6 Re/membering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness, and the Construction of History in the Zohar

The construction of history is dependent on the memory of the past, but a memory that is always selective and malleable. Forgetfulness is thus itself an integral component of memory, for what is remembered is only remembered against the background of what is forgotten. Collective memory, no less than individual memory, is shaped as much by what is forgotten as by what is remembered. As Patrick Geary recently expressed it, "All memory, whether 'individual,' 'collective,' or 'historical,' is memory *for* something, and this political (in a broad sense) purpose cannot be ignored."[1] This political dimension of memory points to the essential role played by forgetfulness as one of the conditions that determines the attainment of historical truth.[2]

Historians who seek to write about cultural memory and the identity of the Jewish people in the Middle Ages must confront the fact that the principal (if not exclusive)[3] documents at our disposal were produced by elitist rabbinic groups that defined themselves in terms of particular interpretations of a given corpus of textual material. These rabbinic circles were, to borrow the technical term employed by Brian Stock, "textual communities," for they "demonstrated a parallel use of texts, both to structure the internal behaviour of the groups' members and to provide solidarity against the outside world."[4] The project of the construction of identity carried out by these communities in the Middle Ages was compounded by the fact that they had to evaluate the existential condition of the Jew vis-à-vis the other, primarily the Christian or the Muslim.[5] While one would be wise to avoid overemphasizing the anxiety of the other on the shaping of Jewish identity in medieval Europe, it is no exaggeration to say that the task of self-definition for the Jew in the Middle Ages

(at least as articulated by the relatively small groups of literati) was carried out over and against another dominant religion. The theological, the social, and the political are inseparable aspects of a singular phenomenon. Moreover, in the eschatologically charged milieu of Christendom in the High Middle Ages, the shaping of identity could not be isolated from the issue of messianic redemption – that is, a primary concern of the religious leaders engaged in polemical confrontation with respect to the identification of the devout Jew or faithful Christian had to do with the belief in who was the true Messiah, and when the messianic age did or would arrive.[6] Holy crusades against infidels, forced conversions, willful acts of apostasy, and public disputations were different ways of expressing in the social sphere the eschatological zeal and theological intolerance that prevailed in medieval Christianity.

In this study, I will focus on the role of memory and forgetfulness in the construction of historical time according to the complex symbolic hermeneutics of *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the "Book of Splendor." The pervasive assumption in critical Jewish historiography that this pseudepigraphic work was composed by one individual, Moses ben Shem Ṭov de León, has recently been called into question,[7] but little evidence has been marshaled heretofore to doubt that most of the composition and redaction of this book took place in Castile in the second half of the thirteenth century.[8] Beyond the obvious importance of this text to the study of Jewish esotericism, the Zohar is a profoundly significant historical document, for, as Yitzhak Baer long ago commented, a "real-life setting is clearly discernible" through the "mystic haze shrouding it." Baer thus concluded that the zoharic tales "are not figments of the imagination, invented to provide a frame for the discussions and teachings of the ancient sages," but are reflections of the "contemporary scene."[9] Of the various examples adduced by Baer, perhaps the most intriguing is his analysis of the passage in the Zohar concerning the water clock that was used to awaken R. Abba and R. Jacob at midnight so that they could study Torah.[10] On the basis of the historical fact that Isaac of Toledo devised a water clock at the behest of Alfonso X, Baer conjectured that the narrative in the Zohar is not "pure fiction" and that the deeds ascribed to the mystical fraternity (specifically rising at midnight to study) were "part of a real Jewish experience in Spain."[11]

In a similar vein, but with a somewhat different emphasis, Scholem remarked that, in the Zohar, Moses de León "reflects the actual religious situation, and expounds it through kabbalistic interpretation."[12] What Scholem had in mind is that the social realia of thirteenth-century Spain are reflected in the Zohar,[13] but he did not address the possibility of an actual group of kabbalists whose mystical lifestyles are personified by the imaginary fellowship (*ḥavrayya*) of the zoharic text, a position that I think is adumbrated in the remarks of Baer.[14] Thus, in the continuation of the aforecited passage, Scholem concludes that Moses de León "clothed his interpretation of Judaism in an archaic garb." The interpretation is attributed to the one individual, Moses de León, and no reference is made to a kabbalistic "fraternity" in the manner that the term is being used in contemporary scholarship. The current trend (of which I am an advocate)[15] to see in the fictional fellowship of the Zohar a reflection of an actual group of mystics involved in communal study, visual meditation, and contemplative worship is a further elaboration of the earlier position rather than a radical and revolutionary break. With respect to this issue, as with respect to most scholarly issues, advancement in knowledge comes by way of a dialectical engagement with the past: seeing beyond is not seeing against[16] but seeing further down a pathway of thought opened up by one's predecessor.

Samael, the Serpent, and the Mythic Grounding of the Jewish–Christian Polemic

Behind the fictional debates and discourses recorded in the Zohar can be discerned various kabbalistic positions, which converged in this period and geographical region, regarding the nature of the Jews and their relationship to God and to the world. Much of the exegesis of Scripture in the Zohar revolves around the question of identity and self-definition vis-à-vis the other. The attitude toward Christianity and Islam that emerges from the Zohar has been examined by several scholars.[17] The particular concerns of this study deal exclusively with the former.[18] In great measure, my analysis of memory, forgetfulness, and the construction of history in the Zohar should be viewed as a chapter in medieval Jewish–Christian polemics, coming precisely at

the time when the writing of polemical literature by Jews against Christians reached its peak in response to the intensive wave of Christian missionizing in the thirteenth century. The impetus for the writing of polemical treatises by Jews was not to convert Christians, but to retrieve former coreligionists who had abandoned the covenant, and some of whom had themselves written disputations against the Jews.[19] It has been noted in the scholarly literature that the zoharic authorship had a complex and ambiguous relationship to Christianity: conscious appropriation of principal theological and eschatological doctrines, on the one hand, and categorical rejection and demonization, on the other. Christianity is portrayed as the socially abhorrent political force that causes Israel to suffer, and that incessantly attempts to lure her onto the path of heresy and licentiousness. According to the symbolism of the Zohar, Christians are the embodiment of demonic impurity in the world.[20]

The point is driven home succinctly in the zoharic exegesis of the words, "Your kinsmen who hate you, who spurn you because of Me" (Isa. 66:5). The "kinsmen" are identified as the "children of Esau," in other words, the Christians,[21] "for there is no nation that mocks Israel to their face and who spit in their faces like the children of Edom, and it is said that they are all impure like a menstruous woman (*niddah*), and this is [the import of the expression] 'who spurn you' (*menaddekhem*)."[22] The metaphorical comparison of the children of Edom to a *niddah*, based on the biblical idiom *menaddekhem*, discloses an essential dimension of the zoharic understanding of the ontological impurity of Christianity.[23] The spiritual attraction of the Church is comparable to seduction of the woman during her menstrual period when intercourse is forbidden. Going beyond the normative halakhic restriction against sexual relations with a menstruating woman,[24] the author of the Zohar, in conformity with the symbology adopted by other kabbalistic authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,[25] associated the blood of menstruation with the demonic potency.[26] In one particularly noteworthy passage, the Zohar delineates intercourse with a menstruous woman as one of three acts that drive the *Shekhinah* away from the world, the other two being intercourse with a Christian woman, literally, "the daughter of an alien god" (based on Mal. 2:11) – that is, the god of estrangement or the demonic Other Side[27] – and killing one's own children by aborting a fetus in the womb.[28] In this context,

then, sexual intercourse with a menstruous woman is distinguished from sexual intercourse with a Christian woman, but the two are linked together because both acts involve the insertion of the holy covenant inscribed upon the circumcised penis into an unholy space. Introducing this passage, Baer remarked that the Zohar "inveighs against lewd practices which were apparently common among the urbane aristocracy of its day."[29] What is important from my perspective is the manner in which that social critique is expressed, for this alone allows one access to the life world constructed by the imagination of the kabbalists who belonged to the mystical brotherhood in Castile. Following the view of a number of medieval halakhic authorities, the zoharic authorship maintained that Christianity is idolatry.[30] Thus, for example, in one context, it is deduced exegetically from the verse, "For you must not worship any other god, because the Lord, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God" (Exod. 34:14), that he who worships Esau is as if he has worshiped the alien god.[31] Insofar as the mishnaic ruling (Shabbat 8:1) ascribed to idolatry the same status of impurity as menstruation, it was an easy step for the thirteenth-century kabbalists to equate Christianity and menstruation. Fornication with a Christian woman has the same effect as sexual intercourse with one's wife during her menstrual period: the holy covenant is defiled and the offspring of such a union partakes ontologically of the impure spirit.[32] In gender terms, this defilement can be seen as the feminization of the masculine Jew. Promiscuous sexual behavior and idolatrous religious practices were thus understood as forms of seduction by the serpentine force of feminine impurity.[33]

The unholiness of the theological doctrine propounded by the Church is akin to the blood of menstruation, that is, the impure and unmitigated force of judgment. The nexus between Christianity and menstrual impurity is deepened in another passage in the Zohar, according to which the menstruant is associated with magic. According to that text, the rationale for the biblical injunction against physical contact with a menstruant is that during this time the "spirit of impurity is conjoined to her" and "she is prone to carry out acts of sorcery more than at other times."[34] In that context, moreover, mention is made of Balaam, the prototype of the Gentile prophet and sorcerer. It is likely that the figure of Balaam is employed by the author of the Zohar to represent Jesus, a point that is suggested by the

comparison that is made (based on a midrashic reading of Deut. 34:10)[35] between Moses and Balaam: just as no prophet exceeded the former with respect to the holy powers, so no prophet exceeded the latter with respect to the unholy powers.[36] The linkage of Jesus (or Christianity more generally) and magical practices is a well-attested polemical motif,[37] and it is clear that the zoharic authorship is continuing this longstanding tradition in its representation of Jesus as the chief wizard of satanic power.

The spiritual force of the Christian faith, therefore, is magic, which is correlated with the impurity of menstruation. Thus, according to another zoharic passage, physical contact with the menstruant causes a blemish above for, by this action, one arouses the "potent serpent" (*ḥivya taqqifa*) that casts its filth upon the *Shekhinah* and thereby separates the masculine and feminine potencies in the Godhead. Sexual intercourse with a menstruant is a reenactment of the primordial sin in which the serpent inseminated Eve, which corresponds above to the defilement of the *Shekhinah* by the demonic power, a point related to the verse, "for he has defiled the Lord's sanctuary" (Num. 19:20).[38] Underlying the symbolic discourse, however, is an important assumption by the author of the Zohar about the historical process. Insofar as the image of the serpent is associated with Esau (a point to which I shall return momentarily), it follows that when a male Jew cohabits with a menstruating woman, he causes the supernal force of Esau to have dominion over the *Shekhinah*. This particular textual example illustrates a larger point: the polemic against Christianity in zoharic literature is cast specifically in terms of the issues of gender, sexuality, and embodiment.[39]

The demonic depiction of Christianity is reinforced by the zoharic appropriation of the aggadic motif that Samael is the guardian angel of Esau or Edom.[40] A striking example of this orientation is found in the zoharic reflections on the description in Genesis 25:22–26 of the gestation and birth of Esau and Jacob. The prenatal struggle of the twins in the womb is explained ontologically: Esau is the "aspect that rides the serpent,"[41] an expression that calls to mind the aggadic image of Samael riding upon the serpent that appeared in the shape of a camel,[42] and Jacob is the "aspect that sits upon the holy and perfect throne in the aspect of the sun that cohabitates with the moon."[43] Esau is the male demonic power (Samael) united with the female serpent in a way that parallels

Jacob's unification with the throne, which is the symbolic depiction of the unity of the masculine *Tif'eret* and the feminine *Malkhut*, also represented by the sun and the moon. In the continuation of this passage, Esau is identified more specifically with the evil serpent (*ḥivya bisha*) who is the most cunning of all the beasts.[44] The vexing exegetical problem of Jacob's apparent deceptiveness with respect to purchasing the birthright from Esau, a point exploited by Christian polemicists against the Jews,[45] is explained by the Zohar in terms of these ontological correspondences: in order to keep the demonic power of the serpent apart from the side of holiness, it was necessary for Jacob to act deceptively.[46] "Thus, all the actions of Jacob, who is in the secret of faith, with respect to Esau were not to give a place to that serpent to desecrate the sanctuary, not to come close to it, and not to rule in the world."[47]

