the Castilian kabbalists, who were reluctant to elaborate on this topic and who likewise spoke of the secret of the demonic as being known to only a select few. See Liebes, “The Messiah,” pp. 123–124. Thus, after the initial discourse on the “great crocodile” we read: “R. Shimeon said: The Account of Creation—the comrades are busy studying it and they have knowledge of it, but few are they who know how to allude to the Account of Creation according to the mystery of the great crocodile. Thus we learned [cf. *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 9] that the entire world evolved only upon the scales of that [crocodile]” (II, 34b). For a discussion of the literary sources and theological significance of this passage, see Liebes, “The Messiah,” pp. 123–126. The statement concerning Moses’ attainment of knowledge of the “great crocodile” succeeds a discussion about Job. The error of Job, according to the Zohar, was that he did not give any portion of his sacrifices (which were all burnt-offerings) to the “Other Side,” and thereby aroused its jealousy. The sin of Job is referred to in the Zohar as “not including evil and good together,” for had he given a portion to the demonic realm as well, then he would have comprised the two together. “Thus it is fitting for a person to know good and evil, and then return to the good. That is the secret of faith.” (See above n. 35 and below n. 111.) Job is described in Scripture as being “removed from evil” (Job 1:8), i.e., he had no portion in *Sitra Ahra*. See II, 181b–182a; III, 101b; Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:291. By contrast, Moses, like Abraham (see above n. 34), had a portion in both realms; thus it

to attain such knowledge, for at that time, the people of Israel were under the dominion of the “great crocodile,” the chief power of evil, embodied in the person of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

### *Redemption*

Israel’s exilic state corresponds to an exilic state within the divine realm, viz., the domination of the Shekhinah by Samael.<sup>46</sup> Alternatively expressed, the historical exile signifies a separation above between the Shekhinah and the Holy One (*Malkhut* and *Tiferet*).<sup>47</sup> The redemptive process, as we shall see, is characterized in the Zohar by two stages which, respectively, correspond to the twofold characterization of exile as (1) the subservience of the holy (the right) to the unholy (the left),<sup>48</sup> and (2) the separation of male and female, right and left, within the divine.<sup>49</sup>

The first stage in the redemptive process is the overthrowing of the yoke of Satanic (i.e., Egyptian) rule. Such a power could be overthrown, however, only by the very means through which it governs. In order for God to redeem Israel, therefore, it was necessary for Him to use the tactics of the left against the forces of the left, to fight fire with fire. Thus the author of the

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says “Go to Pharaoh,” i.e., attain knowledge of the demonic realm, a knowledge which Job did not possess. See Liebes, “The Messiah,” p. 126. On Solomon’s being taught from a book of magic by Asmodeus, see II, 128a; III, 19a, 77a. Cf. also III, 233a–b concerning the legend of Solomon riding an eagle to a place in the wilderness called “Tarmod” (see I Kings 9:18: “Tadmor”), where Azza and Aza’el were bound by chains of iron, and where none but Balaam was allowed to enter. From that place Solomon “learnt wisdom.”

46. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:224–225, 230–231. “The subservience of the Shekhinah to *Sitra Ahra*,” concludes Tishby, “is the hidden mystery of the exile of the Shekhinah. The upper exile is a disturbance of the order of the divine reality, a closing of the channels of influence and an eclipse of the lights due to the removal of the Shekhinah from the realm of the *sefirot* and her joining with the *Sitra Ahra*. The exile of Israel in the countries of the nations is a process which parallels an event that occurs above.” See n. 48.

47. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:225, 229–230; Liebes, “The Messiah,” p. 198.

48. This is expressed in several ways: (1) the submission of the Shekhinah to *Sitra Ahra* (see n. 46); (2) the unification of *Tiferet* with Lilith (see I, 122a–b; III, 69a); (3) the dominion of the other nations over Israel (see I, 84b–85a); (4) Israel’s being nourished by the power of *Sitra Ahra* in place of the power of holiness (see I, 95b; II, 152b).

49. On the analogy between the pair of opposites, male-female and right-left, see, e.g., I, 30a, 70a. See n. 81.

50. I, 211b. Cf. *ibid.*, 201a; II, 29a, 36a. See also Menahem Recanati, *Perush ‘al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1961), Exod. 12:22, 41c–d. On the theme of the Shekhinah employing the forces of *Sitra Ahra* in order to punish the wicked, see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:224–225.

Zohar interprets the verse “I compare thee, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh’s cavalry” (Cant. 1:9):

Come and see: There are chariots of the left in the mystery of the Other Side and chariots of the right in the mystery of the supernal Holiness. The ones are parallel to the others; the ones of mercy and the others of judgment. And when the Holy One, blessed be He, carried out judgment in Egypt, every judgment that He did was in the very likeness of those chariots [on the left] and in the likeness of that very side. Just as that side kills and removes souls, so the Holy One acted in that very way, as it is written, “And the Lord killed every first-born” [Exod. 13:15].<sup>50</sup>

Nowhere was this more apparent, according to the Zohar, than in the plague of the killing of the firstborn; this event symbolized the wiping out of the demonic power of judgment by means of divine judgment. The Zohar thus interprets the verse “And the Lord will pass through to smite Egypt” (Exod. 12:23): “He will pass through the strict lines of judgment of the [lower] crowns, which are bound to the other crowns above, and He will loosen them from their place. And He will pass over his ways in order to act with judgment to protect Israel.”<sup>51</sup> That God “will pass over” means that God will pass through the domain of the lower crowns, the demonic realm, in order to execute judgment upon them and thereby protect Israel.

