Jewish History • Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2 • 1992

The Theosophy of Shabbetai Donnolo, with Special Emphasis on the Doctrine of *Sefirot* in His *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*

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I. Introduction

One of the most important yet puzzling books of Jewish esotericism is *Sefer Yeṣirah*, the "Book of Formation." The fact that scholars have been unable to reach a consensus concerning its date of composition, which has been placed anywhere between the second and eighth centuries, attests to its enigmatic nature.[1] It is not my intention here to review the host of different opinions regarding the literary, intellectual and social context which may have produced this work, nor do I wish to enter into an extended discussion of whether it should be considered a speculative (i.e., cosmological or cosmogonic), magical, or even meditative composition. My focus rather is on one of the earliest commentaries on this work, the *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, (vocalized according to some as *Ḥakkemoni*)[2] or *Taḥkemoni* by Shabbetai ben Abraham Donnolo (913-ca. 982).[3] The author himself mentions two dates of composition for this work, 946 and 982, which makes it difficult to date it precisely.[4] In the same century that Donnolo wrote his *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* several other commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣirah* were written,[5] the two most important being the commentary of Saadiah ben Joseph Gaon (882-942),[6] written around 933, and that of Dunash ibn Tamim (ca. 890-ca. 960),[7] written in 955/56 and based in great measure on the teaching of his master, Isaac Israeli (ca. 855-ca. 955).[8] It is evident that these works stem from different religious and cultural milieus: the commentaries of Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim[9] reflect the situation of Jews living under Muslim rule in Iraq and North Africa, governed by the Abbasid and Fatimid caliphates respectively, whereas that of Donnolo reflects the peculiar cultural mix of Byzantine southern Italy which, as part of the Eastern Roman Empire, was heir to ancient Greco-Roman civilization and in which Greek and Latin predominated. This does not mean to suggest, of course, that there is no influence of Arabic culture in tenth-century southern Italy.[10] From Donnolo's own

writings it is evident that he was conversant with Islamic science, even if it is not entirely clear that he could read Arabic.[11]

II. Byzantine Italy: A Center of Jewish Mysticism

In order to appreciate the tenth-century Byzantine environment in which Donnolo wrote one must bear in mind that by the middle of the ninth century the Jews of southern Italy had begun to undergo a major cultural transformation, passing from the Palestinian sphere of influence to the Babylonian.[12] Such a transformation is reflected in the detailed narrative of the sojourn of Abu Aaron of Baghdad in southern Italy which is found in the *Chronicle of Aḥimaaẓ*, written in 1054.[13] One cannot, therefore, remove entirely from Donnolo's Byzantine milieu eastern influences, whether those of Arabic science and philosophy, or that of Babylonian Jewish religious and social customs. What is central to our concern, however, is the historical consciousness reflected in the *Chronicle of Aḥimaaẓ* that the esoteric lore concerning the divine chariot, i.e., the *merkavah* or *heikhalot* speculation, is said to be cultivated by Amittai and his descendants, presumably continuing traditions received directly from Palestine.[14] Establishing the continuity from Palestine to southern Italy, especially in terms of these esoteric matters, seems to be one of the author's primary intentions in the key passage wherein he introduces his genealogy:

> Now, with great care, I will set down in order the traditions of my fathers, who were brought on a ship over the Pishon... with the captives that Titus took from the Holy City.... They came to Oria.... Among their descendants there arose a man eminent in learning, a liturgical poet and scholar, master of God's law, a sage among his people. His name was Rabbi Amittai. And he had a number of amiable and worthy sons, intelligent and learned men, scholars and poets, who taught and instructed worthy disciples, men of merit and renown, masters of secret lore, makers of rhyme, adepts in the mysteries, observing with wisdom, contemplating with understanding, and speaking shrewdly; enlightened in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, and contemplating the "secret of the chariot" (*sod ha-merkavah*). The first one was R. Shefaṭyah who was involved with wisdom; the second was R. Ḥananel, who studied the law of God which Yequtiel [i.e., Moses[15]] brought down; and the third, Eleazar, who contemplated [the Torah] given in the third [month].[16]

The above passage extols the various scholarly and literary achievements of Amittai and the members of his family. *Inter alia*, it is emphasized that both father and sons were distinguished as liturgical poets. It may be assumed that they preserved and continued the poetic traditions of the Palestinian *payyeṭanim*, one of the main sources for the knowledge of *merkavah* traditions.[17] Although in the continuation of the text Abu Aaron is credited with many things, including the performance of

miraculous acts and organizing academies of talmudic study, he is not singled out as the one who transmitted ancient divine secrets. On the contrary, according to the account in this chronicle, as was pointed out by Gershom Scholem[18] and Joseph Dan[19] years ago and reiterated more recently by Robert Bonfil,[20] knowledge of the secrets of the chariot was present in southern Italy before Abu Aaron arrived. The arrival of the latter signifies – at least in terms of historical memory – a merging of the Palestinian and Babylonian traditions in mystical literature,[21] but, in so doing, it also underscores the autonomous nature of the two.