The cunning of Jacob, therefore, is justified by its theological significance: to keep separate the realms of the demonic and the holy. From another passage in the Zohar, it is evident that this act has a redemptive quality; indeed, Jacob is portrayed as rectifying the sin of Adam and Eve brought about through Samael and the serpent. Presented with two explanations of the serpent in the biblical narrative, the view of R. Isaac that the serpent refers symbolically to the evil inclination and the view of R. Judah that the serpent is literally a serpent, R. Simeon ben Yoḥai asserts that both explanations are correct. Appropriating the aggadic motif briefly mentioned above, the author of the Zohar claims that Samael appeared on the serpent, which is the image of Satan. Samael's destruction of the "primordial tree" that God created, which resulted in bringing death to the world, was not rectified until Jacob, identified symbolically as the "holy tree" (*ilana qaddisha*) and as the "form of Adam" (*dugma de-adam*),[48] came and took the blessings from Esau so that neither Samael above nor his likeness below would be blessed. The soteriological justification for Jacob's action is thus based on the legal principle of measure for measure: just as Samael prevented the blessings from the primordial tree, so Jacob blocked the blessings from Esau.[49] In another passage, the Zohar again contextualizes the biblical narrative in terms of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, but in that setting there is an awareness of the historical situation of the Jew vis-à-vis the Christian in the Middle Ages. Jacob may have deceptively appropriated the blessings from Esau, but the descendants of the

former were still subservient to the descendants of the latter. The author of the Zohar reassures the reader that the true consequence of Jacob's action will only be disclosed in the messianic future, when Israel will be a unified nation in the world and will rule above and below.[50]

The portrait of Jacob that may be drawn from this text is that of a second Adam who rectifies the sin of the first Adam brought about by the seduction of Samael and the serpent. Although the zoharic author utilized earlier rabbinic sources to express this notion of Jacob as Adam redivivus, including the idea that the beauty of Jacob was like that of Adam,[51] the approach adopted by the Zohar is related more directly (albeit in a polemical way) to the Pauline typology of Adam and Jesus, which had a great impact on the history of Christian theology.[52] For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus brings salvation to the world, for through this act of divine grace the punishment of death incurred by humanity as a result of the fall is overcome. Jesus is thus the "last Adam" (ʼέσχατος ʼΑδὰμ), who rectifies the sin of the "first Adam" (πρῶτς ʼΑδὰμ): through the first Adam, the "natural body" (σῶμα φυχικόν) of creation, all humans are physically born and die, whereas through the final Adam, the "spiritual body" (σῶμα πνευματικόν) of the eschaton,[53] all humans are spiritually reborn and redeemed.[54] Jesus, the eschatological Adam, is the father of a new humanity "freed from the tyranny of sin and death," for in him the "essential oneness of humankind" is reconstituted as a "spiritual community," (i.e. the Church), which is symbolically depicted as the "body of Christ" (το σῶμα του Χριστου).[55]

For the author of the Zohar, it is not Jesus but Jacob who restores the world to its original ontic condition. Moreover, the culpability for the sin is somewhat removed from Adam and placed more squarely on Samael.[56] The positive valorization of Adam is upheld by the fact that Jacob is depicted as having the form and beauty of Adam. Hence, what Jacob rectifies is not the fallen nature of Adam but the usurpation of Samael. This is the import of the zoharic statement that the act of destroying the "primordial tree" (*ilana qadma'ah*), that is, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "was hanging on Samael until another holy tree (*ilana aḥra qaddisha*), that is, Jacob, came and took from him the blessings so that Samael above and Esau below would not be blessed." The seemingly deceitful ruse of Jacob is justified by the fact that it mends the rupture in the

cosmic order created by the sinful act of Samael. By linking the satanic force and Esau, the zoharic authorship cleverly undermines the Pauline interpretation of the Genesis narrative: not only is Jesus not the second Adam who restores the pristine divine image to humanity, but the religion of Jesus is the earthly manifestation of the very force that desecrated that image. A further decoding of the Kabbalistic symbolism underlying the designation of Jacob as "another holy tree" brings the anti-Christological polemic into even sharper focus: Jacob symbolizes the attribute of *Tif'eret*, which corresponds to the tree of life and the Written Torah. The point of the passage, therefore, is that the way of the law, the Torah, is the antidote to counterbalance the satanic effect of the primordial serpent, identified as Esau, a cipher for Western Christendom.

Reversing the Christian myth, Jacob-Israel, and not Jesus, is the tree of life that bears the fruit of salvation, which replaces the fruit of the tree of knowledge through which sin came into the world.[57] The eschatological aspiration of the Zohar, therefore, can be seen in terms of the overcoming of Esau.[58] This conception of salvation history is exemplified in the following description of the messianic era: "The tree of life will emit the vital force that will never cease, for it has ceased now on account of the fact that the evil serpent rules and the moon is hidden ... At that time that evil inclination, which is the evil spirit, will vanish from the world ... and after it is removed from the world the moon is not hidden and the wellsprings of the river that flows and issues forth will not cease."[59] In this context, attested in other passages as well,[60] the tree of life symbolizes *Yesod*, which corresponds to the divine phallus, the center of the creative energy, also depicted by the symbol of the river. In the messianic age, the vital force will flow incessantly from this source because the obstructing force of the evil serpent will be obliterated.[61] This phallic restitution also effects the feminine aspect of the divine, for in the condition of exile, the domination of the serpent causes the *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon, to be concealed. According to another passage, the concealment of the moon is the symbolic import of the description of the emergence of Jacob from Rebekah's womb holding onto the heel of Esau (Gen. 25:26).[62] The (temporarily) subservient position of Jacob vis-à-vis Esau is also related to the scriptural claim that the kings of Edom reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites (Gen. 36:31).[63] In the period of history before the

advent of the Messiah, the force of Esau, or Christendom, rules over Israel, and the moon, which is symbolic of the *Shekhinah* or the power of Israel, is hidden. But when the efficacy of the demonic serpent is overcome by the rectification of the holy phallus, the "river that flows and issues forth," the moon is no longer hidden.[64]

From the point of view of the zoharic authorship, the ontological opposition of the two faiths is alluded to in the very narrative of creation. The primordial darkness (*ḥoshekh*), associated with chaos (*tohu*) and symbolized by the shell (*qelippah*) of the nut, is identified as the force whence Edom derives,[65] whereas Jacob is rooted ontically in the spirit of God (*ruaḥ elohim*), symbolized by the kernel (*moḥa*) of the nut.[66] According to another passage, Israel is identified as the "supernal holy core" and the idolatrous nations as the shell.[67] The botanical image of the shell preceding the core is supported exegetically by the verse concerning the rule of the Edomite kings before the kings of Israel.[68] The citation of this verse, moreover, makes it clear that the "idolatrous nations" refers to the Christians. Precisely, this symbolism underlies another image employed by Moses de León: the "other god" is the demonic foreskin that surrounds the holy corona of the phallus in the manner that the shell surrounds the core of the nut.[69] All of these images allude to the mystery that the demonic powers emanate before the holy ones, even though the latter have ontological priority and in the end will prevail.[70]

The theological struggle with Christianity is treated in the Zohar in overtly erotic terms. The key to understanding the meshing of the spiritual and the sexual in this matter is the symbol of the serpent. There are passages in the Zohar wherein the serpent symbolizes the feminine dimension of the demonic, the seductive Lilith who tempts men and appears in the image of a whore. In other contexts, the serpent mythically represents the demonic force in general without any gender specification, although in relation to the divine, the demonic is gendered as feminine in kabbalistic ontology. In other zoharic texts, the serpent depicts the demonic male whose phallic drive is directed toward penetrating the sacred space of the divine feminine, the *Shekhinah*, an idea that is expressed in terms of the aggadic motif[71] of the primordial serpent inseminating Eve.[72] It is evident, as Tishby has noted,[73] that the serpent, whether male or female, symbolizes the demonic sexual force. What Tishby neglected to mention is the obvious point that the mythical image of the serpent is

symbolic of the phallus. But it is precisely this association that allows one to resolve the apparent contradictions in the Zohar with respect to the gender of the serpent. That is, both on the side of holiness and on the side of impurity the phallus, like the serpent, is androgynous.[74] However, there is an essential difference between the androgyny of the holy phallus (manifest in the ninth and tenth gradations, *Yesod* and *Malkhut*) and that of the demonic phallus (represented by Samael and Lilith). In the case of the former, the female is ontically rooted in the male, whereas in the latter, the male is an aspect of the female. The shift in the gender polarity is underscored in the following zoharic reflection on Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons:

> He began to speak and he said: "Who are these" (*mi elleh*) (Gen. 48:8)? One may infer that he was speaking about worship from the side of idolatry [as it says] "This is your god, O Israel" (*elleh elohekha yisra'el*) (Exod. 32:4). Rather it is a secret: When all the aspects of that evil serpent, the serpent that comes from the side of the impure spirit, and the one who rides upon it are united, they are called "these" (*elleh*) ... The Holy Spirit is called "this" (*z'ot*), and it is the secret of the holy, inscribed covenant that is always found on men.[75] And this [is the import of] "This is my God and I will glorify Him" (*zeh eli we-anvehu*) (ibid. 15:3), and "This is the Lord" (*zeh yhwh*) (Isa. 25:9). But these [demonic forces] are called *elleh*, and thus it is written, "This is your god, O Israel." And for this reason it is written, "Though she might forget these" (*gam elleh tishkaḥnah*), but "I," the secret of *anokhi*, "never could forget you" (*we-anokhi lo eshkaḥekh*) (ibid. 49:15).[76]

The androgyne on the demonic side, portrayed by Samael and the serpent upon whom he rides, is parallel to the androgyne on the holy side, symbolized by the holy covenant that is inscribed on the phallus. Thus, the plural *elleh* connotes the union in the unholy realm that is comparable to the conjunction of *zeh* and *z'ot*, which signifies the union in the holy realm. But there is a major difference between the two: the union of the male and the female in the demonic realm results in the manifestation of the latter in the guise of the former – that is, Samael riding upon the serpent is an actualization of the force of judgment – whereas the union in the divine realm is symbolized by

the integration of the feminine *Shekhinah*, referred to as the Holy Spirit, into an aspect of the holy covenant. In his marginal notes to a parallel to this passage in another zoharic context,[77] Ḥayyim Vital correctly explained that the statement that the Holy Spirit is in the "mystery of the holy, inscribed covenant" refers to *aṭarah* (i.e., the corona of the phallus). Indeed, how else could one interpret the zoharic claim? Note that the female aspect of the divine is not depicted here in terms that are generally associated with the feminine gender. On the contrary, the *Shekhinah* is identified specifically as part of the *membrum virile*, and precisely in that capacity does she correspond to the serpent upon whom Samael rides. The rectification of the sin of the serpent, *tiqqun ha-naḥash*, is through the sign of the covenant, *ot berit*, inscripted on the flesh of the male Jew. The exegesis of Isaiah 49:15 at the conclusion of the passage is particularly important, for by means of it, the zoharic author makes the point that forgetfulness is associated with the demonic powers and removed entirely from the *Shekhinah*, for she is the secret of the covenant of circumcision, the locus of corporeal memory.

The theme of circumcision thus plays a crucial part in the zoharic polemic with the Christian faith.[78] In clever exegetical fashion, the author of the Zohar turns the Pauline view regarding circumcision on its head.[79] Not only is the literal circumcision of the flesh not overcome by the spiritual circumcision of baptism, which is a reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ,[80] but through the physical rite the corporeal is spiritualized and the spiritual corporealized. In the final analysis, circumcision (*milah*) is the true incarnation of the divine word (*millah*) in the flesh. Hence, Abraham, and not Jesus, is the creative potency of the divine manifest in the world. The point is disclosed in a reading of the verse, "The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of pruning[81] has come, the song of the turtledove is heard in our land" (Song of Songs 2:12), which serves as the proem (*petiḥta*) to the zoharic exegesis of the epiphany of the three angels to Abraham after his circumcision at the beginning of the section *Wa-yera* (Gen. 18).[82] I translate the part of the text that is most pertinent to the Jewish–Christian polemic:

> "The song of the turtledove is heard in the land," this is the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, which did not exist in the world until Adam was created. When Adam came into being,

> everything existed. After Adam sinned, everything departed from the world and the earth was cursed, as it is written, "Cursed be the earth because of you" (Gen. 3:17), and it is written, "If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you" (ibid. 4:12), and it is written, "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you" (ibid. 3:18). Noah came and he crafted spades and hoes in the world,[83] and after that [it is written] "He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent" (Gen. 9:21). People of the world came and sinned before the Holy One, blessed be He, and the forces of the earth vanished as it was in the beginning. They remained like this until Abraham came, for when Abraham came to the world, immediately "the blossoms appeared in the land." All the forces of the earth were rectified and they were revealed. "The time of pruning has come," [this refers to] the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, told him to circumcise himself, for the time had come when the covenant should be found in Abraham and he circumcised himself. Then this verse was fulfilled in him, the world was established, and the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed through him, as it is written, "The Lord appeared to him" (ibid. 18:1).[84]

The key to understanding this passage is the manner in which one interprets the expression "word of the Holy One, blessed be He," *millah de-qudsha berikh hu*. I suggest that this is not simply a rhetorical trope to allude to the speech of God, but rather a technical reference to the hypostatic word of God. The divine word is first manifest in Adam, but it is fully revealed through Abraham after his circumcision. Implicit in this passage is a play on the words *millah*, "speech," and *milah*, "circumcision." The full disclosure of the former is only through the latter. By means of the bodily circumcision, moreover, reality is ontically grounded, and the rectification of the primordial sin of Adam and Eve is enacted. Although the word was first revealed through Adam, as a consequence of his sin there was a disruption in the cosmic order, mythically portrayed as the cursing of the earth. To understand the nature of that curse, which in turn illuminates the metaphysical nature of sin, it is necessary to decode the remark that as a result of Adam's sin "everything departed from the world" (*kulla istaleq me-alma*); but in order to comprehend that

comment, it is necessary to ponder the preceding remark, "When Adam came into being, everything existed," (*keivvan de-ishtakakh adam ishtakakh kulla*). In the above translation I rendered the word *kulla* in these two statements as "everything," but this fails to capture the allusion to the divine emanation that is "the All" (in Hebrew *ha-kol*), a standard name in the theosophic kabbalistic symbolism (including that of the Zohar) for *Yesod*. It must also be stated that this particular designation has an obvious phallic connotation: *Yesod* is called *ha-kol* because it is the gradation that comprises all the other gradations in the same manner that the phallus was thought of as comprehending within itself all the other bodily parts.[85]

Following this line of interpretation, the consequence of the sin of Adam was the removal of the (phallic) All from the earth, which led to the devastation of the latter. Only when Abraham was circumcised, and the word of God was fully manifest in the world through him, did the earth again become productive. The concluding comment in this opening sermon of the Zohar on Genesis 18:1 reiterates this very point in slightly different language: "Come and see: When Adam sinned, he sinned with respect to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as it is written, 'but as for the tree of knowledge etc.' (Gen. 2:17). He sinned with respect to it and he caused death for all human beings of the world. Thus it is written, 'what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever!' (ibid. 3:22). When Abraham came, he rectified the world through the other tree, which is the tree of life, and he made known the faith to all people of the world."[86] Circumcision thus retains the theological and soteriological significance denied it by Paul; indeed, it is through circumcision of the flesh, and not baptism or the belief in the resurrection, that one truly attains the "mystery of the faith" (*sod ha-emunah*).[87] From that perspective it may be said that by means of circumcision, Christianity itself is ultimately redeemed.