Specifically, according to the Zohar, the divine attribute employed by God in carrying out this act of judgment was the tenth *sefirah*, Shekhinah, commonly called the “lesser” or “weaker” attribute of judgment,<sup>52</sup> or “the lower Court.”<sup>53</sup> This is alluded to in Exodus 12:29, “And the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt”: “And the Lord” (׳מ), according to a midrashic comment, refers to the Holy One and His Court, which, in kabbalistic terms, symbolize *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>54</sup> The Zohar’s point,

51. II, 36b.

52. I, 261a; II, 187a.

53. II, 231b. Cf. *Shekel ha-Kodesh*, pp. 80–83. See Tishby, *Perush Aggadat le-R. ’Azriel* (Jerusalem, 1945), p. 56.

54. II, 37b (based on rabbinic interpretation of ׳מ as “the Lord and His Court,” see *Gen. R.* 51:3, *Exod. R.* 12:4). See also *ibid.*, 37a; III, 176a. See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, ed. Scholem, “Shenei Kuntrasim le-R. Moshe di-Li’on,” *Kovez ’al Yad*, n.s. 8 (1975): 344. It should be noted that, with respect to this very issue, Nahmanides was very careful to emphasize that the plagues in general, and particularly the plague of the killing of the firstborn, were carried out by the Shekhinah in conjunction with the Holy One, i.e., the attribute of judgment together with that of mercy. The motivation here was clearly to avoid the separation of the

therefore, is that the killing of the firstborn (chief power of the demonic) was achieved by means of God acting through “His Court,” i.e., Shekhinah. This is further brought out in another passage interpreting the same verse. Here, as elsewhere in the Zohar, Shekhinah is called by the name “Night”:<sup>55</sup> “And judgment was carried out on all of them when they all entered their homes . . . and the Night carried out judgment on them all in that time.”<sup>56</sup> This too is the underlying intent of the Zohar’s comment that the “essence of the redemption of Israel was in the night.”<sup>57</sup> Yet this attribute lies in between the right and left sides of the divine, and therefore has the capacity to act with mercy or with judgment.<sup>58</sup> At the moment of the killing of the firstborn, the Shekhinah turned with mercy toward the Israelites, thus expressing her dual nature.<sup>59</sup>

The exile, as we have noted, was a state in which the demonic dominated over the divine; redemption is the restoration of power to its proper domain, viz., the realm of the upper *sefirot*. Such a restoration, however, entailed a twofold process. The first stage was the subjugation of the demonic left by the divine left, which resulted in the freeing of the Community of Israel (= Shekhinah) from under the dominion of Pharaoh (= *Sitra Aħra*). It is this

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Shekhinah from the rest of the divine attributes, a sin which the kabbalists referred to as קיצוץ בניצוץ, i.e., “cutting the shoots,” an expression used in the classical Aggadah to refer to Adam (see *Gen. R.* 19:3) or to Elisha ben Abuya (*Hagigah* 14b). (On the kabbalistic meaning of “cutting the shoots,” see Scholem, “Te’udah Hadashah, le-Toledot Reshit ha-Kabbalah,” in *Sefer Bialik* [Tel Aviv, 1934], p. 153, and Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:221.) Cf. Naḥmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, Exod. 12:12 (ed. Chavel, vol. 1, p. 329). Cf. also the supercommentaries on Naḥmanides: Shem Tov ibn Gaon, *Keter Shem Tov*, in *Ma’or ve-Shemesh* (Livorno, 1839), 34a; Joshua ibn Shuaib, *Be’ur Sodot ha-Ramban*, attributed to Meir ibn Sahula (Warsaw, 1875); Isaac b. Samuel of Acre, *Sefer Me’irat Einayim: A Critical Edition*, ed. Amos Goldreich (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 79.

55. On “Night” as a name for Shekhinah, see, e.g., I, 16b, 92b; II, 239b, and elsewhere. See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, p. 341.

56. II, 38a. See Recanati, *Perush ‘al ha-Torah*, Exod. 11:4, 41a.

57. II, 38a. Cf. Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, MS Oxford 1607, 54b (a critical edition of the aforementioned work will appear as part of my dissertation).

58. On the dual character of the Shekhinah, see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:223–228. Cf. also Naḥmanides, Genesis 49:24 (ed. Chavel, vol. 1, p. 273), and *Me’irat Einayim*, p. 83. It should be noted that, according to the Zohar, not only Shekhinah but each of the *sefirot* has the capacity to act with mercy and judgment; see II, 36a; III, 15a, 36b, 146a, 262b. This latter idea can be traced back to the circle of kabbalists in Gerona; see, e.g., Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1964), vol. 2, p. 359. Cf. *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 71a; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 1: 235.

59. See II, 36a, 37a. This is the esoteric meaning of the killing of the firstborn at midnight, i.e., at a time when the Shekhinah performs two functions reflecting her dual nature: mercy toward Israel and judgment toward Egypt. See II, 37b, 80b.

transformation from the unholy to the holy which, according to the Zohar, is the mystical intent of the twin commandments to remove all leaven prior to Passover and to eat unleavened bread during the seven days of Passover. That is to say, the leaven symbolizes the evil inclination, the "Other Side," foreign gods and idolatry, which must be obliterated, whereas the unleavened bread symbolizes the first gradation in the realm of holiness, i.e., Shekhinah, the dominion of the Holy One.<sup>60</sup>

The second stage involved the beginning of the process of reunification of the left and right within the divine sphere, a unification that was torn asunder by the exilic state. This stage is implicit in the biblical narrative as well. The night on which God smote the Egyptian firstborn is referred to in Scripture as *ליל שמורים*, i.e., "the night of watchfulness" (Exod. 12:42). Commenting on this verse, the Zohar notes, *inter alia*, that the word for "watchfulness," *שמורים*, is in the plural, whereas the word for "night," *ליל*, is in the singular.<sup>61</sup> The plural form, we are told, alludes to the secret of unification between male and female, right and left,<sup>62</sup> which was destined to take place on that very night. The night, *ליל*, is the feminine without her masculine counterpart; when the feminine is joined together with the masculine, then *ליל* becomes *לילה*.<sup>63</sup> Thus the verse continues: "this is the Lord's watch-night" *הוא הלילה הזה לה' שמורים*. The night of redemption is a night wherein the two are united, and hence the form *לילה* is used. This marks the beginning of the second stage in the redemptive process.