Prima facie, it would seem that the account in the *Chronicle of Aḥimaaẓ* stands in marked contrast to the tradition which circulated in the circle of Eleazar of Worms (d. ca. 1230). The most celebrated version of this tradition is found in a passage in Eleazar's commentary on the prayerbook where he states that the secret concerning the arrangement of the prayers (*sod tiqqun ha-tefillot*) as well as other esoteric matters (simply designated as *sodot*) cultivated by the German Pietists can be traced in a continuous chain going back to Abu Aaron ben Samuel, the Prince of Baghdad. According to Eleazar, Abu Aaron left Babylonia and came to the city of Lucca in Lombardy where he transmitted the esoteric traditions to Moses bar Qalonymos, who together with his sons, Qalonymos and Yequtiel, were transported by Charlemagne to Mainz. After the establishment of a new center of Jewish life in the Rhineland, the traditions were passed on in a successive chain until Qalonymos the Elder, who transmitted them to Eleazar Ḥazan of Speyer who transmitted them to Samuel the Pious. The latter, in turn, transmitted the secrets to his son, Judah the Pious, who then transmitted them to Eleazar of Worms.[22] It follows, according to this text, that in the historical recollection of the Qalonymide circle of Pietists the esoteric traditions were transferred from East (Babylonia) to West (Europe) via Italy.[23] Let us for the moment grant historical "factuality" to this legend – though it is evident that the search for factuality ultimately misses the whole point of the narrative[24] – and assume that some of the Pietists' traditions can in fact be traced back to Abu Aaron.[25] This should not, however, mislead us into thinking that this accounts for all, or even the majority, of the mystical or esoteric doctrines and texts which informed the spiritual mentality of the German Pietists.[26] On the contrary, it is abundantly clear that the Pietists likewise preserved Palestinian traditions, frequently liturgical in nature,[27] which were rooted in the world of chariot mystical speculation.[28]

That the Pietists themselves traced the path of transmission of their traditions from Palestine directly to Italy, without passing through Babylonia, is demonstrated by a statement of Shem Tov ben Simḥah ha-Kohen, mentioned by Dan,[29] but for the most part overlooked by other scholars: "The [mystical] intention of prayer [is transmitted] to the one who fears God, to none other but the modest. [This intention derives] from a tradition of the great rabbi, R. Eliezer [sic] the Roqeaḥ, who received from the mouth of R. Judah the Pious, and he from his father, and son received from father, going back to [the one known as the] "flowing

myrrh" (מר דרור)[30] who received from the mouth of Yosef Ma'on, who was exiled from Jerusalem to Rome [i.e., Italy] by the wicked Titus."[31] While the personalities mentioned in the second part of this statement cannot be identified with any historical precision, there is every reason to believe that some of the mystical and magical traditions reflected in the writings of the German Pietists, ultimately deriving from the *merkavah* and *heikhalot* literature, did reach Italy directly from Palestine without the mediation of Babylonia.[32] Even if we posit that the major texts from this corpus were redacted in their final form in Babylonia in the Geonic period, an old view experiencing something of a rebirth in recent scholarly discourse,[33] this does not mean that all the key ideas expressed therein best reflect the Mesopotamian milieu.[34] Perhaps it is the Byzantine context, and especially southern Italy, with its deep connections to Palestine, on the one hand, and Greco-Roman culture, on the other, including lingering vestiges of ancient mystery and Gnostic religions, that may help us account for the background of much of the early mystical literature as well as its acceptance into Jewry in central and western Europe, particularly in the twelfth century.[35]

Here it is important to note[36] that Hai Gaon (939-1038), in his famous responsum to rabbis from Qairouan concerning the magical or theurgical use of divine names, acknowledges that such techniques were reported by "sages of the land of Israel and sages of the land of Edom,"[37] the latter term designating the lands of Christendom within the Byzantine Empire.[38] While later on in the same responsum Hai notes that similar techniques are reported by Spanish scholars and members of the talmudic academy in Sura,[39] it is instructive that he initially mentions the Palestinian and Edomite (i.e., Byzantine) communities as sources for these traditions. Indeed, according to the language of the responsum, Hai appears to be saying that the rabbis of Qairouan, who addressed their question to him, had heard about the magical use of divine names precisely from "people of Rome [again referring to the Christian Empire in Byzantium] and the land of Israel."[40] Moreover, Hai points out that the formulae which the North African rabbis saw in Palestinian and Byzantine sources are similar to those which appear in the texts in his possession: והנוסחים שראיתם הרוצה לעשות כך וכך יעשה כך וכך הרבה יש אצלינו מאד מזאת. Hai goes on to mention several books including *Sefer ha-Yashar*, *Ḥarba de-Mosheh*,[41] *Raza rabbah*,[42] *Heikhalot rabbata* (i.e., *Heikhalot rabbati*), *Heikhalot ze'irta* (*Heikhalot zuṭarti*), and *Sar Torah*.[43] While Hai does not say explicitly that the scholars in Mesopotamia had received these sources from the sages of Palestine or Edom, nor even that the latter had these specific works, at the very least the second possibility is intimated in the language he used in introducing the catalog of relevant texts that he had. Support for such a possibility is to be gathered from the account in *Chronicle of Aḥimaaẓ* where, as I noted above, Amittai and his sons were said to have studied *Sefer ha-Yashar* as well as the secret of the chariot (*sod ha-merkavah*) which I take to be in this context a textual reference[44] and not merely a generic term designating the esoteric discipline.[45] The existence of some of these magical and esoteric works in Palestine is attested to by a polemical statement of