Memory, Masculinity, and the Secret of the Covenant

The zoharic reflections on memory and forgetfulness are based on the correlation of masculinity and memory related to the philological presumption regarding the link between *zakhar* and *zekher*.

Reflecting on this etymological connection in its biblical roots, Amos Funkenstein remarked that one should expect that within a patriarchal society, the male (*zakhar*) alone constitutes the memory (*zekher*) insofar as the idea of "nation," "assembly," or "community" is always exclusive of women.[88] Funkenstein interprets the philological connection of *zakhar* and *zekher* in light of his understanding of the interplay and interconnectedness of collective and individual memory, namely, the individual's act of personal remembering is an instantiation of a system of linguistic signs and symbols shared by a cultural collectivity. In the case of ancient Israel, and much of Jewish history that followed, that system was predominantly male. The particular gendering of memory as masculine is also related to the more specific correlation of remembrance and the covenant of circumcision. The covenant, biblically, is called a "sign," for it functions as that which reminds one of the relationship between God and Israel. Memory is thus linked fundamentally to the masculine because the site of the covenantal incision is the phallus.[89] The more specific link between memory and the *membrum virile* is a bedrock of kabbalistic speculation. The correlation between *zakhar* and *zakhor*, first expressed in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,[90] is developed and applied to various exegetical contexts by the author of the Zohar.[91] I begin by citing an interpretation of the verse, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," (*zakhor et yom ha-shabbat leqaddesho*) (Exod. 20:8):

> "Remember" (*zakhor*) refers to the secret of the masculine, the secret of the masculine that takes all the limbs of the supernal world; "the Sabbath day" (*et yom ha-shabbat*) to include the eve of Sabbath, which is the [attribute of the] night, and this is [the import of] "and keep it holy" (*leqaddesho*), for it is in need of holiness from the holy nation, and it is crowned through them, as is appropriate. "Remember" (*zakhor*), the place in which there is no forgetfulness and no forgetfulness exists in it, for there is no forgetfulness in the place of the supernal covenant, and all the more so above. There is forgetfulness below, the place that must be remembered, and concerning this it is written, "May [God] be ever mindful of his father's iniquity" (Ps. 109:14). There are angels appointed there who recall the merits and sins of people, and there is no forgetfulness before the holy throne, [with respect to] what is before [the throne]. And who is before?

> [The attribute called] *zakhor*, and all the more so above, for everything is the mystery of the masculine. The secret of the holy name, YHW, is inscribed there, and [that which is] below needs to be sanctified, and it is sanctified through *zakhor*, for from that it takes all holiness and all blessings. And this occurs when the eve of Sabbath is crowned upon the holy nation, as is appropriate, through prayers, supplications, and hymns of joy.[92]

The biblical admonition to "remember the Sabbath day" serves as an exegetical springboard for the fertile imagination of the Zohar's author. The word *zakhor* refers to the "secret of the masculine," *raza di-dekhura*, the attribute *Yesod*. The phallic signification of this symbol is underscored by the description of the "secret of the masculine" as that which "takes all the limbs of the supernal world," an idea that reflects the biological notion (which I mentioned above) that the penis gathers the energy of all the upper limbs of the body. Indeed, in the passage immediately preceding the one that I translated, the author of the Zohar makes the point explicitly: " 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,' this is the secret of the holy phallus,[93] for in that phallus all the sources of the bodily limbs exist, and it is that which contains everything."[94]

In the place of the masculine, which is the supernal covenant or the phallus, there is no forgetfulness, for this gradation is the ontological locus of memory. Beneath this gradation, however, there is a place wherein forgetfulness is operative, and thus there must be angels to recall the good and the bad deeds of men. In this context, the place characterized by forgetfulness corresponds to the *Shekhinah*, or feminine presence, although in another zoharic passage the place of forgetfulness is associated with the "extremity of the side of darkness" (i.e., the demonic realm).[95] Prima facie, the view that forgetfulness is characteristic of the *Shekhinah* would seem to contradict the rabbinic teaching that there is no forgetfulness before the throne of glory.[96] The zoharic author, however, masterfully interprets this dictum to refer to that which is before the throne (i.e., the attribute *zakhor* or the masculine *Yesod*), and not to the feminine throne itself. The lower grade, which is imaged as feminine, is said to be sanctified by the masculine, a process that unfolds when Sabbath eve, which symbolizes the *Shekhinah*, is crowned by the prayers of the Jewish

people. From the end of the passage, we learn that the process is reciprocal: in the moment that the *Shekhinah* is crowned by the people of Israel, the people of Israel are crowned by the *Shekhinah*.[97]

The crowning represents the coronation of the Sabbath bride, or the *Shekhinah*, as she prepares to unite with the holy King.[98] On the most basic level, this reflects standard regal symbolism: the *Shekhinah* is, after all, the Queen and thus the image of her being crowned makes perfectly good sense. This imagery is enhanced, moreover, by the symbol of the Sabbath bride, for in the Jewish tradition there is attested the actual practice of the bridegroom and the bride wearing crowns. But there is a deeper significance to this symbolism: the crowning represents the assimilation of the *Shekhinah* into the phallic *Yesod*, a metamorphosis that is related in zoharic literature to the sacred union of male and female.[99] The phallicization of the feminine is also alluded to in the comment that the *Shekhinah*, or "that which is below," is "sanctified through *zakhor*, for from that it takes all holiness and all blessings." By receiving the overflow from the attribute called *zakhor*, the forgetfulness, associated with the *Shekhinah*, is overcome. The act of remembering, therefore, has the role of uniting the female and the male, a union that results in the transformation of the female into an aspect of the male. Thus, the biblical verse that frames this whole discussion, *zakhor et yom ha-shabbat*, is related exegetically to the eve of Sabbath and to the day of Sabbath, the feminine and the masculine.

Re/membering the Covenant: Messianic Overcoming of Binary Opposition

According to the predominant symbolism of the Zohar, an intrinsic link is forged between the phallus, memory, and history: the circumcised phallus, which bears the mark of the divine covenant in the flesh, is the locus of the collective memory that renders history meaningful. Rejecting the universalizing and spiritualizing tendencies of Christianity, the zoharic author insists that the site of salvation remains the embodied sign of circumcision. The identity of the Jew, even in the messianic age, is inextricably linked to the sign inscribed on the flesh. Circumcision, therefore, signifies the cultural difference between Jew and Christian, but also the gender difference

between male and female within the body politic of Israel. However, as I have already noted above, an essential element of the theosophic teaching proffered by the zoharic authorship is that the female itself is an aspect of the male, a point underscored by the androgynous nature of the covenant in general and that of circumcision in particular. A particularly straightforward articulation of this idea is given by Moses de León: "The secret of the covenant (*sod ha-berit*) is the corona (*aṭarah*) in the secret of the glorious crown (*aṭeret tif'eret*), and when a person is circumcised and he enters the secret of the holy covenant, he enters two gradations that are one unit, the corona (*aṭarah*) and the Eternally Living One (*ḥei ha-olamim*), the secret of the All (*kol*), and all is one unit."[100] By means of the rite of circumcision, therefore, one is conjoined to the ninth and the tenth *sefirot*, *Yesod* and *Malkhut*, referred to here as the Eternally Living One (or the All) and the corona, which constitute one entity. The female aspect is thus totally assimilated to the male. In a similar vein, one could argue that Christians should find their restoration in the Jews, for the otherness of Edom is overcome in the reintegration of the demonic into the divine.[101] It is important to note that in terms of medieval gender stereotypes, another profound reversal is at work here: the Jew is associated with masculine virility (emblematic of divine grace) and the Christian with feminine constriction (symbolic of divine judgment),[102] which is most fully expressed in the monastic ideal of celibacy or sexual impotency.[103] The "other god" is thus portrayed as the castrated being (the emasculated male) who stands in antithetical opposition to the phallic potency of the divine.[104] But the cultural and gender boundaries are fluid, for the process of history, culminating with the coming of the Messiah, is perceived as the engenderment of memory by means of which the bifurcation of male and female, Jew and Christian, is overcome.

I have noted several times that the locus of memory in the divine realm is the attribute that corresponds to the phallus, the seat of the creative element of the Godhead. This is instantiated below in the body of the Jewish male: memory is incised upon the flesh. But as I have also indicated above, the phallus is androgynous. Thus, one finds a distinction in the Zohar between two kinds of memory, *peqidah* and *zekhirah*, correlated, respectively, with the feminine and the masculine.[105] The historical situation of exile entails the separation of male and female, a rupture induced by the forgetting of the covenant.

This state of forgetfulness is not merely the result of poor attention or the inability to retain something that escapes the mind, or even the psychopathological condition of amnesia. The forgetting of the covenant is more than a subjective lapse of memory; it is the ontological state of oblivion, the concealment of that which must be concealed from the one who must conceal.[106] An allusion to this veiled concealment, the doubling of forgetfulness, is found in the following zoharic exegesis of the verse, "At the end of two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile" (Gen. 46:1):

> "At the end of" (*wa-yehi miqqets*). What is [the meaning of] *miqqets*? R. Simeon said: The place in which there is no memory (*zekhirah*), and this is the extremity of the left (*qets di-semo'la*). What is the reason? For it is written, "But remember me (*zekhartani*) when all is well with you again" (Gen. 40:14). Was it appropriate for Joseph the Righteous to say, "But remember me"? Rather, when Joseph contemplated his dream he said: Certainly this is a dream of memory (*ḥelma di-zekhirah*). But he erred with respect to this for everything is [dependent] on the Holy One, blessed be He. Therefore, the place in which there is forgetfulness (*nashyu*) rose before him. What is written? "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him" (ibid., 23). Since it is written "the chief cupbearer did not remember" (*we-lo zakhar*), why does it say, "he forgot him" (*wa-yishkaḥehu*)? Rather, [the word] *wa-yishkaḥehu* [refers to] the place in which there is forgetfulness (*shikheḥah*), and this is the extremity of the side of darkness (*qets de-siṭra de-ḥoshekh*).[107]

Forgetfulness is linked to the demonic, for it is always oppositional and conflictual: strife is of the essence of this oblivion. The particular manifestation of that conflict is the veiling of the sign of the covenant.[108] Joseph, who is called "righteous" (*tsaddiq*) because of his diligence with respect to sexual purity (*shemirat ha-berit*) and on account of his symbolic correspondence to *Yesod*, the divine phallus,[109] thought that it was appropriate to interpret the dream of the cupbearer (*sar ha-mashkim*), since he felt that it derived from the side of memory. Consequently, Joseph exposed that which should have been hidden, a disclosure that resulted in the domination of forgetfulness, the demonic force of darkness, over the power of

remembrance. Oblivion is the absence of demarcation, the concealment of the sign that leads to a state of disorientation and exile, the separation of male and female. "Come and see: All the time that Joseph, who is the supernal covenant, exists, the covenant of the *Shekhinah* exists together with Israel in peace as is appropriate, but when Joseph, the supernal covenant, departs from the world, the covenant of the *Shekhinah* and Israel go into exile. Thus it has been established, as it is written, 'A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph' (Exod. 1:8)."[110] The departure of Joseph from the world – the sundering of the male/female bond – results in the exile of the *Shekhinah* and the Jewish people. That this state is characterized by oblivion is underscored by the biblical claim that the king of Egypt (the satanic power) has no recollection of Joseph (the phallic covenant).