This mystery, according to the Zohar, is alluded to as well in Exodus 13:21, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they may go by day and night." Nahmanides had already interpreted the verse in terms of kabbalistic symbolism: the word *וה'*, "and the Lord," as the rabbis had said,<sup>64</sup> always refers to the Lord and His Court, which, understood theosophically, symbolize *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*. Hence the verse comes to

60. See I, 226b; II, 40a, 182a; III, 95b. Cf. *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, MS Oxford 1607, 54a–b. It should be noted that leaven was already used allegorically as a symbol for that which is evil or impure in Greco-Jewish, New Testament, and talmudic sources. See Philo, *Questions on Exodus*, I:15, II:14 (but see *The Special Laws*, II:184); I Cor. 5:6–8; Matt. 16:11–12; *Berakhot* 17a; *Gen. R.* 34:10, p. 320; *Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, *Noah* 15b. And see now B. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), p. 120, n. 13.

61. II, 38b.

62. See above n. 49.

63. II, 38. Cf. I, 260a; II, 131a; III, 22a.

64. For references, see above n. 54.

tell us, comments Naḥmanides, that “the Holy One, blessed be He, went with them by day and His Court by night,”<sup>65</sup> that is to say, the attribute of mercy governed them by day, whereas the attribute of judgment governed them by night.<sup>66</sup> While both attributes were thus operative in the redemption from Egypt, the two were not perfectly united, for each had its allotted time. Yet, contained here is also an allusion to the future redemption in which “the attribute of His Court [i.e., judgment] will ascend to [be united with] mercy.”<sup>67</sup> This is the secret of the word *וְהוּא*: the Holy One and His Court will be united as one, and redemption will be complete.

The author of the Zohar clearly develops the interpretation of Naḥmanides, but he does not accept the latter’s distinction between the redemption from Egypt and the future redemption.

“And the Lord went before them by day.” The Holy One, blessed be He, and His Court. R. Isaac said: It has been taught: The Shekhinah travels with the patriarchs.<sup>68</sup> “He goes before them by day,” that [refers to] Abraham. “In a pillar of cloud,” that [refers to] Isaac. “To lead them the way,” that [refers to] Jacob. “And by night in a pillar of fire to show them the way,” that [refers to] King David. . . . And it is written, “And the Lord went, etc., that they may go by day and by night.” Now why did they go by day and by night? . . . So that the highest perfection [lit. the perfection of all] should be found amongst them, for there is no perfection without day and night.<sup>69</sup>

The “highest perfection,” *שלימותא דכלא*, is found only where there is “day” (masculine potency of the divine) and “night” (feminine potency) united as one. There is here an echo of one of the theosophic principles which the Zohar establishes in connection with the creation account. In response to the question, Why does the Bible record with respect to each day, “And it was evening and it was morning”? the author of the Zohar writes: “To teach that there is no day without night, nor night without day, and they should not be separated.”<sup>70</sup> In the event of redemption, as in that

65. Naḥmanides, Exod. 13:21 (ed. Chavel, vol. 1, p. 348).

66. See Isaac of Acre, *Me'irat Einayim*, p. 81; Recanati, Exod. 13:21, 43a.

67. Naḥmanides, loc. cit.

68. The notion of the fourfold unity between the Shekhinah and the patriarchs (i.e., the *sefirot Hesed, Gevurah, and Raḥamim*) is repeated often in the Zohar. It is related, alternatively, to the four components of the Chariot or to the four legs of the Throne. See I, 60b, 99a, 120b, 150a, 237a, 248b; III, 174a, 182a, 262b. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:516.

69. II, 46a–b. Cf. also III, 191b.

70. I, 46a. Cf. also, *ibid.*, 5b, 32a; III, 93b, 134b.



of creation, we find a unification of day and night, masculine and feminine, the Holy One and the Shekhinah.

This second stage of redemption is expressed in somewhat different, but not unrelated, terms in the climactic event of the miracle of the sea. It is in his exegesis of this portion that the author of the Zohar is able to develop most fully his theosophic understanding of redemption and to introduce his unique parlance: the containment of the left within the right.