Daniel al-Qumisi, the Karaite author living in Jerusalem in the ninth century, describing the books of magic circulating amongst the Rabbanites. His list includes the following: *Bartalya Qansarin*,[46] *Sefer Bil'am, Sefer 'Adam, Sefer ha-Yashar, Sefer ha-Razim*,[47] and the *Raza rabbah*.[48] The *Sefer 'Adam, Raza rabbah, Bartalya* and *Qansarin*, as well as the *Sefer 'Uza ve-'Uzi'el*, are mentioned by another Karaite author who lived in Jerusalem in the tenth century.[49] Thus we have clear evidence of the circulation of similar texts in learned circles in Palestine, Mesopotamia, and southern Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries.[50]

In this connection it is also appropriate to recall that, in his responsum to the scholars of Tyre, Maimonides described the Shi'ur qomah as "a work of one of the Byzantine preachers (דרשנין אלרום)," intending thereby to undermine both its traditional literary attribution to Tannaitic figures as well as the view expressed by those who turned to Maimonides for counsel that it was a composition of the Karaites.[51] Whether or not Maimonides' claim that this work of Jewish mysticism was a product of the *darshanin al-Rum* is in fact historically accurate, it is noteworthy that he located such speculation within the Byzantine orbit.[52] Historians of Jewish mysticism need again to consider the thesis put forth by S. W. Baron that the "transition from Eastern to Western mystic lore" took place through the agency of Byzantine Jewry.[53] Baron was not arguing, as did Scholem,[54] that Jewish mystical texts containing Palestinian elements made their way from Babylonia to Italy and from there to Germany and France. (The "Oriental" source for the Gnostic and mystical currents in Judaism of which Scholem speaks thus comprises Palestine and Mesopotamia.) Baron's point is rather that within the Byzantine milieu itself the older Palestinian traditions and texts survived and were understood in such a way as to provide the roots for what became the dominant trends of Jewish mysticism in the High Middle Ages. In that sense Byzantium, and especially southern Italy, is the "Eastern" center of Jewish mysticism. To be sure, as I have already indicated, there can be no doubt that some of the works of Jewish esotericism studied by scholars of southern Italy were found as well in rabbinic academies in countries within the Islamic East such as Babylonia. Yet, the cultural context was sufficiently different in the two environments to produce strikingly distinct approaches to the relevant material. The relevance of this claim is borne out when we examine carefully the different readings of *Sefer Yeṣirah* found in Donnolo, on the one hand, and Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim, on the other. It is my contention that an appreciation of the difference in cultural context is critical for assessing their respective interpretations of *Sefer Yeṣirah* and, in particular, the key term of that work, *sefirot*. Scholars have argued that certain *merkavah* speculations, originating in Palestine and cultivated in southern Italy, reached other European centers of Jewish life, including France and Germany, where they helped foster subsequent developments in Jewish mysticism, including eventually the crystallization of German Pietism and Provençal-Spanish kabbalah in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[55] What has not been sufficiently appreciated in previous

scholarly discussions is the extent to which Donnolo himself presents a theosophic understanding of the *sefirot*.

III. *Sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah*

Before proceeding to a discussion of the term *sefirot* let me briefly comment on the possible dependence of Donnolo's *Ḥakhmoni* on the other two major commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣirah* written in the tenth century. It is not at all clear that Donnolo had first-hand knowledge of Saadiah's *Tafsir Kitāb al-Mabādī*, let alone the commentary of Dunash ibn Tamim. (If we assume that Donnolo could not read Arabic,[56] then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that he had direct access to these commentaries.) There is no support for Scholem's claim that Donnolo's commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* "was indisputably influenced by the commentary of Saadiah b. Joseph Gaon to the same work."[57] Dan more cautiously remarked that there "is no evidence that Donnolo knew Saadiah Gaon's works" even though "there are some close parallels between the theology of Donnolo and that of Saadiah."[58] Other scholars, including Andrew Sharf[59] and Shlomo Pines[60] have noted that different cultural contexts produced the works of Saadiah and Donnolo.[61] The relevance of this last remark becomes particularly apparent when we turn our attention to the explanation of the term *sefirot* in these commentaries. Indeed, one of the most significant problems in the scholarly study of Jewish esoteric literature, related especially to the question of the origins of theosophic kabbalah, is the precise connotation of the term *sefirot* that first appears in *Sefer Yeṣirah*.

It is generally thought by scholars that the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* refers to the ten primordial numbers which serve, together with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, as the instruments with which God creates the world. The *sefirot* and the *'otiyyot* together comprise the thirty-two hidden paths of wisdom mentioned in the beginning of the text. This view, as I have already noted, has been widely affirmed by modern scholars, including, to name but two outstanding examples, Gershom Scholem and Ithamar Gruenwald.[62] Scholem, for his part, does admit that the fact that the author uses the term *sefirah* instead of *mispar* suggests that the *sefirot* are "not simply a question of ordinary numbers, but of metaphysical principles of the universe or stages in the creation of the world."[63] Scholem rejects, however, the possibility that in its original source the term refers to emanations from God, i.e., he excludes a theosophic understanding, attributing such a reading only to later kabbalistic interpretations of the text.[64] Yet, Scholem does acknowledge that the *sefirot* are described as "living numerical beings" which are characterized in terms borrowed from the description of the living beings (*ḥayyot*) in Ezekiel's chariot vision.[65] This aspect of the *sefirot* is highlighted by the statement in *Sefer Yeṣirah* (1.8) that the ten *sefirot* bow down before the divine throne,[66] a statement which strikingly parallels the comment in *'Avot de-Rabbi*