The power of Christianity, according to the zoharic author, can also be understood as the lure of oblivion in which the covenant is forgotten, a withholding of the sign. Redemption, conversely, is the restoration of memory, the retrieval of the covenant in its twofold aspect as male and female, which is revealed in the unveiling of the hidden sign. The point is poignantly expressed in the zoharic interpretation of the sign of the covenant seen by Noah in the form of the rainbow:

> It is written, "[When the bow is in the clouds] I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant" (Gen. 9:16), for the desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, is towards it[111] constantly and the one who is not worthy through it cannot enter before the Master. Thus it is written, "I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant." "I will see it," what [is the meaning of] "I will see it"? This is a secret, as it is said, "Put a mark on the foreheads etc." (Ezek. 9:4) to be manifest on them. Others say that this is the inscription of the holy sign on the flesh. R. Judah said: Certainly everything is this way, but the rainbow that is seen in the world exists in a supernal mystery. When Israel will go out from the exile, this rainbow will be adorned in the colors of the bride who is adorned for her husband. That Jew said to him: Thus my father said to me when he departed from this world: Do not expect the feet of Messiah until that rainbow is seen in the world, adorned in the bright colors and illuminating the world. Then you can

> expect the Messiah. From where do you know? As it is written, "I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant." Now it is seen in darkened colors to be a reminder that a flood will not come. However, in that time it will be seen in bright colors and it will be adorned in the ornamentation of a bride who is adorned for her husband. Then [is it appropriate to say] "and remember the everlasting covenant" (*lizkor berit olam*). The Holy One, blessed be He, remembers that covenant that is in exile and He lifts her up from the dust, as it is written, "they will seek the Lord their God and David their king" (Hosea 3:5), and it is written, "they shall serve the Lord their God and David, the king whom I will raise up for them" (Jer. 30:9). "I will raise up" from the dust, as it says, "I will raise up again the fallen booth of David" (Amos 9:11). Thus [it is written] "I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant," to raise her up from the dust.[112]

The author of the Zohar utilizes the biblical narrative concerning Noah and the rainbow in order to characterize the arrival of the messianic age. The physical manifestation of the rainbow is symbolic of a process within the Godhead. From the beginning of this passage, it would appear that the rainbow corresponds to the phallic aspect of the *Shekhinah*, which is referred to on a number of occasions in the Zohar as the "sign of the covenant,"[113] the very term that Scripture uses in this context to describe the rainbow. This symbolic usage of the word *qeshet* is attested in other zoharic passages, of which I will here mention only two examples:

> It is written, "Like the appearance of the bow (*ke-mar'eh ha-qeshet*) that shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek. 1:28), the appearance of all the colors, and thus [it is written] "I have set My bow (*qashti*) in the clouds" (Gen. 9:13). What is "My bow"? As it is said with respect to Joseph, "Yet his bow (*qashto*) stayed taut" (ibid. 49:24), for Joseph is called righteous (*tsaddiq*). Therefore "his bow" is the covenant of the bow (*berit de-qeshet*) that is contained in the righteous, for in the covenant the one is united with the other. Since Noah was righteous, his covenant was a bow.[114]

The symbolic understanding of the rainbow is confirmed in another passage wherein it is asserted (based on Babylonian Talmud, Ḥagigah 16a) that looking at the rainbow is prohibited because it is akin to looking at the *Shekhinah*, the same rationale that is used to explain the prohibition of looking at the fingers of the priests during the priestly blessing. In an effort to explain this dictum, the Zohar (through the persona of R. Abba) explains that there is a bow above and a bow below. With respect to the former, it is forbidden to look at its colors because "he who looks at its colors it is as if he looked at the place above and it is forbidden to look at it in order not to cause shame for the *Shekhinah*." On the other hand, the bow below refers to "that sign of the covenant inscribed on a person, for he who looks at it causes shame above."[115] The parallelism between the lower and the upper bow instructs about the nature of the latter: just as the *qeshet* below is the sign of the covenant inscribed on the phallus, so the *qeshet* above is related to that aspect of God that corresponds to this part of the anatomy, the place that must remain hidden in order not to cause shame to the *Shekhinah*.[116] The phallic understanding of the rainbow is verified by the view that the object of God's vision (according to Gen. 9:16) is the inscription of the covenant upon the flesh. When God sees the sign of circumcision, He remembers the everlasting covenant.

The second part of the zoharic interpretation of Noah's rainbow cited above involves the complex gender symbolism, especially related to the transformation that is connected to the messianic redemption. From the claim that the rainbow will be "adorned in the ornamentation of a bride," it would appear that this symbol corresponds to the feminine *Shekhinah*, and not to the masculine *Yesod*.[117] This is a reasonable deduction, but before one jumps to conclusions about the imaginary constructions of the divine female, it is necessary to situate this passage in the larger framework of the assumptions about gender that one finds in both the Zohar and related theosophic literature. The rainbow is a liminal symbol, for it marks the transition from exile to redemption. In the exilic state, there is separation of male and female, and hence the rainbow appears in darkened colors; in the redemptive state, by contrast, there is a reunion of male and female, and the rainbow shines in bright colors, like a bride adorned before the bridegroom. In the exile, moreover, the rainbow is depicted as the forsaken covenant buried in the dust,

but in the time of redemption the covenant shall be uplifted and restored to the phallus as the sign of the covenant. The point is clarified in a second passage where the end of exile is described in the following way:

> Then the rainbow will be seen in the cloud in bright colors like a wife that is adorned for her husband, as it is written, "I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant" ... "I will see it," in the bright colors, as is appropriate, and then [I will] "remember the everlasting covenant." What is the 'everlasting covenant' (*berit olam*)? This is the Community of Israel, and the *waw* will be united with the *he*, and she will be lifted from the dust, as it says, "and God remembered His covenant" (Exod. 2:24), this is the Community of Israel for she is the covenant, as it says, "and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant" (Gen. 9:13). When the *waw* is aroused in relation to the *he*, then supernal miracles will be aroused in the world ... and He will lift the Community of Israel from the dust, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will remember her.[118]

At the beginning of the redemption, it is appropriate for the rainbow to appear in the form of the bride (or wife), so that the erotic yearning of the male will be aroused and the union of the two consummated.[119] The attribute of the divine that corresponds to the rainbow at this moment of transition is configured as the feminine other of heterosexualized masculine desire. The conjugal relation of the male and the female, represented respectively by the letters *waw* and *he* of the Tetragrammaton, rectifies the ontological separation of exile.[120] But the reunion of male and female is a process of reintegration of the female in the male or, to put the matter somewhat differently, insofar as the female provides the space to contain the male she is the extended phallus.[121] The othering of the feminine, which entails the psychic projection of the feminine as other, is to be evaluated strictly from the point of view of the male.[122]

The following account of Lacan's theory of signification given by Judith Butler is particularly helpful for an understanding of the phallocentric dimension of the zoharic imagery: "This is an Other that constitutes, not the limit of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of a masculine self-elaboration. For women to

'be' the Phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to 'embody' the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through 'being' its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity."[123] Bracketing the question of the constructivist legitimacy of the Lacanian position,[124] in my estimation the structuralist approach can be applied without distortion to the zoharic texts. The phallocentric morphology is expressed in the aforecited passage from the Zohar in terms of the image of God's remembering the covenant, which must be construed as an act of re/membering, that is, of transforming the female into the sign of the covenant that is inscribed on the male organ.[125] From a passage in one of Moses de León's Hebrew writings, it is clear that the memory elicited by God's looking at the rainbow as the sign of the covenant signifies the gender transformation of the *Shekhinah* into part of the phallic *Yesod*, which is expressed concomitantly as the amelioration of judgment by mercy:

> Whenever the rainbow is seen in the cloud, then the sign of the covenant is within her and the judgment vanishes from the world ... The secret is "I will remember My covenant" (Gen. 9:15), for there is no memory (*zekhirah*) without the sign of the covenant (*ot berit*). Therefore they established the blessing [on the rainbow], "Blessed be the one who remembers the covenant" (*zokher ha-berit*),[126] for then she contains all the colors that are seen within her from [the gradation that is called] the All. Thus, God, blessed be He, has mercy over the creatures and over the earth. Know that the secret of the matter of the rainbow and [that of] the covenant are joined together. Therefore, they established that it is forbidden for a person to look at the rainbow in order not to cause shame to the *Shekhinah* and not to look within her. Thus the prophet said, "Like the appearance of the bow (*ke-mar'eh ha-qeshet*) that shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek. 1:28).[127]

From the vantage point of the zoharic symbolism, the reinscription of memory, and the overcoming of oblivion that it entails,

is the secret that endows history with meaning and purpose. Judaism's spiritual struggle with Christianity plays a critical role in this drama. The seductive power of Christianity induces the forgetting of the covenant (manifest in both theological and sexual terms), which brings about the separation of male and female, and the consequent dominance of the evil serpent. As a result of that domination, the virility of the Jew (located in the circumcised phallus) is compromised and the masculine is feminized. By contrast, redemption is the reunion of male and female such that the latter is restored to the former in the image of the sign of the covenant. In the messianic era, the force of Edom is subjugated to that of Jacob, and the feminine potency is masculinized.[128]

Notes

1. Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion At the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 12.
2. Viewed from this perspective, the split between critical historical consciousness and collective memory may not be as sharp as it emerges from Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), even if we readily grant that the critical historian is not the custodian of the cultural memory that has been essential to the Jewish historical experience. To be sure, the traditional effort of remembering the past is a process that often entailed the conscious submersion of the past in the dark waters of oblivion, whereas the historian's reflective scrutiny of the Jewish past is predicated (at least ideally) on the assumption that forgetfulness is not the best handmaiden to memory. The historian's attempt to recollect the past indiscriminately entails a historicizing of Judaism rooted in the secularization of Jewish history, which does indeed represent a decisive break with traditional modes of remembrance and the imaginative consecration of the past (*Zakhor*, pp. 81, 91). It is nevertheless clear that the historian's vision of the past is itself colored by certain cultural presumptions (primarily of a linguistic and semiotic nature) imparted by collective memory, which inevitably involve a process of selectivity and forgetfulness in remembering the past. A similar position has been articulated by Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993). For a challenge to Yerushalmi's thesis based on the idea that "historical consciousness" is not in antithetical opposition to collective memory, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 11, 18–21; and the remarks on this debate by David Myers, "Remembering *Zakhor*: A Super-commentary," *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past*, 4, 1992, pp. 129–146 (I thank the author for calling my attention to his study, which helped me refine my own argument).
3. I do not subscribe to a monolithic representation of Judaism in the Middle Ages based on rabbinic documents; on the contrary, one must assume a plurality of interacting Judaisms in spite of the effort of some rabbis to present

a uniform picture. The cultural pluralism of medieval Jewish societies embraced various forms of sectarianism as well as differing conceptions of Rabbanite Judaism itself. Even if we wish to consider rabbinic Judaism as the mainstream Jewish culture, it would be historically inaccurate to speak of a homogeneous rabbinism. Thus, one should not neglect other kinds of material available to the scholar studying the nature of Jewish identity in the Middle Ages, for example, Muslim heresiography of the Jews or Karaite historiography. For two recent works of scholarship dealing, respectively, with these corpora, see Steven Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 17–46, and Fred D. Astren, "History, Historicization, and Historical Claims in Karaite Jewish Literature," Ph.D. thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1993.

4. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 90. I have employed in a more elaborate fashion Stock's notion of the "textual community" in "Orality, Textuality, and Revelation as Modes of Education and Formation in Jewish Mystical Circles of the High Middle Ages," in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 178–207. Stock's model has been profitably applied to classical rabbinic Judaism by William S. Green, "Otherness Within: Towards a Theory of Difference in Rabbinic Judaism," in *"To See Ourselves As Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 49–69, esp. 53–55. Green's comments about the rabbinic circles in the classical period are, in my view, entirely applicable to the medieval rabbinic circles whence the pietists and mystics emerged.
5. For a recent study that reexamines this issue, see Martin Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
6. See Gerson Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Culture* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1991), pp. 271–297. On the role of the messianic question in Jewish–Christian polemics in the High Middle Ages, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 111–124, 136, 155, 179, 181–184, 209–210, 220; Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 57–59, 69–70, 74–82, 86–88, 90–100, 104–114, 117–136, 142–145, 149–150, 153, 168–169, 170–173; idem, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 172–194. This issue has been examined from a new perspective in the provocative study of Israel Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations," *Zion*, 58, 1993, pp. 33–90; and compare the impassioned responses to this study and the rejoinder by Yuval in *Zion*, 59, 1994. The centrality of messianic eschatology in thirteenth-century kabbalah was noted by Baer, *History of the Jews*, vol. 1, pp. 248–250, 276–281. Consider especially Baer's description of the period of the Zohar as one of "near-messianic times" (p. 269), a view that has been resurrected in more recent scholarship by Liebes (see reference below). Regarding the messianic dimensions of thirteenth-century Jewish mysticism, see Joseph Dan, "The Beginning of the Messianic Myth in the Kabbalistic Doctrine of the

Thirteenth Century," in *Messianism and Eschatology: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Zvi Baras (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), pp. 239–252 (Hebrew); Moshe Idel, "Introduction," in Aaron Zeev Aescoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements: Sources and Documents on Messianism in Jewish History, Volume One: From the Bar-Kokhba Revolt until the Expulsion of the Jews From Spain*, ed. Yehuda Even-Shemuel (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1987), pp. 9–28, esp. 11–16 (Hebrew); idem, "Typologies of Redemptive Activity in the Middle Ages," in *Messianism and Eschatology*, pp. 253–279 (Hebrew); idem, *Messianism and Mysticism* (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1992), pp. 17–38 (Hebrew); and Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 1–84. For the historical record, it should be noted that the messianic enthusiasm of the author of the Zohar, expressed as a belief in the imminent coming of the Messiah, which served as the justification for revealing kabbalistic secrets, was emphasized by Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1894), vol. 4, pp. 18–19. Graetz's position, which differs significantly from that of Scholem (especially as he expressed it in *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 39–41), is not mentioned by Liebes.

7. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 85–138.
8. Most recently, Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigle She-BaNistar: The Halachic Residue in the Zohar* (Tel-Aviv: Hakkibutz Hameuchad, 1995) (Hebrew), emphasizes the impact of the religious customs and the method of study of Franco-German Jewish culture on the zoharic authorship, but he still maintains that the work is of Spanish origin. More specifically, Ta-Shma is of the opinion that the Zohar was composed in the 1260s or 1270s in Toledo or Guadalajara in the circle of Jonah ben Abraham Gerondi, where one finds a blend of the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi traditions.
9. *History of the Jews*, vol. 1, pp. 267.
10. Zohar 1:92b.
11. *History of Jews*, vol. 1, p. 268. Regrettably, in my study of the midnight study vigil in the Zohar, "Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature," in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), pp. 209–235, I neglected to mention these important and pertinent remarks of Baer. Indeed, the position that I adopt in that study, that the references to the communal midnight study in the Zohar reflect actual practice and are not to be construed simply as imaginative constructions, basically concurs with Baer's view. Although Baer himself (*History of Jews*, vol. 1, p. 437 n. 24) referred the reader to Scholem's work for an investigation of the "real-life setting of the Zohar," it seems to me that Baer's own analysis was closer to the mark and in an essential way anticipated the socially oriented trend in current scholarship.
12. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 58.
13. Cf. ibid., p. 225, where Scholem again remarks that the "medieval environment can be recognized in many details of the Zohar." In that context he specifically mentions the work of Baer.
14. On the other hand, it must be noted that Scholem did entertain the possibility that the author of the Zohar, whom he considered to be Moses de León, belonged to a group of Castlilian mystics described as the "representatives of the Gnostical reaction in the history of Spanish kabbalism," i.e. Isaac and Jacob ha-Kohen of Soria, Ṭodros ben Joseph Abulafia of Toledo, and Moses ben Simeon of Burgos. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 175, 187, and 190.

15. See Liebes' study cited in note 7; idem, "New Directions," pp. 160–161; idem, "Zohar and Eros," pp. 67–119; Wolfson, "Forms of Visionary Ascent;" idem, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 326–392.
16. I owe this formulation to my colleague, David Leahy, who used it in response to a comment that I made that a certain aspect of his own philosophical thinking regarding the "absolute consciousness absolutely without self," articulated more fully in his *Foundation Matter the Body Itself* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), reminded me of an idea central to Hegel's phenomenology of the self. I have extended the scope of his comment to characterize the scholarly endeavor in the humanities in general. It appears that the process of innovation and its presentation in the world of scholarship is the reverse of the situation in the political arena, where the radically new is clothed as the old and tested. Consider, for example, the following remark of Chris Knight, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 452: "Subtle subversion, rather than explicit negation, would seem to be how most successful counter-revolutions in human history have been achieved. All is utterly changed – yet ostensibly all stays the same." Perhaps in scholarly fields that are more politically oriented, and hence more concerned with safeguarding territory and exercising domination, the political model is more readily adopted, but in that domain of human endeavor the more revolutionary the claim the more legitimating and empowering.
17. On the zoharic attitude to Christianity, see Adolf Jellinek, "Christlicher Einfluss auf die Kabbala," *Der Orient*, 12, 1851, pp. 580–583; Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4, p. 23; Wilhelm Bacher, "Judaeo-Christian Polemics in the *Zohar*," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 3, 1891, pp. 781–784; Yitzhak Baer, "The Historical Background of the Ra'aya Mehemna'," *Zion*, 5, 1940, pp. 1–44 (Hebrew); idem, "The Kabbalistic Doctrine in the Christological Teaching of Abner of Burgos," *Tarbits*, 27, 1958, p. 281 (Hebrew); idem, *History of Jews*, vol. 1, pp. 266–277; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 973; Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 70; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 65–68, 139–161; Matt, *Zohar*, pp. 15–22, 240. On the zoharic attitude towards Islam, see Ronald C. Kiener, "The Image of Islam in the *Zohar*," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 8, 1989, pp. 43–65 (English section).
18. In previous studies, I have touched upon the polemical responses in the Zohar (and related kabbalistic literature) and my reflections here should be viewed as an expansion of my earlier thoughts. See Wolfson, "Mystical Rationalization," pp. 245–246, 248–249; idem, "Light through Darkness: The Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar," *Harvard Theological Review*, 81, 1988, pp. 81 n. 29, 82–83 n. 34, and 86 n. 46; idem, "Woman – The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence Silberstein and Robert Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 168–169, 189–190.
19. See *The Book of the Covenant of Joseph Kimḥi*, trans. Frank Talmage (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), pp. 19–20, and other references cited on p. 19 n. 50; David Berger, *The Jewish–Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzaḥon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p. 16; Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*; Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*.
20. Abraham Gross, "Satan and Christianity: The Demonization of Christianity in the Writings of Abraham Saba," *Zion*, 58, 1993, pp. 91–105 (Hebrew),

notes that the portrayal of Christianity as the demonic religion and the view of Jesus as the incarnation of Samael or the devil, which are found in Spanish kabbalistic works from the second half of the fifteenth century, can be traced back to thirteenth-century sources composed by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and the kabbalists in northern Spain, such as Naḥmanides and Baḥya ben Asher. He does not deal explicitly with the Zohar, which probably had the greatest impact on subsequent kabbalists.

21. The author of the Zohar fits into what Gerson Cohen identified as the exegetical approach to the problem of Edom–Rome taken by Babylonian, Spanish, and Provençal Jewish scholars as opposed to the orientation found in southern Italian sources. According to the former, the name of Edom was applied primarily to Christianity and only secondarily to Rome after the Roman Empire adopted that faith as the official state religion. See Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Culture*, pp. 243–269, esp. 259–260.
22. Zohar 2:188b; part of this text is quoted (in a different translation) by Matt, *Zohar*, p. 17. On the zoharic representation of medieval Christianity as the demonic force in the world, see Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4, p. 17; Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 40; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 66–68, 244 n. 92. The association of the Other Side and the nations of the world (without specifying a specific link to Christianity) is noted by Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 451.
23. The contrast between the ontic grounding of the Jewish soul in the realm of holiness and that of the non-Jewish soul (especially the "idolatrous nations," which is a code for Christians) is repeated on many occasions in the zoharic corpus and related kabbalistic literature. Cf. Zohar 1:47a, 131a, 220a; 2:21b; 3:25b, 37a, 104b, 105b, 119a, 259b; and see Wolfson, "Mystical Rationalization," pp. 242–244, 248. I note, parenthetically, that in *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 65, Moses de León has some negative comments about the Muslim woman during her menstrual period. The correlation of the blood of menstruation, particularly related to the birth of Jesus (as we find, for example, in the different recensions of the *Toledot Yeshu*), and Christianity is employed in Jewish polemical literature in the Middle Ages in an effort to discredit the doctrine of the virgin birth; hence the attribution of the title *ben niddah*, "son of a menstruant," to Jesus. See Samuel Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach Jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1902), pp. 38–41, 64–68, 118, 139–140; *Sefer Nestor ha-Komer*, ed. Abraham Berliner (Altona, Germany: Gebrüder Bonn, 1874), p. 7; Berger, *Jewish–Christian Debate*, pp. 43–44, 183–184, 350–354. This polemical trope is used as well by Abraham Abulafia, although he is mostly concerned with emphasizing the material nature of the blood in order to contrast the spirituality of the Jewish Messiah (the Sabbath) and the corporeality of Jesus (the sixth day). See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 52–53.
24. See Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: Schocken, 1984), pp. 147–174; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Purity and Piety: The Separation of Menstruants from the Sancta," in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, ed. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1992), pp. 103–115; idem, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. S. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 273–299; Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, pp. 55–7. I do not mean to suggest that in the classical rabbinic sources one cannot find negative depictions of menstruation that ultimately reflect a misogynistic orientation. Consider, for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 17:8,

p. 160, where the laws of menstruation are explained as a punishment for Eve's having brought about the death of Adam.

25. For a fuller treatment of menstruation in the kabbalistic material, see Sharon Koren, "Mysticism and Menstruation: The Significance of Female Impurity to Medieval Jewish Spirituality," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, New Haven, 1999.
26. Wolfson, *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 344–345; *Mishkan ha-Edut*, MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. Quat. 833, fols. 24a–b; and see Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1358–1359. If we follow the suggestion of Baruch Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 75, that according to the priestly conception impurity was not only an offense against God but introduced a "kind of demonic contagion into the community," then the biblical laws regarding menstruation (Lev. 15:19–33) already presuppose the idea that the blood of menstruation is the materialization of the anti-godly force. For discussion of this position, see also Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 9–31. It goes without saying that the characterization of menstrual blood as the source of demonic impurity and the ensuing menstrual taboos are found in a variety of different cultures. For representative studies, see William N. Stephens, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstrual Taboos," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 64, 1961, pp. 385–316; Paula Weideger, *Menstruation and Menopause: The Physiology and Psychology, the Myth and the Reality* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 85–113; Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb, "Introduction," in *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 3–50; Knight, *Blood Relations*, pp. 374–416; Mary Jane Lupton, *Menstruation and Psychoanalysis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 92–105. In the Middle Ages, this negative conception of the female body led to widely held superstitious beliefs (often presented as scientific in nature) about the detrimental effects of the blood of menstruation on a woman's offspring. See Claude Thomasset, "The Nature of Woman," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silence of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 54–58, 65–66; Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 151 and references cited in n. 62.
27. Cf. Zohar 1:204b, where the "alien kingdom" (*malkhuta aḥra*) of the idolatrous nations is called the "other one" (*aḥer*) based on the verse "For you must not worship any other god, because the Lord, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God" (Exod. 34:14). And cf. Zohar 2:61a, where the same verse is cited as a prooftext to support the view that one should not have sexual intercourse with a Gentile woman, again referred to as the "daughter of an alien god." Cf. Zohar 1:131b; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 75a, 86b.
28. Zohar 2:3a–b, translated in Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1202–1205.
29. *History of the Jews*, vol. 1, p. 262.
30. See Matt, *Zohar*, p. 240; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 234 n. 47.
31. Zohar 1:171b. The passionate zeal (*qin'ah*) associated with the God of Israel in Scripture is linked specifically to the phallus, or the divine attribute that corresponds to the phallus, in zoharic texts. Cf. Zohar 1:66b, 131b; 2:3b; 3:190a; Wolfson *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 230.
32. Zohar 1:131b; 2:87b; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. Quat. 833, fols. 26a–27a; *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 212–213.