Commenting on the verse “And Israel saw the great work [lit., the great hand, *היד הגדלה*] which the Lord wrought against the Egyptians” (Exod. 14:31), the author of the Zohar writes:

R. Ḥiyya said: The Hand and all the fingers were here perfected. The Hand was perfected for it was contained within the right, for it has been taught, “All is contained within and depends upon the right.”<sup>71</sup> Thus it is written, “Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy” [ibid., 15:6].<sup>72</sup>

The attribute by means of which the divine redeemed Israel and at the same time destroyed Egypt, as we have said above, was the Shekhinah, here referred to by the expression “the great Hand.”<sup>73</sup> This is made explicit in another zoharic passage: “What is the meaning of ‘the great Hand’? That is to say, ‘hand’ [*יד*] is not less than five fingers. ‘The great’ [*הגדלה*] contains five other fingers; then it is called ‘great.’”<sup>74</sup> The “great Hand” is a composite of both hands, the term “great” (*הגדלה*) referring to the five fingers of the right hand,<sup>75</sup> and the term “hand” (*יד*) referring to the five on the left.<sup>76</sup> Shekhinah, insofar as it is the *sefirah* which comprises all ten gradations

71. See I, 17a, 253a.

72. II, 52b.

73. See Naḥmanides, Exod. 14:31 (ed. Chavel, vol. 1, p. 353); Ibn Shuaib, *Be'ur Sodot ha-Ramban*, 13a; *Me'irat Einayim*, p. 82; Bahya ben Asher, *Perush 'al ha-Torah*, ed. Chavel, 5th ed. (Jerusalem, 1981), vol. 2, p. 121. See also Recanati, 43b.

74. II, 53b. Cf. the commentaries of R. Moses Cordovero and R. Abraham Galante to the Zohar, ad loc., cited by Abraham Azulai, *Or ha-Ḥammah* (Benei-Berak, 1973), vol. 2, 43b–44a.

75. The word *גדולה* is a common name for the attribute of *hesed* or the right hand; see, e.g., II, 59b, 286b; III, 277a, 302a.

76. The word *יד* by itself refers to the left hand; see III, 142b. See also *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. R. Margaliot (Jerusalem, 1978), § 163 (Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, § 109, p. 116), where the principle of evil is said to have the “form of a hand.”

corresponding to the ten fingers,<sup>77</sup> is called the “great Hand.” Put differently, Shekhinah is called “the great Hand” because She is the hand which contains both the left and right hands as one. Concerning the latter image, we read:

Come and see: It has been said that all ten plagues which God performed in Egypt were [wrought by] one hand, for *the left was contained in the right*. The ten fingers, contained one within another, correspond to the ten sayings by means of which the Holy One, blessed be He, is called. In the end, corresponding to them all, is the great and mighty Sea.<sup>78</sup>

The ten plagues were performed by ten fingers which correspond to the ten sayings, i.e., the ten *sefirot*. Yet all the plagues were wrought by the “one Hand,” i.e., Shekhinah, for the fingers of the left (= *sefirot* aligned on the side of Rigor or Judgment) were contained in those of the right (= *sefirot* aligned on the side of Mercy or Love). Moreover, as the miracle at the sea was the culmination of the plagues—in the Zohar’s language “corresponding to them all”—so Shekhinah, symbolized as “the great and mighty Sea,”<sup>79</sup> contains within itself the whole sefirotic order.<sup>80</sup> This is the meaning of R. Hiyya’s comment: “the Hand and all the fingers were here perfected.”

The containment of the left within the right which characterizes the state of the Shekhinah at the climax of the redemptive process reflects a higher process within the divine, a process which is exegetically connected in the Zohar to the verse “Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy” (Exod. 15:6). The right hand symbolizes the divine attribute of love, whereas the left hand symbolizes the attribute of judgment. One would expect, therefore, that Scripture should describe the left hand of God as being “glorious in power” and as the one which “shat-

77. On the correspondence of the ten fingers to the ten *sefirot*, see *Sefer Yeẓirah* 1:3; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, § 124 (Scholem, § 87, p. 94), § 132 (Scholem, § 94, p. 101). See Nahmanides, Exod. 17:12 (p. 372); II, 75b.

78. II, 56b.

79. Cf. I, 19b, 86a, 236b, 241a, 267b; II, 19b, 226a; III, 58a, 150b.

80. This description of the Shekhinah is to be found already in the *Bahir* and in other early kabbalistic sources. See Scholem, “Ha-Shekhinah,” in *Pirkei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Kabbalah u-Semaleha*, p. 276. Cf. also Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:219. A related idea, also found in the earlier sources, is that the whole sefirotic order is reflected in each of the *sefirot*. See Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbi 'Azriel*, p. 15, n. 2.

ters the enemy.” For what reason is the right hand so described in the above passage? Addressing this issue, the Zohar notes:

“Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.” What is the meaning of נאדרר? It should be written נאדרר! When the left comes to unite with the right, then it is written נאדרר [i.e., is glorious], and תערך [i.e., shatters]. It is always like this, for *the left is found in the right and is contained therein*. R. Shimeon said: It is as we have explained, for a man is found divided. What is the reason? In order that he may receive his mate, and they will make one body.<sup>81</sup> So [it says] ‘Thy right hand,’ i.e., it is divided. What is the reason? In order to receive the left hand with it. Thus is everything: one [part] with another. Therefore, with one hand He strikes and heals, as it is written, “Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.”<sup>82</sup>

The right hand of God is described as the one “glorious in power” and as the one which “shatters the enemy,” for the right hand contains within itself the left hand as well. When there is harmony in the sefirotic realm, then the left is united with, nay contained in, the right—as male united with female—and all acts, including those of the left, are carried out by the guidance of the right: “with one hand He strikes and heals.”