Natan regarding the seven attributes (*middot*) of God which are said to "serve before the throne of glory."[67] It would seem from Scholem's analysis, however, that these *merkavah* descriptions represent a secondary stage in the compositional process for, as Scholem himself puts it, the author of *Sefer Yeṣirah* has searched out the *merkavah* literature for ways to characterize the primordial numbers. An even more extreme formulation of this position is that of A. P. Hayman who has concluded that there is no essential similarity between the two texts, and that *heikhalot* material has been incorporated into *Sefer Yeṣirah* at a later stage in the redactional process in order to make the text acceptable to a wider circle of Jews.[68] According to this view, therefore, the *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* have nothing to do with the hypostatic beings that fill the throne-world according to *heikhalot* literature, but are rather the mathematical ciphers through which God creates. This position has been reaffirmed, most recently, in the work of Pines mentioned above in which he compares the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* to the term *ektaseis* (extensions) in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies, a Jewish-Christian document of the second century, which speaks of six extensions coming forth and returning to the divine realm (a concept that does in fact closely parallel the six dimensions mentioned in *Sefer Yeṣirah*).[69] The critical semantic shift occurs when the *sefirot* are no longer merely numerical units, but rather designate the actual potencies of the divine realm. The supposed transition is expressed succinctly by Scholem when he compares the use of the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* and *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the latter considered to be the first major text dedicated fully to a theosophic conception: "The *Sefirot*, first mentioned in the *Sefer Yeṣirah* as corresponding to the ten basic numbers, became in *Sefer ha-Bahir* divine attributes, lights, and powers, each one of which fulfills a particular function in the work of creation."[70] In another context Scholem described the new explanation of the meaning of the term *sefirot* in the *Bahir* as follows: "The word is not derived from *safar*, to count [as in *Sefer Yeṣirah*], but from *sappir*, sapphire. They are thus the sapphirine reflections of the divinity, and Psalm 19:2, 'The heavens declare the glory of God,' is interpreted by the author in accordance with this etymology: 'the heavens shine in the sapphirine splendor of the glory of God.'"[71] According to the conventional scholarly view, then, a fundamental change occurred with respect to the meaning of this term in the later kabbalistic writings which began to appear in central Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

IV. *Sefirot* in Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim

The explanation of the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* as mathematical units is found already in the earliest philosophical commentaries on this work, based perhaps upon the appearance of the term *sefirah* in talmudic and midrashic literature where it connotes that which is counted.[72] Thus, Saadiah Gaon explicitly renders the word *sefirot* as *al-'adad*, i.e., numbers (Hebrew: *misparim*), which correspond in his

mind to the categories of quantitative characteristics that apply to all existents.[73] These numbers are extrinsic to God and therefore have no theosophic implication. This point is emphasized on any number of occasions by Saadiah including, e.g., his interpretation of the passage in *Sefer Yeṣirah* (1.7): "Ten *sefirot belimah*, their measure is ten without end (*midatan 'eser she-'ein lahen sof*): "The numbers themselves have no end with respect to what may be formed from them by human beings, but they have an end in relation to the Creator."[74] The same numerical interpretation of the *sefirot* is to be found in Dunash ibn Tamim[75] and later on in a variety of authors, including Solomon ibn Gabirol (ca. 1020-ca. 1057),[76] Abraham ibn Ezra (ca. 1092-1167),[77] Judah Halevi (ca. 1075-1141),[78] and Judah ben Barzillai of Barcelona (late 11th-early 12th century), whose commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* basically follows – indeed to a great degree paraphrases – the commentary of Saadiah.[79] It must be noted, however, that in Dunash ibn Tamim's commentary there are a few hints that the *sefirot* are not considered ordinary numbers but rather signify powers or aspects in the divine world, understood in this context Neoplatonically as the sphere of intelligible entities. For example, in one place he writes that God included within the thirty-two paths of wisdom, which are comprised of the ten *sefirot* and the twenty-two letters, "all the spiritual sciences (החכמות הרוחניות) for they are the beginning [or principle] of the [divine] unity (התחלת היחוד) to contemplate things which are beyond nature."[80] In another place, commenting on the enigmatic statement of *Sefer Yeṣirah* (1.8), "Ten *sefirot belimah*, their vision is as swift as the flash of lightning, and there is no limit to their boundaries, one's discourse [about them] should be as swift as possible [literally, running and returning, ברצוא ושוב], and one's utterances should be as if driven by a storm; and before the throne they bow down," he remarks that this section "elucidates more about the divine wisdom (חכמת האלהות) [i.e., metaphysics][81] which is appropriately [characterized] in the image (דמיון) of the ten *sefirot*."[82] Insofar as *ḥokhmat ha-'elohut* is specified as that science which deals with God's unity (*yiḥud*) and the spiritual entities (*ruḥaniyyim*), it follows that the *sefirot* must instruct one about the very nature of the divine and the angelic beings which make up the intelligible world. In yet a third passage the author states explicitly that the "ten ineffable *sefirot* are the power of [God] which spreads out in everything."[83] From these passages it may be concluded that for Dunash ibn Tamim contemplation of the *sefirot* can teach one something about the unity of God as well as the spiritual realities. It is possible that ibn Tamim reflects here a Neoplatonic position which may have also been a central characteristic of the commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* by his teacher, Isaac Israeli.[84] Still, the primary meaning assigned to the *sefirot* by ibn Tamim is that of numbers in accord with the line set by Saadiah.