33. The Zohar repeatedly links sexual relations with Gentile women and idolatry (understood as the worship of the other god of the demonic realm). See Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1365, and other sources mentioned in Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, p. 140 n. 2. Cf. *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 63, and Zohar 1:214a, where sexual intercourse with a non-Jew is considered a world-destroying act. It is of interest to consider the linkage of the sign of circumcision and idolatry on the part of Gentile women according to the remark placed in the mouth of the Jew in Peter Abelard, *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew, and a Christian*, trans. Pierre J. Payer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979), p. 47. The correlation of idolatry and menstruation is found already in the pseudepigraphal *Letter of Jeremiah*, but in that context the issue is a purely cultic one, that is, since the pagan does not have to abide by the laws of menstruation, the likelihood that sacrifices to idols may have been touched by women during the menstrual period or at childbirth is great. See Neusner, *Idea of Purity*, p. 36.
34. Zohar 1:126b. Cf. Zohar 3:79a–b; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 81b–c; *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 279–280.
35. *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, sec. 357, p. 430. Cf. *Numbers Rabbah* 20:1; *Midrash Tanḥuma*, Balaq 1, p. 785.
36. Cf. Zohar 2:21b–22a, 69b; 3:192a, 193b–194a; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 47c; *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, pp. 74–75; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, pp. 16–19; see Matt, *Zohar*, p. 240. The association of Balaam's magical acts and the demonic is repeated on many occasions in zoharic literature; cf. Zohar 1:125b–126a; 3:113a, 200b, 206b–210b, 264a; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 47c. In the first and last two of these references, Balaam is described as drawing down the force of impurity from the supernal serpent by committing sexual acts with his she-ass every night, an idea already expressed in rabbinic sources. Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 105a–b (in that setting the view that Balaam had intercourse with his she-ass is juxtaposed to the idea that he performed sorcery with his penis) and Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 4b; see also *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance*, ed. Ernest G. Clarke with Walter E. Aufrecht, John C. Hurd, and F. Spitzer (Hoboken: Ktav, 1984), pp. 187–188 (ad Num. 22:30). One wonders if implicit in this rabbinic tradition is a polemic against Christians who are depicted as a race of asses, an image that is especially related to the issue of sexual promiscuity. See Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 117–118. On the inherent impurity of Balaam, again linked to the image of the serpent, cf. Zohar 1:169b (in that passage Balaam is contrasted with Jacob). For discussion of Balaam's magical practices and the demonic realm in zoharic literature, see Cohen-Alloro, *Secret of the Garment*, pp. 75–81. On the symbolic correspondence of the *ḥamor* and *aton* to the masculine and the feminine potencies in the demonic realm, cf. Zohar 3:207a; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 78c. See note 61.
37. See Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 103–139; Francis C. R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984), pp. 316–448; Alan Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 143–146; Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

38. Zohar 3:79a. The different symbolic connotations of the mythical image of the serpent inseminating Eve in zoharic texts have been duly noted by Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 461, 467–470.
39. This is, of course, not exclusive to the Zohar. Consider, for example, the reference in medieval Jewish texts to the promiscuous nature of the mother of Jesus, cited by Berger, *Jewish–Christian Debate*, p. 23. The discrediting of the sexual behavior of the father of Jesus figures prominently in the polemical *Toledot Yeshu*; see Bernhard Blumenkranz, "The Roman Church and the Jews," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), p. 221. The assault on the parentage of Jesus may have been contemporary with his life. Cf. *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus*, trans. Marvin Meyer (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), sec. 105, p. 63: "Jesus said, 'Whoever knows the father and the mother will be called the child of a whore." Consider also the claim of the Jew reported in Origen, *Contra Clesum* I:28, 32 (trans. Henry Chadwick [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980], pp. 28 and 31–32) that the mother of Jesus was convicted of adultery with a soldier named Panthera (the term used in a derogatory sense to refer to the father of Jesus in rabbinic sources; see Chadwick, p. 31 n. 3; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, pp. 46–50). This tradition may also underlie the response of the Jews to Jesus in John 8:41, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." These last two references are noted by Meyer, *Gospel of Thomas*, p. 106. It is relevant here to recall as well the argument of Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, p. 26, that the reference to Jesus as the "son of Mary" in Mark 6:3 should be understood in a pejorative sense as a challenge to the father of Jesus. Smith supports his reading by noting that the genealogy of Jesus in Matt. 1:2–16 only mentions four women, all of whom gave birth as a result of illicit sexual relations. The claim that Christians were lax with regard to sexual prohibitions is a common motif in medieval Jewish polemical literature. See, for example, *Book of the Covenant*, pp. 33, 35, 48; Berger, *Jewish–Christian Debate*, p. 224 (in that context the Gentile practice of having sexual relations with menstruant women is mentioned explicitly); and compare the passage from Meir ben Simeon's *Milḥemet Mitswah*, cited by Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, p. 63.
40. *Midrash Tanḥuma*, Wa-yishlaḥ 8, p. 137; Zohar 1:146a, 170a; 2:11a, 111a, 163b; 3:124a (*Raʿaya Meheimna*), 199b, 243a (*Raʿaya Meheimna*), 246b (*Raʿaya Meheimna*), 248a (*Raʿaya Meheimna*); *Zohar Ḥadash*, 23d (*Midrash ha-Neʿelam*), 47a (*Midrash ha-Neʿelam*); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 69, 105a; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 464.
41. The expression, *de-rakhiv naḥash*, "one who rides a serpent," is applied to Esau in Zohar 1:171a. In that context, the Aramaic equivalent, *de-rakhiv al ḥivya*, is also employed to describe Esau. Cf. Zohar 1:146a, 228a; 2:268b. It should be noted that in some passages of the *Raʿaya Meheimna* stratum of the zoharic corpus, the serpent is associated with Ishmael and Samael with Edom (concerning the latter, see the references in note 20). Cf. Zohar 3:124a, 246b. (In other contexts, this kabbalist follows the main body of the Zohar and links Esau to the serpent; for example, cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 59, 93a.) This may reflect a more negative stance vis-à-vis Islam on the part of this anonymous kabbalist. For the opposite view that this author was more conciliatory towards Islam than Christianity, see Giller, *Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 51 and other relevant references cited on p. 146 n. 114. It is possible that the portrayal of Ishmael (i.e., Islam) as a serpent influenced Sabbatai Tsevi's identification of

himself as the "holy serpent" (attested in the use of a crooked serpent as part of his signature). See Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, pp. 227, 235–236, 391, 813. There are, of course, other reasons to explain the adoption of this symbol, including the numerological equivalence of *naḥash* and *mashiaḥ*, as Scholem has noted, but it is plausible, in light of Sabbatai Tsevi's conversion to Islam, that the issue I have mentioned is also relevant. For a more detailed discussion of the Sabbatian idea expressed through the numerological equivalence of *naḥash* and *mashiaḥ*, see Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995), pp. 172–182 (Hebrew). Finally, it is of interest to consider a remark of Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto in *Qin'at ha-Shem Tseva'ot*, in *Sefer Ginzei Ramḥal*, ed. Ḥayyim Friedlander (Bene Berak, 1984), p. 106. Luzzatto states that it appears from a passage in Zohar 3:282a (*Ra'aya Meheimna*) that "the Messiah, who is in the secret of the *Shekhinah*, must be clothed in the shell that is in the secret of Shabbetai, which is the shell of Ishmael in the secret of the diminution of the moon." Cf. *Qin'at ha-Shem Tseva'ot*, pp. 112–113. This is an obvious reference to the central tenet of Sabbatian ideology regarding the messianic identity of Sabbatai Tsevi who wore the garment of Islam, an interpretation that Luzzatto summarily rejects. See Isaiah Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches: Researches and Sources* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), vol. 3, pp. 756–779, esp. 759–769 (Hebrew).

42. *Pirqei Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13:31b; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, sec. 200; Zohar 1:35b, 55a, 263b; 2:236a–b, 243a, 243b–244a, 268b; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 467. The characterization of the primordial serpent in the form of a camel is made explicitly in a tradition attributed to Simeon ben Eleazar in *Genesis Rabbah* 19:1, p. 171.
43. Zohar 1:137b–138a. Cf. ibid. 3:64a.
44. The identification of Esau, demonic impurity, and the serpent is implied as well in Zohar 1:177a.
45. See Berger, *Jewish–Christian Debate*, p. 56.
46. An entirely different approach is offered in Zohar 2:12b. Building on a view expressed in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, ed. Meir Friedmann (Vienna: Achiasaf, 1904), 19:114, the author of the Zohar explains the domination of Edom in this exile over Israel as compensation for the tears that Esau shed when Jacob took the blessing of the firstborn away from him: "The redemption of Israel only depends on weeping, when the tears that Esau wept before his father will be completed and consummated ... The weeping that Esau wept and the tears that he shed have brought Israel into exile. When these tears are annulled by the weeping of Israel, they will come out of exile." See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 1514–1515, and Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 34. Cf. *Zohar Ḥadash*, 23b (*Midrash ha-Ne'elam*): "You should know that since Jacob took the blessings from Esau through deception, permission was not given to any nation in the world to subjugate Israel except for the nation of Esau."
47. Zohar 1:138b. Cf. ibid. 143a, 145b–146a; and the parallel in *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, pp. 45–46. The zoharic view with respect to keeping the serpent outside the inner sanctum should be compared with the idea expressed by Joseph Gikatilla in his *Sod ha-Naḥash u-Mishpaṭo*, translated and analyzed by Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 79–80; the relevant part of the Hebrew text is printed in idem, *Major Trends*, pp. 405–406 n. 113. According to that text as well, evil results from the disruption of proper boundaries when the serpent, which belongs on the outside, penetrates to the inside, which is the precinct of the holy. Cf. Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 1:101–102, 135, 154,

211–214; 2:25, 127. Although the language of the Zohar tends to be more dualistic (as Scholem himself notes, *On the Mystical Shape*, p. 81; idem, *Major Trends*, p. 239; see also the introduction of Ben-Shlomo to his edition of *Sha'arei Orah*, pp. 38–39), there is an important similarity between the zoharic treatment of Esau as the evil serpent and Gikatilla's depiction of the primordial serpent, which he identifies as Amaleq. In this connection, it is also of interest to consider the view of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* regarding the proper boundary separating the holy and the demonic; see Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 222–223.

48. For a useful study to understand the range of philological meanings attached to this technical term in medieval biblical exegesis, see Sarah Kamin, "'*Dugma* in Rashi's Commentary on Song of Songs," in *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), pp. 13–30 (Hebrew). On the use of the term in the Zohar, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 38.
49. Zohar 1:35b. The transaction between Jacob and Esau is understood in the Zohar to be a particular illustration of the more general principle of the appeasement of the Other Side through the giving of gifts. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 453–454.
50. Zohar 1:145b.
51. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metsi'a 84a.
52. Paul's eschatological anthropology is related to his theology of the covenants: just as the pneumatic Adam fulfills or perfects the somatic Adam, so the new covenant of grace surpasses the old covenant of law. The Adam–Jesus typology thus serves a different theopolitical agenda than the equation between Jesus and Moses adopted by Jewish Christians such as the Ebionites. The belief in Jesus as the *novus Moses* was predicated on the recognition that both the Church and the Synagogue were legitimate paths and that certain aspects of Jewish ritual had to be upheld even by Christian believers insofar as Moses was a true and eternal prophet of God. See Hans J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 245–248. The Jewish Christian view contrasts sharply with the protrayal of Jesus as superior to Moses in Heb. 3:1–6, the position that became normative in the history of the Church. Regarding this passage, see David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 261–268.
53. The notion of the "pneumatic body" of Christ of which all believers are members is the theological principle underlying the ethical mandate to glorify the body, which is described as the "temple of the Holy Spirit." Cf. 1 Cor. 6:15–20. On the transformation of the "body of humiliation" of sinful humanity into the "glorious body" of Christ, cf. Phil. 3:21.
54. Rom. 5:12–21; I Cor. 15:21–22, 45–49; Col. 3:9–10; see Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 36–57, 120, 268, 304; Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 65–66. The relation of Jesus to Adam is also presumed in Luke 3:23–38, which traces the genealogical line from Jesus to Adam, who is identified as the son of God. See Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 29 and 191.
55. William D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 207–208 and 301. On the image of the "body of Christ" related to

the spiritual community of the Church, cf. 1 Cor. 6:15, 10:17, 12:12–13, 27; Rom. 7:4, 12:5; Col. 1:18, 24.

56. One detects a similar homiletical strategy in *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 368–369. The attitude expressed in the Zohar should be viewed within the framework of other medieval Jewish sources that polemicize against the Christian doctrine of original sin. See Joel Rembaum, "Medieval Jewish Criticism of the Doctrine of Original Sin," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, 7–8, 1982–83, pp. 353–382. See also Bezalel Safran, "Rabbi Azriel and Naḥmanides: Two Views of the Fall of Man," in *Rabbi Moses Naḥmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 75–106. In other zoharic texts, the blame for the sin is attributed to the female who brought death to the world by cleaving to the "place of death," that is, the demonic realm. Cf. Zohar 1:36a.
57. See Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 253.
58. See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 43.
59. Zohar 1:130b–131a.
60. In contexts where the symbol of the tree of life is used to refer *Yesod*, the latter is often also depicted by the symbol of the incessantly flowing river. The convergence of these two images is obviously meant to underscore the phallic nature of this divine attribute. Cf. Zohar 1:35a; 3:239b; *Shushan Edut*, p. 361; *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, p. 381; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 69.
61. According to Zohar 1:238a, the eschatological promise of Zech. 9:9 indicates that the Messiah will subdue the masculine and feminine powers of the demonic realm, symbolized by the donkey and the she-ass (see note 36). The citation of Isa. 63:1 in that context alludes to the fact that this process comes about through the execution of divine judgment against the bloody force of Edom. Hence, the messianic king is associated symbolically with the *Shekhinah*, which is a manifestation of judgment.
62. Zohar 1:138a.
63. Zohar 1:108b, 177a–b; 2:108b, 111a; 3:128a, 135a, 142a, 292a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 65–67.
64. The image of the eclipse of the moon, or the diminution of the light of the moon, for the exile of the *Shekhinah*, which reflects her separation from the masculine *Tif'eret*, symbolically represented by the sun, is repeated quite often in kabbalistic literature, including the zoharic corpus. Conversely, the state of redemption is commonly depicted as the moon being illuminated by the sun. For example, cf. Zohar 1:75b, 165a, 181a–b, 199a, 239b; 2:137a–b, 167b; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, pp. 61, 85–86; *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 369. According to Zohar 1:20a, the separation of the moon from the sun is described as a diminution of the moon's light, which results in the creation of shells that protect the kernel, a process that is referred to as the "rectification of the kernel," *tiqquna de-moḥa*. In this context, then, a positive role is assigned to the notion of the shell as a material garment that covers and shields the light.
65. On the association of Esau and the primordial darkness, cf. Zohar 2:167a. As Liebes has argued, in *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–149, the correlation of *tohu* and barrenness in Zohar 1:3b, an ontic condition rectified by the appearance of Abraham, may signify Israel's exilic condition under the domination of Christianity.
66. *Zohar Ḥadash*, 55b. On the use of the image of the shells to characterize the realm of demonic forces, see Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 461–464.