Come and see: From the right hand of God all light, blessings, and happiness are aroused. Within the right the left is contained, just as there is in a human being a right and left hand, and *the left is contained in the right*. . . . When the right is aroused the left is aroused with it, for the left is held and contained within the right.<sup>83</sup>

81. This clearly reflects the aggadic myth that Adam was created as androgynous and was then separated into man and woman. For references, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:88–89, n. 42. Cf. I, 35a, 37b, 165a; II, 55a, 231a–b; III, 10b, 19a, 44b; *ZH*, 55c–d, 66c. According to the Zohar, not only Adam but the soul of each person was originally made androgynous, and only upon descent to the world is divided into male and female; at the time of marriage the original unity is restored (see *Yevamot* 63a). See I, 85a, 91b, 108a; II, 246a; III, 43a–b, 283b; Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:608. The one who remains single is called by the Zohar פלג גופא, i.e., “half-a-body.” See III, 7b, 57b, 296a, (*Idra Zuta*); Liebes, “Sections of the Zohar Lexicon,” pp. 277–278; Matt, *Zohar*, p. 217. The kabbalists applied the aggadic myth to the divine: as the complete human personality is to be found only in the unification of male and female, so too the divine being is only complete when male (*Tiferet*) and female (*Malkhut*) are united. See Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbi 'Azriel*, p. 86; idem, *MhZ*, 1:139, 148–149. Cf. also Liebes, “Sections of the Zohar Lexicon,” p. 33, n. 26, and idem, “The Messiah,” p. 202.

82. II, 57b. See also III, 37a.

83. II, 57a. Cf. *Shekel ha-Kodesh*, p. 39. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:341. Cf. I, 230b; II, 162b, 223a, 263a; III, 17b, 80b, 118b, 176b. Cf. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, ed. Lauterbach, vol. 2, p. 41.

The removal of the right hand, by contrast, summons separation and division, the domination of the left hand of the divine, and with this comes the danger of the left resulting in an “autonomous” demonic realm: “When the right hand is found, the left is found with it, and acts of judgment do not dominate in the world. . . . But if the right is removed and the left is summoned, then acts of judgment are stirred up in the world and judgment rests upon all.”<sup>84</sup>

Hence, the divine act of redemption can be viewed from two vantage points: the subjugation of the demonic left by means of the divine left, and the containment of the divine left within the divine right. While it is the case that the word “left” is used with two distinct meanings, there does not seem to be any equivocation on the part of the Zohar, for the apparent tension is resolved by a proper understanding of the dialectical relation between the demonic and the divine. That is, the subjugation of the unholy left is accomplished by means of the divine left, which, unlike the former, is contained within the right. Whereas exile represents the domination of the (demonic) left, redemption represents the containment of the (divine) left within the (divine) right. Put differently: exile is a condition of pure judgment, redemption one of mercy balanced with judgment. The severing of this balance is, in the first place, one of the causes for the emergence of an independent demonic realm.

### *Revelation*

In Egypt Israel was under the dominion of the “Other Side.” The exodus represented a transference of power from the unholy to the holy. This process reached completion only at the theophanous event of Sinai. Before Israel could receive the Torah, however, two other significant events in their history were recorded in Scripture.

The first was the war with Amalek (Exod. 17:8–16). The Zohar, building upon a midrashic theme,<sup>85</sup> maintains that Israel was attacked because they

84. II, 57a. The notion of the left hand over the right signifying misfortune is reflected in *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, ed. Lauterbach, vol. 2, p. 41: “When the Israelites do the will of God, they make His left hand to be like the right, as it is said, ‘Thy right hand, O Lord . . . Thy right hand, O Lord’—two times. And when the Israelites fail to do the will of God, they make His right hand to be like the left, as it is said, ‘He hath drawn back His right hand’ [Lam. 2:3].” See Judah Goldin, *The Song at the Sea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 149.

85. Cf. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, vol. 2, p. 139; *Berakhot* 5b; *Tanhuma*, *Beshallah* 25; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 13.

had forsaken the ways of God.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Amalek, says the author of the Zohar, is “the prosecutor of the Holy One, blessed be He, above,”<sup>87</sup> i.e., *Sitra Aħra*. Hence, the theosophic significance of the war with Amalek is equivalent to that of the destruction of the Egyptians: the wiping out of the demonic by the divine. This dynamic, according to the Zohar, is to be found in the verse “And when Moses raised his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed” (Exod. 17:11): “‘When he raised,’ i.e., when he lifted the right hand on top of the left, and he prayed [lit. intended] by means of the spreading of his hands.”<sup>88</sup> But here too, as in the case of the splitting of the sea, the subjugation of the demonic left is achieved by means of the divine right, which in itself contains the divine left. Indeed, in one passage, the Zohar interprets the verse concerning the raising of the right hand of Moses in light of the verse concerning God’s right hand shattering the enemy.<sup>89</sup>

The second event preceding the account of the Sinaitic revelation which the Zohar makes special note of is the meeting of Moses with his father-in-law, Jethro, in the wilderness (Exod. 18:1 ff.). The section of the Zohar on Jethro begins with an exegetical comment concerning Aaron’s lifting up of the right hand over the left.<sup>90</sup> The relevancy of this remark can be under-

86. II, 65b. Such an interpretation is, of course, suggested by the juxtaposition of verse 7, “And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?” with verse 8, “Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.” See Rashi’s commentary, Exod. 17:8.