The mathematical interpretation of the *sefirot* in Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim can be easily explained in light of the resurgence of interest in Pythagoreanism in the ninth and tenth centuries which is attested to, for example, by Thābit ibn Qura's translation of the works of Nicomachus of Gerasa (ca. 100 C.E.) into Arabic[85] as

well as in the elaborate mystical theory of numbers propounded by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā.[86] There is clear evidence that both Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim were influenced by these trends which no doubt had an impact on their reading of the ancient Jewish work, *Sefer Yeṣirah*.[87] It is thus no mere coincidence that in Saadiah's list in his commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* of nine cosmogonic theories, the seventh view is the Pythagorean notion that the world was created from numbers, and the eighth view is that of *Sefer Yeṣirah* that the world was formed out of the ten numbers and twenty-two letters. These two views are listed next to each other, for in Saadiah's mind the latter represents the more perfect articulation of the former.[88]

In the case of Donnolo. however, one finds no evidence for a Pythagorean interpretation of the *sefirot*. The commentary of Donnolo, in contrast to the mathematical approach of Saadiah and, to an extent, that of Dunash ibn Tamim, reflects a theosophic understanding of the *sefirot* which anticipates the meaning of this term evident in later kabbalistic works.[89]

V. Donnolo on the Divine Image

To support my claims it will be necessary to enter into a more detailed discussion of Donnolo's thought. In the first part of *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* Donnolo categorically rejects the anthropomorphic interpretation of Gn 1:26 which would imply that God possesses a corporeal form in whose image and likeness Adam was created.[90] According to Donnolo's reading, the plural form of "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," refers to the Creator addressing the world, a process here understood as an allegorical depiction of the fact the human being is a microcosm reflecting the shape and structure of the macrocosm.[91] Hence, the critical words *ṣelem* and *demut* should not be rendered in terms of physical likeness but rather as a comparison of function or activity: וזה הצלם והדמות שאמר ה' יתברך לעולמו אינו דמות תאר פנים כי אם בדמות מעשה אלהים ומעשה העולם.[92] Moreover, it has been argued by Castelli that Donnolo, like Saadiah in his time and Maimonides at a later date, sought to combat the "monstrous and invasive anthropomorphism" of the aggadic passages in the talmudic and midrashic literature.[93] Following this line of interpretation, Sharf adds that Donnolo's detailed anatomical interpretation of this verse is related to his rejection of anthropomorphism which may have been, in part, derived from ancient Jewish mystical or Gnostic doctrines current in southern Italy in his time.[94] Sharf flatly states that while Donnolo may have had knowledge of the Gnostic doctrines, transmitted either through the Jewish mystical sources such as the *heikhalot* or *Shi'ur qomah*, or through Christian Gnostic texts,

> there is no doubt that he implicitly rejects their fundamental assumption.... He looks at the nature of man as he looks at the nature of God in a way which, while not reaching the level of rational analysis by Sa'adiah or by the Rambam in their fight against superstition, is still a breeze of fresh commonsense in a

> jungle of myth and fantasy.... There could be no sharper contrast between his matter of fact, exact descriptions and the emotional ambiguities of the mystics, whether Jewish, Christian or Hellenist, whether the writers of the Gnostic texts or of the Shi'ur Komah.[95]

The picture, however, is a bit more complex. It can be shown that Donnolo proposed a theosophic understanding of the *sefirot*, which while not overtly mythical is nonetheless closer in spirit to the speculation found in the Gnostic texts or the Jewish mystical sources than it is to the rational orientation of Saadiah or Maimonides. Donnolo, as will be seen in detail below, espouses a theosophy which posits the existence of a form or image of God (*demut ha-'Elohim*), identical with the glory (*kavod*), and comprised of multiple powers (*sefirot*) which collectively make up the divine unity (*yiḥud ha-'El*). It is true that Donnolo employs the macrocosmic-microcosmic motif as a tool of exegesis in order to undermine the view that God has a physical likeness (*demut*) or image (*ṣelem*) with which Adam was created. This does not, however, imply that he agreed with the claim made by medieval Jewish philosophers that God has no *demut* at all. Indeed, given Donnolo's unambiguous rejection of a corporeal understanding of the divine image and the concomitant assertion that all anthropomorphic and anthropopathic expressions are to be treated allegorically,[96] it is all the more striking that in his treatment of prophetic visions he does not challenge the notion that God has an image, a *demut*. Following earlier midrashic traditions, which seem to have connections with the mystical literature as well, Donnolo speaks of the image of God, though in his case there is a fundamental change in the term's meaning with respect to its ontological referent. It is certain that in the relevant midrashic texts the word likeness, *demut*, is interchangeable with the words *ṣurah* (form), and *kavod* (glory).[97] More specifically, as may be gathered from the various sources, the word *demut* signifies the visible form of God which is the hypostatic likeness of an *anthropos*.[98] In some examples,[99] the anthropomorphic image of the divine is associated with God's activity as creator of the universe,[100] whereas in others,[101] the context is the epiphany of God at the Red Sea and at Sinai. Although the nature of that likeness or form is not specified in the midrashic pericopae dealing with the appearance of God, it stands to reason that it involved an anthropomorphic manifestation. Indeed, it is plausible that even these passages are rooted in some esoteric tradition, for what the Israelites requested was to see the visible form of God on the throne at each of these critical moments in Israel's *Heilsgeschichte*. Thus in parallel texts[102] the word *kavod* is used in place of *demut*, again suggesting that the latter term, as the former, is being used in a technical way to name the enthroned anthropomorphic figure. It is of interest to note that the same semantic equivalence between *demut* and *kavod* is detectable in the *heikhalot* texts, for both words refer to the divine form upon the throne.[103]