67. As Liebes notes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 89 n. 188, the source for this image was probably Judah Halevi's *Sefer ha-Kuzari* 4:23. On the image of Israel as the core, cf. Zohar 2:195a.
68. Zohar 2:108b. See Wolfson, "Light through Darkness," p. 82 n. 34.
69. *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, pp. 68–69.
70. Regarding the kabbalistic doctrine of the emergence of the demonic shell prior to the divine core, see Idel, "Evil Thought."
71. For a list of relevant rabbinic sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, vol. 5, p. 133 n. 3, and for the zoharic passages, see Reuven Margaliot, *Sha'arei Zohar* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1978), p. 69, s.v. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 146a. It is of interest to note that in several contexts (Zohar 2:52b, 219b; 3:249b), the bite of the "great serpent" functions in a positive way as the catalyst that opens the womb of the female (portrayed symbolically as a hind based on Ps. 42:2) to give birth. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 395–396, 468–469, 738–740. In Zohar 3:67b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*) the image of the serpent opening the womb by biting is applied specifically to the birth of the Messiah. This enigmatic image of the Zohar was considered by later kabbalists to contain one of the most recondite secrets of the divine. Compare the discussion between Isaac Luria and Ḥayyim Vital regarding Zohar 2:52b in Meir Benayahu, *The Toledoth ha-Ari and Luria's "Manner of Life" (Hanhagoth)* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1967), pp. 197–198 (Hebrew); and see Meroz, "Redemption," pp. 307–315; Liebes, "'Two Young Roes," pp. 128–130, 137–148. On the evolution of this secret in Sabbatean literature, see references in ibid., p. 128 n. 146.
72. See note 38.
73. Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 468.
74. I have discussed the mythic symbol of the androgynous phallus in a number of my studies. See Wolfson, "Woman – The Feminine as Other," pp. 186–188; idem, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 275 n. 14, 317, 342, 344, 357–359, 371 n. 155, 388–389; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 46–47, 85–92, 117–118, 147–148 n. 42, 198–199 n. 11, 201 n. 29, 202 n. 31, and 224 n. 147; idem, *Along the Path*, pp. 84, 87–88, 173 n. 319, 175 n. 329, 186 n. 376, 222 n. 172. Neumann, *Great Mother*, p. 49, refers to the "uroboric nature" of the phallus, a term that he employs to convey the idea that phallic images can be symbolic of both the masculine and the feminine. Particularly interesting is Neumann's reference (note 18 *ad locum*) to the Indian sculpture of the phallus in which Shiva or Shakti is contained. And compare the description of the uroboric snake woman, i.e. a woman with a phallus, on p. 170. For a more extensive discussion of the mythological symbol of the uroboros, with special attention to its hermaphroditic character, see idem, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 5–38, 187, 414–418. The image of the uroboros is connected to the demonic power in Zohar 2:176b (*Sifra di-Tseni'uta*), as noted by Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 467. Moreover, in that context, the serpent, whose tail is said to be on its head rather than in its mouth, is associated with the symbol of the sea-monster (*tanin*). It is also important to note that the particular act that is related to the image of the serpent is the engraving or inscribing of letters. The more conventional image of the uroboros, i.e., the circular snake whose tail is in its mouth, appears in Zohar 2:179a and 3:205b. These zoharic references are cited by Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, p. 236 n. 105. On the head and the tail of the evil serpent, cf. Zohar 2:268b; 3:119b. In the latter context, the *Shekhinah* in exile is described as executing providence over the nations of the world in the

manner that the serpent crawls upon the earth, with its head bent to the dust and its tail extended in the air.

75. The expression that I have translated as "men" is *bar nash*, the Aramaic equivalent of *ben adam*. From the context it is evident that this term does not denote all of humanity but is limited to Jewish males, for the inscription of the sign of the covenant is exclusive to the latter. Cf. Zohar 1:94a, 162a. This usage is attested in other zoharic passages, although in some contexts a more exacting term, *bar nash yisra'el*, is used (Zohar 2:865a; 3:25b). To cite one striking example: "Thus a person (*bar nash*) should not mix his image with the image of an idolater because the one is holy and the other is impure" (Zohar 1:219b–220a; and cf. the parallel in Zohar 3:104b). In this context the word *bar nash* refers to the Jew who is contrasted with the idolater, that is, the Christian. The masculine character of *bar nash* is underscored from the meaning of the passage, which is to prohibit sexual relations between the Jewish male and the Christian female. For a similar contrast between *bar nash* and the idolatrous nations, cf. Zohar 1:131a, 205a; 2:88b. According to zoharic anthropology, the human being in the fullest sense is the circumcised Jew. The point is stated explicitly in the *sod milah* appended to Moses de León, *Nefesh ha-Ḥakhmah*, ed. Wijnhoven, "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 131: "When one receives the holy covenant that is sealed and inscribed on his flesh, then he is included in the category of a human being (*nikhlal bi-khelal adam*)." This is expressed on occasion in the Zohar in terms of the rabbinic notion that Jews, in contrast to idolaters, are called by the name *adam*. Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 61a; Baba Metsi'a 1146; Keritut 6b; Zohar 1:20b, 28b; 2:25b (*Piqqudin*), 86a, 275b; 3:125a (*Ra'aya Meheimna*), 219a, 238b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*); "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 130. The kabbalistic symbolism reinforces the androcentrism of the rabbinic conception of circumcision. On the rabbinic view, see the recent analysis of Lawrence Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Hoffmann correctly notes that circumcision as a "cultural symbol" underscores the "gender opposition in rabbinic Judaism" (p. 24). In particular, Hoffman focuses on the "binary opposition of men's blood drawn during circumcision and women's blood that flows during menstruation" (p. 23); and see extended the discussion on pp. 136–154.

76. Zohar 1:228a.

77. Ibid. 2:236b.

78. The issue of circumcision is the subtext of the polemical zoharic passage cited and discussed by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–152; and see Liebes' comments on p. 233 nn. 36 and 42. Kiener, "Image of Islam," pp. 48, 54–60, notes the centrality of the ritual practice of circumcision in the polemic against the Muslim faith that one finds in zoharic literature. On this point, see also Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name," pp. 98–99; idem, *Through a Speculum*, p. 366 n. 142.

79. Many scholars have written on Paul's treatment of circumcision; here I only mention three relatively recent discussions: John Collins, "A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us,"* pp. 163–186; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, pp. 187–223, and Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 25–27, 36–38, 106–135.

80. Here I follow the suggestion of Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, p. 27, who cites in support of his interpretation A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection:*

Studies in Pauline Theology Against Its Graeco-Roman Background (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), p. 84.

81. The Hebrew *zamir* has a double connotation, "singing" and "pruning." Both meanings are attested in the zoharic text. In this context, the pruning is related more specifically to the rite of circumcision.
82. The contextualization of a polemic against Christianity in the zoharic exegesis of Genesis 18 is not accidental, for this verse was used in Christian polemics as a scriptural prooftext to anchor the doctrine of the Trinity in Hebrew Scripture. For example, see *Book of the Covenant*, pp. 61–64. In the Eastern Orthodox iconographic tradition, especially prominent in Russian Orthodoxy, the appearance of the three angels to Abraham is assumed to be the sensory apparition of the three divine hypostases and is thus known as the "Old Testament Trinity." See Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. Anthony Gythiel (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), pp. 267, 276, 294–296, 398–399, 401–402, 408.
83. The presumption of the Zohar is an aggadic elaboration of the verse, "Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard" (Gen. 9:20), which is followed by the narrative of Noah's drunkenness. The idea that Noah was responsible for the introduction of instruments in the world is suggested, no doubt, by the biblical description of him as one who worked the land. The depiction of Noah as a drunkard is related more specifically to the fact that he is described as the first to plant a vineyard.
84. Zohar 1:97a–b. My reading of this passage confirms the interpretation of Zohar 1:3b proposed by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–150.
85. The point is made explicitly in many kabbalistic documents. Here I mention only a few representative examples from the oeuvre of Moses de León: *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 61; *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, p. 381; *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 227.
86. Zohar 1:102b.
87. In several contexts, Moses de León describes the rite of circumcision as entering the "mystery of faith." Cf. *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 67; "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 133.
88. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 6.
89. The connection of memory and phallus, based on the Hebrew etymology, is noted by Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 87. This nexus also underlies Derrida's depiction of circumcision as the "concise experience" of the primordial cut on the flesh which occurs at the designated time, the signature of self, the scar that opens the way, the encircling of oneself by means of which one is named. See Derrida, "Shibboleth," p. 341; *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 59–60, 65–74, 87–88.
90. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, sec. 182: "Why is it written [by Sabbath] 'remember' (*zakhor*) [Exod. 20:8] and 'keep' (*shamor*) [Deut. 5:12]? 'Remember' is for the male (*zakhor le-zakhar*) and 'keep' for the bride (*shamor le-khallah*)." See Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1223; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 107–108. The impact of this text is discernible in a number of subsequent kabbalistic texts, as noted by Margaliot is his note *ad locum*. See also sources cited by Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, p. 134; and compare the analysis of this bahiric text in idem, *Origins*, pp. 142–143, 158–159.
91. Cf. Zohar 1:48b; 2:92a (*Piqqudin*), 118b (*Ra'aya Meheimna*), 138a; 3:80b.
92. Zohar 2:92b.

93. *Berit qaddisha*, which literally means the "holy covenant." It is evident, however, that in this context, as in many other zoharic passages, the term *berit* is best translated as "phallus," the site of the covenant of circumcision.
94. Zohar 2:92a.
95. Zohar 1:193b. According to another passage (1:160a), the twofold aspect of memory, signified by the words *zekhirah* and *peqidah*, is applied to the demonic realm.
96. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 32b; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:8, 263b. Cf. *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 160. This formulation is part of the *zikhronot* prayer included in the *musaf* for Rosh ha-Shanah: *ki ein shikheḥah lifnei khisse khevodekha we-ein nistar mineged einekha.* See *Maḥzor la-Yamim ha-Nora'im*, 2 vols., ed. Daniel S. Goldschmidt (Jerusalem: Qoren, 1970), vol. 1, p. 256. An alternative locution, *ein shikheḥah lifnei ha-maqom*, "there is no forgetfulness before God," is found in Tosefta, Yoma 2:7; Palestinian Talmud, Yoma 3:9, 41b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 3:8, p. 89. A literal rendering of this expression in Aramaic is found in Zohar 1:199b, *deleit nashyu qameih qudsha berikh hu*. Cf. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 3:7, p. 46; *Midrash Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, Ki Tetse 11, 20b; *Eikhah Rabbah*, ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna: Rom, 1899), 5:1, p. 154.
97. The reciprocal coronation between the *Shekhinah* and the righteous comes about, according to the Zohar, through other ritual activities, notably study of Torah. See Wolfson, "Forms of Visionary Ascent," p. 230. Cf. the formulation in Zohar 1:84a: "Praiseworthy are the righteous who are crowned by the Holy One, blessed be He, and He is crowned by them."
98. For discussion of the motif of Sabbath as the *hieros gamos*, see Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 101–121. On a number of occasions in his analysis, Ginsburg touches upon the image of coronation as it relates to the union of male and female.
99. For other examples of this symbolic understanding of crowning, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 357–368. Regarding the understanding of sexual union as the assimilation of the female into the male, see idem, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 92–98.
100. "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 133. I have translated according to the version of this passage extant in MS Florence, Bibliotheca Laurentiana Plut. 88.42, reconstructed from the editor's apparatus. This reading, more or less, conforms to that which is found in the printed edition of Basel, 1608. Cf. Zohar 1:13a; 3:91b–92a.
101. The kabbalistic characterization of redemption as the reintegration of the principle of evil into holiness was already made by Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, p. 77. In that context, however, Scholem left open the question whether this reintegration implied the complete annihilation of the principle of evil or its suspension (i.e. termination and elevation) in the holy. Regarding this theme, see Wolfson, "Left Contained," pp. 37–45.
102. I do not mean to suggest that for the zoharic authorship the attribute of judgment is purely passive. On the contrary, there are many descriptions of divine and even demonic judgment as an aggressive force. (A *locus classicus* to depict the active quality of judgment, related especially to avenging sexual sins connected to the male organ, is Lev. 26:25; see Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1365.) The issue is, rather, that the attribute of judgment in relation to the attribute of mercy or grace is the quality of limitation and restriction. Absolute judgment, therefore, is characterized as impotency or celibacy, both associated with Christianity.