87. Ibid. See I, 29a; II, 65a, 194b–195a; III, 175a, 281b.

88. II, 66a. The lifting of Moses’ hands, i.e., the raising up of the right hand over the left, is here interpreted as an act of prayer. See *Sefer ha-Bahir* 138; II, 57a. Cf. Todros Abulafia, *Ozar ha-Kavod*, 29b. Abulafia, like the author of the Zohar, interprets this passage as the joining together of the left hand with the right. This, notes Abulafia, is the supreme act of faith. See below n. 111. It is the ultimate task of “homo religiosus” to contain the left within the right. See II, 26b, 32a; III, 39b, 178a. See Menahem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 14:121, n. 106. It especially characterizes the mystical import of prayer; see II, 57a. Cf. Moses de León’s “Untitled Commentary on the *Sefirot*,” MS Munich 47, 340a–b. Concerning this work, see Scholem, “Eine unbekannte mystische Schrift des Mose de Leon,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 71 (1927): 109–123. In terms of prayer, this is alternatively expressed (based on Ps. 100:2) as the placing of Shekhinah between the right and left as a preparation for the ultimate unification between her and the Holy One; see I, 229b, III, 8a–b, and cf. to Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, MS Oxford 1607, 14b, 24b. See also the interpretation of Cant. 2:6 in I, 163b; II, 138b, 238b; III, 118b, 119b (cf. Menahem Recanati, *Ta’amei ha-Mizvot* [Basel, 1581], 8a), 148b.

89. II, 66a. On the mystical significance of the war with Amalek as the wiping out of the left by the right, see II, 65b, 194b; III, 281b.

90. Ibid., 67a. See *Sefer ha-Bahir* 124; II, 57a, 225a; III, 92b. Cf. MS Munich 47, 340b; *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 111b.

stood only in light of the symbolic correspondence of Aaron, high priest of the Israelites, to the divine right side, the attribute of love, and of Jethro, priest of Midian, to the demonic left. The Zohar explicitly states that the “Other Side,” like the side of holiness, has two forces, a king and a priest: “In the ‘Other Side,’ which is not the side of holiness, there is the secret of the king, and it has been explained that he is called ‘the old and foolish king’ [Eccles. 4:13]. And beneath him is the priest of On.”<sup>91</sup> The Zohar goes on to say:

when that king and that priest are subdued and broken, then all the other forces [of the demonic] are subdued and they acknowledge the Holy One, blessed be He. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, alone governs above and below. . . . In the manner of this very secret the Holy One, blessed be He, acted in the land [below], for He broke the “old and foolish king” who was Pharaoh. When Moses came to Pharaoh and said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us” [Exod. 5:3], he opened up and said, “I know not the Lord” [ibid. 2]. . . . When He smote him and his people, he came and acknowledged the Holy One, blessed be He. Afterwards that priest of On, Jethro, who served under him, was broken and subdued until he came and acknowledged the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, “Blessed be the Lord who saved you, etc. Now I know that the Lord is great” [ibid. 18:10–11]. . . . When that king and priest acknowledged the Holy One, blessed be He, and were broken before him, then the Holy One, blessed be He, ascended in His glory upon everything above and below.<sup>92</sup> And until the Holy One, blessed be He, ascended in His glory when those [two] confessed before Him, the Torah was not given.

The conversion of Jethro, like the overthrowing of Pharaoh, was a necessary stage in the redemptive process. Only when the subjugation of these two demonic powers was completed could the revelatory process ensue.

The giving of the Torah, according to the Zohar, likewise symbolizes the containment of the left within the right, but in two senses. The first is the one with which we are already familiar: the unification of the left within the right in the realm of divinity. This is expressed in several ways in the Zohar. There is, first of all, the kabbalistic interpretation of Exodus 19:16, “And it came to pass on the third day,” the day in which the revelation took place: “On the third day precisely, for it is mercy [רחמי],”<sup>93</sup> i.e., the balance between

91. Ibid., 67b. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:288–289.

92. Cf. II, 184a (cited above in n. 35).

93. II, 81a. So too, according to the Zohar, the third day of creation stands for mercy (*Tiferet*), which is the balance between *hesed* (the right) and *gevurah* (the left). See I, 17a. See

love (חסד) on the right and strength (גבורה) on the left. Moreover, the Zohar interprets the biblical theme concerning the appearance of lightning and fire at Sinai in the following manner:

It has been taught: R. Judah said: The Torah was given on the side of strength. R. Jose said: If so, then it was on the left side! He said to him: It was restored [אתהדר] to the right, as it says, "From His right hand a fiery law unto them" [Deut. 33:3], and it is written, "Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, etc." We find that *the left is restored* [דאחזור] *to the right, and the right to the left.*<sup>94</sup>

The verse describing the Sinaitic revelation, Deuteronomy 33:3, is here compared to the verse describing the miracle at the sea, Exodus 15:6, for both verses, according to the Zohar, instruct us about the mystery of the containment, or restoration, of the left within the right. The redemptive act in the one case, and the revelatory act in the other, are achieved by means of the right hand which contains within itself the left.

With respect to revelation, the Zohar repeats this theme by reinterpreting a midrashic motif,<sup>95</sup> viz., the primordial Torah was written as black fire upon white fire.

R. Isaac said: The Torah was given as black fire upon white fire in order to contain [לאכללא] *the right in the left, so that the left would be restored* [דאחזור] *to the right*, as it says, "From His right hand a fiery law unto them." . . . R. Abba said: The tablets were before their eyes, and the letters that were flying about were visible in two fires, white fire and black fire, to show that the right and left are one.<sup>96</sup>

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also I, 120a, with reference to the "third day" in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac; see below n. 111. The third day was the appropriate one for the event of giving the Torah, for the latter symbolically represents *Tiferet*, which is the balance between right and left. See below n. 101.