Donnolo's language regarding the image of God draws upon this earlier literature, yet in his case the *demut* denotes not the visible likeness of God, anthropomorphic

or otherwise, but rather the aspect which is invisible due to the inherent limitations of created beings, both angelic and human, to see God. Donnolo thus notes in one place that God did not appear to the Patriarchs, Moses or the other ancestors who stood at Sinai "in any image" (ולא נראה להם בכלום דמות),[104] i.e., in any fixed image, so that "Israel would not err and say 'this is His image,' resulting in their making an image of God (דמות אלהים) and bowing down to it. Therefore He appeared on one occasion in fire and on another through a cloud."[105] Although the theme of God's invisibility is well-known from midrashic[106] and even some mystical texts,[107] it seems to me that Donnolo's insistence on God's not appearing in a specific image (*demut*) so that Israel would not err and make an icon of that image and worship it reflects the debate that raged in Byzantine Christianity between the iconoclasts and the iconodules. To be sure, the roots of iconomachy in Judaism can be traced to much earlier sources incorporated in the biblical canon.[108] Specifically, in the case of Deuteronomy, the aversion to using images in sacred worship is connected to the claim that no image of God was seen at Sinai.[109] Nevertheless, it is possible that Donnolo's interest in this problem, and the particular way he articulates it, may be best understood in light of trends of thinking current in his Byzantine environment.[110] It should be noted, moreover, that parallels to the usage of the word *demut* to refer to the invisible image of God can be found in religious poetry originating in the same milieu as that of Donnolo, or one that shares the same cultural matrix as his own. Thus, for example, the ninth-century Italian poet, Amittai ben Shefatyah, upon whom the influence of *merkavah* mysticism is well-known,[111] expressed the matter as follows: "The angels and seraphs are each covered with six wings, hiding their bodies, the image [of God] they do not see" (דמות אינם צופים).[112] A similar formulation is found in the *piyyuṭ*, אמרו לאלהים אמת ויישר פעלו, attributed to Yoḥanan ben Yehoshua ha-Kohen,[113] a *payyeṭan* who apparently lived in Palestine in the ninth-tenth centuries:[114] "His image [the angels] do not see" (ודמותו לא צצים).[115] Just as we find that these poets speak of the divine image which cannot be seen by angelic beings, *a fortiori* by humans, so too with Donnolo. Let me cite the relevant text from *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* in full:

> "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him; to them He makes known His covenant" [Ps 25:14]. It is written, "O Lord, there is none like You! You are great and Your name is great in power" [Jer 10:6], and it is written, "Who can tell the mighty acts of the Lord" [Ps 106:2]. Who is capable of thinking the slightest bit about the great, mighty and awesome God, to comprehend His image (דמותו) for even the beasts under the throne of glory and the seraphs above it, the ministering angels, the [angels called] *'er'ellim*, and all the host of heaven cannot comprehend His image.... Even the holy ones on earth, the prophets and seers with whom He has spoken did not comprehend or see His image as it is. Moses our master, who was the chief prophet and who spoke to Him mouth to mouth, requested to see the image of His face, but He did not heed him. As it is written, "Show me Your glory" (Ex 33:18), and [God] responded to him, "You cannot see My face" (ibid., 20), and it says, "And the Lord said, 'See there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock, and, as

> My glory passes by, etc.'" (ibid., 21).... From these verses we understand that Moses, may he rest in peace, requested from God only to see the image of His face as it is, but his prayer in this regard was not heard. Concerning that which the prophet Isaiah, may he rest in peace, said, "I beheld the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne [and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple] seraphs stood above Him etc. and one would call to the other etc." (Is 6:1-3), even though it says "I beheld the Lord" he did not see the image of His face but he saw the throne. He did not see the glory of the Lord upon the throne but rather the skirts [of His robe] as the skirts of a coat. Thus we have learned that Moses saw the glory of His back standing and Isaiah saw in a vision His glory seated on a throne. From the vision of the throne and the seraphs standing above Him, he understood that [the throne] was that of God.[116] He saw, however, the glory of His skirts which is the glory under His feet. When [the glory] was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, [even though it is written, "And they saw the God of Israel],[117] they saw only His glory which is under His feet by means of a sign and symbol (באות ובסימן),[118] as it says, "And under His feet was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire" (Ex 24:10). With respect to Ezekiel the prophet, even though he saw in his vision the beasts and the *'ofanim* which were above the heads of the beasts...the image of God did not appear to him as it is, "for man may not see Him and live" (Ex 33:20). [God] did not want to show him [the glory] except in the image of man, in an image which he was accustomed to seeing, so that he would not be frightened and startled by the appearance of His image, resulting in his sudden death. Thus [the glory] appeared to Adam, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, the three Patriarchs, and to prophets and seers in the image of man... And to Daniel [the glory] appeared in the vision of the night in the image of man, as it is written, "As I looked on thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days was sitting etc. A river of fire etc." (Dn 7:9-10). From all these proofs we know in truth that there is no creature in heaven or earth who can contemplate in his mind the divine image (דמות האלהים).[119]