103. Zohar 2:112a: "The one who does not attempt to produce offspring cleaves to the side of the evil man (*adam bisha*) and enters beneath his wings." On the "ontological flaw" of celibacy and the death of the Edomite kings, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 68. Regarding the zoharic opposition to the Christian monastic ideal, see ibid., pp. 149 and 190 n. 201. On Jewish polemicizing against the Christian ideals of monasticism and celibacy, see *Book of the Covenant*, p. 35 n. 21.
104. Zohar 2:103a, 108b–109a (in that context the emasculated demonic force is associated with the rabbinic idea of the castration of the masculine Leviathan; cf. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 74b; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 72). See Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 517, 1362.
105. Cf. Zohar 1:115a, 159b–160a. In 119a it seems that the *peqidah* and *zekhirah* mark two stages in the process of redemption, a motif that became a central messianic teaching in later kabbalistic texts, for example, in the *Ma'amar ha-Ge'ullah* of Moses Ḥayyim Luzzato. On the possible Sabbatian background to Luzzato's notion of two stages of redemption, see Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, vol. 3, pp. 780–808; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, p. 319 n. 119.
106. My distinction between cognitive forgetting and ontological oblivion, and the characterization of the latter, is indebted to the analysis of Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 71–83.
107. Zohar 1:193b.
108. According to the zoharic symbolism, this is the mystical intent of the biblical injunction for Israel to wipe out the memory of Amaleq (Exod. 17:14; Deut. 25:19). Insofar as Amaleq is the personification of the demonic power, which is associated with oblivion, it follows that an appropriate means to control this force is the obliteration of its memory from existence. Significantly, the Zohar adopts the aggadic view that Amaleq is associated with sins related specifically to the covenant of circumcision, the locus of memory on the flesh. Cf. Zohar 1:28b; 2:65a, 66a, 67a, 195a; 3:30b,190a.
109. Zohar 1:59b, 71b, 153b, 184a, 189b, 197b, 229a, 251a, 257a; 2:23a; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 62. Note that in Zohar 1:93b the birth of the messianic king from the seed of Boaz is explained in terms of the latter's sexual purity with respect to the phallus.
110. Zohar 1:184a.
111. The word that I have translated as "it" is *bah*, which is in the feminine form. I have not rendered this as "her" because this gives the impression that the point of this passage is that desire of God is for the female persona of the *Shekhinah*. In fact, the issue here is the phallic covenant, which is related to the *Shekhinah*, but not in the image of a female. The feminine grammatical form is used because it relates to the word *qeshet*, the visible sign of the eternal covenant, but in terms of the theosophic symbolism the *qeshet* corresponds to the female aspect of the Godhead that is localized in the phallus, the sign of the covenant (*ot berit*).
112. Zohar 1:72b. Cf. ibid. 2:11a; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 18, 36b.
113. Cf. Zohar 1:65b, 93b; 2:57b, 66b. 87b, 180b, 195a; *Shushan Edut*, pp. 363–364; "Sefer ha-Mishkal," p. 132. In some passages, by contrast, the "sign of the covenant" refers symbolically to *Yesod* rather than *Shekhinah*. Cf. Zohar 1:47b, 94a, 114b, 153b, 222b, 236b, 246a, 247b; 2:23a, 200a, 225a; 3:84a.
114. Zohar 1:71b. The view expressed by Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 617 n. 215, that in this passage the bow refers symbolically to *Malkhut*, can be accepted only if

it is understood that it is the aspect of *Malkhut* comprised within *Yesod*, which is precisely the point of the comment that the "covenant of the bow" is "contained in the righteous." By contrast, cf. the interpretation of Gen. 49:24 in Zohar 1:247a, wherein *qeshet* is said to refer to the female spouse of Joseph, presumably a reference to the feminine personification of *Shekhinah*. On the phallic connotation of *qeshet*, cf. Zohar 1:18a, 72b; 3:84a; and see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 286, 334 n. 30, 337–338 n. 40, 340–341, 368–369 n. 149, 386–387.

115. Zohar 2:66b. I discussed this passage in *Through a Speculum*, p. 334, but I did not go far enough in my understanding of the phallic nature of the rainbow in this context.

116. Zohar 1:71b: "Permission is not given to gaze with the eye upon the rainbow when it appears in the world so that no shame will appear before the *Shekhinah*." For a Hebrew parallel to this passage, cf. *Shushan Edut*, p. 364. In his commentary on the liturgy, Eleazar of Worms remarks that the worshiper sees the *Shekhinah* only in the beginning of his prayers, for "more than that would be a disgrace for the *Shekhinah*." See *Perushei Siddur ha-Tefillah la-Roqeah*, ed. Moshe Hershler and Yehudah A. Hershler (Jerusalem: Machon ha-Rav Hershler, 1992), p. 2. According to my analysis of this passage in "Sacred Space and Mental Iconography: *Imago Templi* and Contemplation in Rhineland Jewish Pietism," in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine*, ed. Robert Chazan, William Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 632–633 (the passage is translated on pp. 607–608), the shamefulness described here is related to the phallic element of the *Shekhinah* in a manner that parallels the zoharic idea.

117. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 15, asserts that in the Zohar the rainbow generally alludes to *Yesod*, but acknowledges that in this context (the reference to Zohar 1:62b should be corrected to 72b; in the original Hebrew version the reference is correct) the rainbow appears to represent *Malkhut*, or the feminine *Shekhinah*. I have adopted a similar approach, but I have provided the ontological structure that resolves the tension between these two interpretations. That is, the rainbow, like the phallus, is an androgynous symbol and thus can represent both the male and the female. Indeed, in my opinion, the female is itself part of the male.

118. Zohar 1:117a.

119. On the liminality of the symbol of the bride applied to the *Shekhinah*, consider the following comment of Ezra of Gerona on the verse, "Your cheeks are comely with plaited wreaths" (Song of Songs 1:10), in *Kitvei Ramban* 2:487: "The figurative language (*ha-mashal*) refers to the *Shekhinah* coming out from exile and she is like a bride that enters the nuptial chamber." Cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 12, 27a: "The lilies refer to the children of Israel who shall be in exile amongst the mixed multitude who are the thorns. This is the secret of 'I will make an end (*khalah*) of all the nations among which I have banished you, but I will not make an end of you' (Jer. 46:28). He showed him the reward of the general assembly of study (*agra de-khallah*), and it is the 'blazing fire' (Exod. 3:2) amongst the thorns, which are the sinners when they oppress the *Shekhinah* and Israel. Their reward is the bride (*kallah*), for the *Shekhinah* goes from them as a bride and the groom comes on account of her. This is the meaning of 'the profit of the public lectures is the pushing' (*agra de-khallah duḥaqa*), that is, he will bring them out of exile on account of her." For a different use of this talmudic dictum, *agra de-khallah duḥaqa*

(Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 6b), cf. Zohar 3:239a (*Ra'aya Meheimna*). In that context, the dictum is interpreted as support for the idea that those who are enagaged in the study of the Torah in the exile suffer on behalf of the *Shekhinah*.

120. Zohar 1:119a, 145b–146a. In the latter context it is stated explicitly that the rectification for the sin of the primordial serpent is through the union of male and female. On the use of this zoharic text by the Frankists, see Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 139.

121. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 92–98. The reading of the zoharic passage that I have offered here confirms my remarks in *Through a Speculum*, pp. 274–275 n. 14. That the nature of heterosexual eros is linked essentially to the construction of the feminine as the place to contain the masculine is stated explicitly in the exegesis of Song of Songs 7:11 in Zohar 1:88b: "'I am my beloved's' is first and afterwards 'his desire is for me.' 'I am my beloved's,' to establish a place for him initially and afterwards 'his desire is for me.'" On the essential role of the female to contain the male, cf. the interpretation of the expression *aron ha-berit* in Zohar 2:214b as a reference to the *Shekhinah* that contains the holy body of the divine *anthropos*, which is also depicted as the secret of the Torah. In that context, moreover, this symbolic nexus is applied to the custom of placing the corpse of the righteous man in a coffin, for he alone is worthy of such an honor, since he was careful with respect to the "sign of the holy covenant." The biblical paradigm is Joseph, of whom Scripture says that "he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt" (Gen. 50:26). Commenting on the double *yod* in the word *wayyisem*, the author of the Zohar writes, "The covenant was joined to the covenant, the secret below in the secret above, and he entered the coffin."

122. Consider the account of the creation of Eve out of Adam given in Zohar 3:83b: "The Holy One, blessed be He, took her from his side, shaped her, and brought her before him. Then Adam had sexual intercourse with his wife and she was a support to him." According to this passage, there is a transition from the original androgynous state (Gen. 1:26–28), in which the female was contained within the male, to a separation of the female from the male (ibid. 2:18–24). What is significant is that even in the case of the second account of the creation of the woman, the female gender is described strictly from the point of view of the heterosexual desire and procreative mandate of the male. The zoharic author thus understands the biblical locution of God making a "fitting helper" for Adam in terms of separating the female from the male so that the male can have sexual relations with the female. Cf. Zohar 3:296a (*Idra Zuṭa*), translated and discussed in Wolfson, "Woman – The Feminine as Other," pp. 175–176. Given the repeated emphasis in the Zohar on coitus as the masculinization of the female (see the reference at the end of note 110), there is simply no textual justification to interpret the second account of creation as more equalitarian than the first.

123. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 44.

124. A critique of Lacan's "heterosexist structuralism" is given by Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 43–57; and idem, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 57–91.

125. For further discussion of this understanding of the kabbalistic doctrine of redemption, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 116–121. In part, the kabbalistic understanding of the act of remembering reflects the philological use of the root *pqd* in the talmudic expression (attributed to Joshua ben Levi) in

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 62b, "every man is obligated to have conjugal relations with [literally, to remember] his wife (*lifqod et ishto*) when he goes on a journey." Cf. *Shulḥan Arukh*, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 240; Yoreh Deʿah 184; Even ha-Ezer 76. This euphemistic usage is biblical in origin; cf. Judges 15:1. One must also bear in mind those biblical passages where the root *pqd* is used in conjunction with God visiting the barren woman, an act that results in the opening of the womb. Cf. Gen. 21:1; 2 Sam. 2:21.

126. Tosefta, Berakhot 6:5; Palestinian Talmud, Berakhot 9:3, 12d); Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 59a. Cf. *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 161.

127. *Shushan Edut*, pp. 363–364.

128. The occultation of the feminine in the messianic era is affirmed in a number of zoharic passages. In exile the *Shekhinah* is dispersed among the nations in order to protect her children, but in such a state she is exposed (on the description of the destruction of the Temple as the separation of the Matrona from the King resulting in the exposure of the genitals, cf. Zohar 3:74b). In the redemption, however, the *Shekhinah* will be concealed within the rebuilt Temple like a woman who is compared metaphorically to the fruitful vine hidden within the house (on the basis on Ps. 128:3). The word *tsenuʿah* in these contexts has the double connotation of "hidden" and (sexually) "modest." Cf. Zohar 1:84b, 115b–116a; 2:170b–171a; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 66a–b; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 93. The language of the zoharic texts may be based on *Sefer ha-Bahir*, sec. 156. The eschatological condition of the *Shekhinah* reflects and is reinforced by the sexual modesty of Jewish women, who are (ideally) to remain within the home so that the upper covenant is not forgotten or damaged. Cf. Zohar 3:125b; *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 372. In his commentary on Ezekiel's chariot vision, Moses de León connects this idea exegetically to the words "the heavens opened and I saw visions of God," that is, in the exilic state that which was concealed is disclosed, for there is no shelter or covering protecting the *Shekhinah*. This dispersion is the symbolic significance of the heavens opening up. Most interestingly, the visions of God are here related directly to this state of disclosure that is associated with exile (hence the word for visions, *mar'ot*, is written in the defective form). In the state of exile, the *Shekhinah* is in the form of the mirror (*mar'eh*) in which the image is seen, whereas in the state of redemption she is hidden. Cf. MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 283, fol. 166a. On the concealment and internalization of the feminine, cf. ibid., fol. 167a. Finally, it should be noted that elsewhere in zoharic literature, it is emphasized that during the week, when the *Shekhinah* is entrapped in the demonic shells (symbolic of exile), she is compared to a gate that is closed so that the unholy will not have intercourse with the holy, but when she is liberated on Sabbath and the day of the new moon, the gate is opened, for then the holy has intercourse with the holy (symbolic of redemption), and the moon is illuminated by and united with the sun. Cf. Zohar 1:75a–b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 18, 34a; sec. 19, 38a; sec. 21, 61a; sec. 30, 73a–b; sec. 36, 78a; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 438–439, 1226–1227; Ginsburg, *Sabbath*, pp. 115–116, 292–293. Needless to say, this motif is another version of the standard kabbalistic understanding of exile as the separation of the masculine and feminine aspects of God.