94. *Ibid.*

95. See Talmud Yerushalmi, *Shekalim* 6:1, *Sotah* 8:3; *Cant. R.* 5:11. Cf. *Tanḥuma*, introduction, where the reading is slightly different. See also *Midrash Konen*, in Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, 4th ed. (Jerusalem reprint, 1982), 2:23, and *Midrash Eser ha-Dibrot*, in Jellinek, op. cit., 1:62, where the anthropomorphic element (i.e., the arm of God) is added. Cf. Scholem, "Shi'ur Komah—ha-Demut ha-Mistiit shel ha-Elohut," in *Pirkei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Kabbalah u-Semaleha*, p. 164, n. 18. According to Scholem, one must view these midrashic statements in the context of the anthropomorphism of the *Shi'ur Komah* tradition. Cf. also Moshe Idel, "Tefisat ha-Torah bi-Sifrut ha-Heikhalot vi-Gilguleha ba-Kabbalah," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981): 43–45.

96. II, 84a. This midrashic theme was interpreted in various ways by kabbalists of the thirteenth century. In one passage, attributed by Scholem to R. Isaac the Blind, a Provençal

The Torah “comes from strength [the left] and is contained [ואתכלילת] in the right.”<sup>97</sup>

This containment of the left within the right is reflected, according to the Zohar, in the alignment of the people at the moment of revelation: five groups on the right and five on the left.<sup>98</sup> It is reflected, moreover, in the very structure of the tablets which Moses received.

It has been taught: Five voices [i.e., commandments] were on the right, and five on the left. *Those on the left were contained in the right*, and from the right those on the left were revealed. And here everything was [contained in] the right, and those [on the left] were contained in those [on the right]. The one who stood on one side and saw the other side could read those letters [on the other side]. For we have learnt that the left was restored to the right, as it is written, “From His right hand a fiery law unto them.”<sup>99</sup>

Finally, the very object of revelation, the Torah, embodies the mystery of the left being contained in the right. This can be explained in one of several ways: (1) The written Torah corresponds symbolically to *Tiferet*, which is the balance between the right and the left.<sup>100</sup> (2) There are two aspects to the Torah, the written and the oral. The former represents the right, and the latter the left,<sup>101</sup> or, alternatively, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>102</sup> Hence, the day of the Sinaitic revelation, the one source for both aspects of Torah, is the wedding day of the masculine and feminine potencies of the divine.<sup>103</sup> (3)

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kabbalist, the white fire refers symbolically to *Tiferet*, the written Torah, and the black fire to *Malkhut*, the oral Torah. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1978), pp. 48–49. For other references, see Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbi Azriel*, p. 77, n. 7. The midrash was used in an altogether different manner by Nahmanides in the introduction to his commentary on the Torah; see p. 2 of the Chavel edition. Cf. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, p. 38, and Idel, “Tefisat ha-Torah,” p. 45. 97. II, 84a. See I, 48b.

98. II, 82a (based on Deut. 29:9–10). Cf. MS Munich 47, 341a, where de León refers to this passage as “our rabbis, may their memory be blessed, alluded to, etc.” The exact date of this work is still unclear, but from this passage it would appear to have been composed after the author had worked on the Zohar. See, however, A. Farber, “On the Sources of Rabbi Moses de Leon’s Early Kabbalistic System” [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3 (1984): 87–88.

99. II, 84b, 98. See II, 90a. Cf. Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, MS British Museum 759, 41a.

100. See I, 64a; II, 60a. Cf. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, p. 49.

101. See III, 153a, 257a.

102. See II, 161b; III, 264a. Cf. Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:366.

103. See I, 8a.



The Torah comprises 613 commandments, 248 positive and 365 negative. The former derive from the right side of the divine, the masculine זכור, and the latter from the left side, the feminine שמור.<sup>104</sup> Insofar as the Torah given at Sinai includes all 613, it symbolizes the balance of positive and negative, right and left.

The event of revelation as understood by the Zohar thus represents the complete containment of the left within the right in the divine sphere. Apart from this, however, there is another nuance to this motif in the Zohar, viz., the reintegration of the demonic left into the divine right. The exodus from Egypt was the first step in Israel's spiritual odyssey out of the realm of the unholy; hence, the evil inclination, the left side, symbolized by the leaven, had to be totally removed. At Sinai not only did the left side not have to be removed, it had to be reappropriated. This, according to the Zohar, is the mystical intent of the biblical injunction to bring leavened bread as the first fruits of the Lord on Pentecost.

“You shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves [of two tenth measures; they shall be of fine flour and shall be baked with leaven]” [Lev. 23:17]. This is the bread by which Israel got wise, the supernal Wisdom of the Torah, and they entered its ways. Now we must look carefully. On Passover Israel went out from the bread which is called leaven [חמץ], as it is written, “You shall not see any leaven” [Exod. 13:7], and “Whoever eats that which is leavened” [ibid. 12:19]. What is the reason? On account of the honor of that bread which is called unleavened [מצה]. Now that Israel merited the highest bread, it was not appropriate for the leaven to be wiped out and not seen at all. And why was this sacrifice [of the bread of the first fruits] from leaven, as it is written, “they shall be of fine flour and shall be baked with leaven”? Moreover, on that very day [when the Torah was given] the evil inclination was wiped out,<sup>105</sup> for the Torah, which is called freedom, was to be found! This

104. See II, 70b, 91a, 162a–b, 165b, 275a; III, 92b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*), 264a; *ZH* 54b. Cf. Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:432.