The purpose of this elaborate discourse is to reach the conclusion that an anthropomorphic interpretation of Gn 1:26 is simply inadequate since the image of God is not something available to human comprehension: "One should not think that the human being [bears] the image of the appearance of God (אין להבין כי האדם כדמות הכרת פני האלהים). It is written that Adam was formed "from the dust of the earth" (cf. Gn 2:7), [and Adam] was created male and female (cf. ibid. 1:26; 5:2) in order to procreate. Who can say, therefore, that this [corporeal] image and likeness is the image of God?"[120] Significantly, to reiterate the main point, what Donnolo does not reject is the very claim that God has a *demut*, an image or form. On the contrary, he accepts this notion without qualification; thus at the end of the passage he refers to the *demut ha-'Elohim*, even though no created being can know or comprehend that very image. Indeed, Donnolo characterizes this *demut* as the "light which has no measure or [dimension of] greatness" (האור שאין לו שיעור וגדולה) and as "the glory which cannot be fathomed" (והכבוד שאין לו חקר).[121] In yet another context Donnolo uses similar terminology to describe the primordial light whence

emerges the fire from which the spiritual entities, comprising the throne and the angels, are said to derive: "From the radiant splendor of His great and awesome light which cannot be fathomed and has no measure, He shines His splendor within the water. From the force of that splendor which He shone in the water a fire emerged, and from that fire He carved and hewed the throne of glory, the *'ofanim*, the seraphs, the holy beasts, the ministering angels, and all the heavenly host."[122] The radiant splendor (זהר וגבה) which is an immeasurable light, also identified as the Holy Spirit (רוח הקדש), is the glory that cannot be seen, the invisible image of God.

The divine glory assumes the image of an *anthropos* as it appears to human beings, but this is not the essential form of the glory. This point is underscored in Donnolo's interpretation of Ez 1:26 contained in the extended passage cited above: "[God] did not want to show him [the glory] except in the image of man (בדמות אדם), in an image which he was accustomed to seeing, so that he would not be frightened and startled by the appearance of His image, resulting in his sudden death." It would seem, moreover, that Donnolo is operating with a twofold conception of the glory, a conception that is implied in Saadiah Gaon as well, though interpreted in an entirely different way, and which is developed more fully in subsequent writers largely on the basis of a comment by Nathan ben Jeḥiel of Rome (1035-ca. 1110). While Donnolo does not explicitly formulate such a position, it is suggested by his interpretation of Ex 24:10 and Is 6:1 mentioned above, i.e., that the nobles of Israel as well as Isaiah apprehended the lower glory. In the case of Isaiah this is expressed in terms of the prophet seeing the glory seated on a throne, for what he beheld was the "glory of His skirts" (כבוד שוליו) which is also identified as the "glory under His feet" (הכבוד אשר תחת רגליו). The same notion is expressed in terms of the nobles of Israel in slightly different language: "Even though it is written, 'And they saw the God of Israel,' they saw only His glory which is under His feet by means of a sign and symbol (באות וסימן), as it says, 'And under His feet was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire' (Ex 24:10)."

The glory described as under God's feet may be equated with the anthropomorphic appearance which the invisible *demut*, the unfathomable light and immeasurable glory, assumes in the prophetic vision. This formulation is based in part on a passage attributed to R. Berechiah in Exodus Rabbah 23.15: "'This is my God and I will glorify Him' (Ex 15:2). See how great were those who went down to the sea![123] How much did Moses have to beg and entreat God before he saw the [divine] image (הדמות), as it says, 'Let me behold Your glory' (Ex 33:18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: 'You cannot see My face' (ibid., 20). In the end God showed him [the demut] by means of a token (בסימן), as it says, 'as My glory passes by' (ibid., 22)."[124] A first reading of Donnolo might suggest that his position is quite similar, if not indebted, to that of Saadiah. Thus the latter, in his *Tafsir Kitāb al-Mabādī*, distinguished between the "second" air, also identified as the *ruaḥ ha-qodesh*, the *kavod*, and *shekhinah*, and the "first" air which permeates all reality and in which the ten *sefirot* and twenty-two letters take shape.[125] Saadiah

emphasized that the "second" air is a created entity, just as in his *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa'l-I'tiqādat (Book of Beliefs and Opinions)* he noted that the *kavod* or *shekhinah* is the form *(al-ṣurah)* created from light which can take on the shape of an *anthropos* seen by the prophets.[126] Yet, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that Donnolo's metaphysical assumptions are not at all comparable to Saadiah's, for Donnolo does not assert that the *ruaḥ ha-qodesh*, which is the light beyond measure and the incomprehensible glory, is a created form; on the contrary, for Donnolo these terms are different ways of signifying the divine likeness itself, the *demut ha-'Elohim*, which is not created.[127] He makes no effort to challenge the notion that God has a *demut*, as do those authors influenced by the Greco-Arabic philosophical tradition,[128] nor do we find Donnolo opting for a psychologistic interpretation (developed by Hai Gaon[129] and his followers, Ḥananel ben Ḥushiel of Qairouan [d. 1055/56][130] and Nathan ben Jeḥiel of Rome[131]) according to which the locus of the visible form is solely within the mind.[132] The viewpoint adopted by Donnolo is still very much indebted to the earlier mystical and aggadic traditions which posited a divine form, a *demut*, that could assume a visible shape to man.