105. The Zohar here reflects a statement made by the rabbis to the effect that the pollution (זומא) by means of which the serpent inseminated Eve ceased when Israel stood at Mount Sinai; see *Shabbat* 146a, *Yevamot* 103b, *Avodah Zarah* 22b. The Zohar connects this idea with another rabbinic notion, viz., the cessation of the evil inclination at the moment of revelation. Specifically, according to one tannaitic source (R. Nehemiah), there was a temporary uprooting of the evil inclination from the hearts of the Israelites when they heard the commandment “Thou shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3) at the event of revelation; see *Cant. R.* 1:2. According to the zoharic sources, the evil inclination returned on account of the sin of the golden calf. See I, 36b, 52b, 63b, 70b, 126b, 228a; II, 94a, 168a, 193b, 236b, 242b; III, 97b. The

may be compared to a king who had an only son who was sick. One day the son desired to eat. They said to him: The king's son should eat this medicine, and until he eats that no other food will be found in the house. So it was done. When he ate the medicine, he said to him: From now on you may eat whatever you desire, and it will not harm you. Similarly, when Israel left Egypt, they did not know the essence or secret of Faith. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Israel shall eat medicine, and until they eat the medicine no other food shall be shown to them. When they ate the unleavened bread, which was medicine, in order to enter and to know the secret of Faith, the Holy One said: From now on leaven shall be shown to them, and they can eat it, for it cannot harm them. And all the more so on the day of Shavu'ot, which is a complete medicine.<sup>106</sup>

In this passage the author of the *Zohar* makes two statements which, *prima facie*, are contradictory. On the one hand, he says, "it was not appropriate for the leaven [symbolic of the evil inclination] to be wiped out and not seen at all," while on the other hand, relying on rabbinic sources, he asserts that on the very day that the Torah was given "the evil inclination was wiped out." This apparent tension can be resolved only if we understand the two assertions in a dialectical relation: "it was not appropriate for the leaven to be wiped out" because "the evil inclination was wiped out." When Israel left Egypt it was necessary to remove all leaven, for at that time they were comparable to a sick child who could consume only the prescribed medicine, i.e., the unleavened bread, symbolic of the entry into the realm of holiness, the beginning of faith. After they received the higher type of bread, viz., the bread of wisdom embodied in the Torah,<sup>107</sup> this was no longer necessary. On the contrary, the very leaven which was forbidden on Passover was required on Shavu'ot. At the moment of revelation the left side was once again appropriated by Israel, for at that time it presented no danger to the people, its efficacy being undermined by the Torah, the most perfect antidote to the malady of the evil inclination.<sup>108</sup> In the presence of the "complete medicine," the unholy is restored to its source in the holy.

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final and ultimate destruction of the evil inclination is to occur at the advent of the Messiah; see *Sukkah* 52a. For other references, see Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York, 1961), p. 290, n. 3; Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 416–417, n. 2.

106. II, 183a–b. See also III, 97a.

107. See II, 40a, 61b (see Matt, *Zohar*, pp. 113–116, 245–247), 183a. See Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:391. On the unleavened bread as a symbol for the Shekhinah, the beginning of faith, see above n. 60.

108. This too is based on a midrashic motif. For references, see Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 273–275.

### *Conclusion*

We have attempted to trace a common theme that runs through various portions of the Zohar. This theme serves as the exegetical axis upon which the zoharic understanding of exile, redemption, and revelation turns. The historical movement of Israel from Egypt to Sinai is, at the same time, a spiritual movement from the dominion of the left to that of the right. The ultimate stage of this process, the revelation of the Torah, is one in which we find the containment of the left within the right. Such a process began in Egypt but reached completion only at Sinai. The perfect state is not one in which evil is entirely obliterated,<sup>109</sup> but rather one in which it is contained within the good. Only the sick soul must eliminate all traces of the left; the healthy soul, by contrast, can reappropriate the left and thereby unite it with the right. Indeed the essence of divine worship is to worship God with both hearts,<sup>110</sup> i.e., to contain the evil inclination within the good, the left within the right.<sup>111</sup>

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109. See III, 63a (*Pekudim*), where it is stressed that evil should not be completely eliminated, for it is as necessary in the world as is the good. The ideal of spiritual perfection in the Zohar is one in which the person achieves holiness through contact with the unholy, and by means of such contact the unholy itself is transformed or contained within the holy. See above nn. 35, 45 and below n. 111. The notion that the evil inclination (i.e., the sexual desire) should not be eradicated, on account of its necessity for the begetting of life in the world, can be found in several rabbinic sources. See, e.g., *Yoma* 69b; *Gen. R.* 9:7, pp. 71–72. Cf. also *Lev. R.* 14:5.

110. See *Berakhot* 54b. Cf. I, 155b, 178b; III, 80b, 267a; and *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 39b.

111. See II, 26b (with reference to Deut. 4:39), and *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, ad loc. Cf. II, 161b and III, 264a. The wicked, according to the Zohar, cause a blemish (גַּם) above by causing a separation of right and left, i.e., by not containing the left (evil inclination) in the right (good inclination). See II, 26b. This too was the sin of Job: by not giving the realm of the “Other Side” its proper due, he did not contain the left within the right; see n. 45. On the nature of גַּם in the Zohar as the separation of male and female, see Tishby, *MhZ*, 2:607; Liebes, “The Messiah,” esp. p. 198. The notion of the containment of the left in the right is a pivotal idea upon which much of the theosophical hermeneutics in the Zohar turns. It would be impossible to give all the contexts in which such an idea occurs. Worthy of mention, however, are (1) the zoharic interpretation of the act of creation; see Tishby, *MhZ*, 1:133, 219–220, 269–270, 381–382; (2) the building of the Tabernacle; see *ibid.*, 2:188–189; (3) the Akedah; see I, 119b, 133b, 230b; II, 257a; cf. *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 78b, and Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 1:224–225; (4) the love of God, אַהֲבַת רַבָּה, which contains both sides, *hesed* and *din*; see I, 11b–12a; (5) faith itself, insofar as it is the union of male and female; see I, 49b, 55b, 160a, 172b; II, 89a, 92a, 161a.