VI. Donnolo on the *Sefirot*

It can be shown, moreover, that for Donnolo this *demut*, or the upper aspect of the glory, is the boundless and limitless light that contains, embraces, or encompasses the ten *sefirot*. Commenting on the passage in *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1.7, "Ten *sefirot belimah*, their measure is ten without end,[133] their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end as a flame bound to the coal," Donnolo writes: "Their beginning is God and their end is God (תחלתן הוא האלהים וסופן הוא האלהים),[134] for He is the first and last.[135] He fixed (נעץ)[136] these ten ineffable *sefirot* in His great power (בכחו הגדול) as a flame bound to the coal."[137] The first thing to note is that *koaḥ ha-gadol*, the "great power," is a technical term in Donnolo's *Ḥakhmoni* for the divine glory that is invisible, the *demut* which no angel or person can apprehend.[138] The expression *koaḥ ha-gadol* is already applied to God in Scripture,[139] but its theosophical connotation as synonymous with *kavod* should be traced to the use of the Greek δύναμις and the Hebrew גבורה in esoteric circles of the first or second centuries.[140] As Scholem already noted,[141] we find two striking examples – both of which could very well have been known by Donnolo – of this usage: the first in the Jewish apocryphon, *Vita Adae et Evae* (§21), where the term "great Power" (*virtus magna*) is used for the divine glory, and the second in the Acts of the Apostles 8:10, where the Samaritan, Simon Magus, is praised as "the power of God which is called Great" (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεχάλη).[142] Although the more common term rendered by "dynamis" is *gevurah*, one can readily see the philological connection between these expressions and that used by Donnolo, *koaḥ ha-gadol*, a usage which parallels as well the Syriac חילא רבא (probably a translation of the biblical appellation of God, האל הגדול).[143]

While this precise formulation is not found in the extant *heikhalot* texts, the word *koaḥ* itself is employed in this corpus (for example, in the text published by Scholem under the title *Ma'aseh merkavah*) in a technical sense as referring to the hypostatic power of God.[144] It seems to me that this locution should be viewed in relation to another term well-known from early rabbinic texts, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai*,[145] as well as the *heikhalot* literature,[146] "great glory," *kavod gadol*. Scholem has shown on the basis of Greek (*μεχάλη δόξα*) and Aramaic (זיווא רבא) parallels in apocalyptic and mystical sources, that the expression *kavod gadol* was used as a technical term to name the glory enthroned on the chariot.[147] Scholem also suggested that the two terms, the "great dynamis" and the "great glory" seem to have been interchangeable even in the earlier esoteric terminology. It is evident that for Donnolo this is precisely the case, for the great power of God is treated hypostatically as His glory and, as will be seen below, as His wisdom. In this connection it is of interest to mention the following description of wisdom in the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* which may have been known to Donnolo in the Greek translation of the Septuagint or the Latin of the Vulgate.[148] The version of the Septuagint reads: *'Ατμὶς χάρ ἐστι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀπόῤῥοια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής*.[149] The Latin text is almost identical to the Greek with the exception that in the second clause the emanation is said to come forth from the "omnipotent deity" rather than the glory: *vapor est enim virtutis Dei et emanatio quaedam est claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera*. Wisdom (*σοφια*) is thus depicted as an emanation (*ἀπόῤῥοια*) from God in two ways (a third way is provided in the next verse, viz., as a ray of God's brightness): the breath that flows from the power of God (*δύναμις*; *virtus*) and a pure efflux from the all-powerful glory (*δόξα*) or deity. From the Greek text it is evident that the power and glory of God are identical, and wisdom is but a manifestation of that power. For Donnolo the power (*koaḥ*) of God becomes an hypostasis which is identical with his glory (*kavod*) and wisdom (*ḥokhmah*). In marked contrast to the earlier sources, however, Donnolo maintains that the "great power" is not the aspect of divinity which is visible, but rather the form of God that is invisible.

Donnolo describes this "great power" in several other ways in his commentary, including, God's "wonderful power" (כחו הנפלא),[150] "His great and awesome light which cannot be comprehended and has no measure" (אורו הגדול והנורא לאין חקר ושיעור),[151] the "great and powerful fire which is above the supernal heavens" (האש הגדולה החזקה שעל השמים העליונים),[152] the "splendor of the Holy One, blessed be He" (זהר של הקב"ה),[153] and the "instrument" (כלי) utilized by God in the act of creation.154 It should be noted that the expression "great light," אור הגדול, which occurs in Is 9:1, appears in *Sefer Josippon*, a work written in southern Italy in the tenth century. In that context the term is used to refer to the eschatological reward of the righteous in the paradisiacal state attained after the death of the body.[155] This usage is attested to in earlier Jewish apocalyptic writings that may have directly influenced the author of *Sefer Josippon*.[156] Y. Baer observed that the term reflects

the "influence of the religious ideas that emerged from the school of R. Saadiah Gaon."[157] As evidence for this claim Baer cites a passage from a responsum of Saadiah to a certain heretic, apparently a Karaite,[158] cited in Hebrew translation by Judah ben Barzillai in his commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah*. In that context the "great light" is identified as "light of the glory" (אור הכבוד) which is the created light (האור הברוי), the first of all things created and formed," the "resplendent light" (אור הבהיר), which is also identified as the "God of Israel" seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders (cf. Ex 24:10ff.) and as Akatriel who, according to a talmudic legend (cf. B.T. Berakhot 7a), was seen sitting on a throne in the Holy of Holies by R. Ishmael ben Elisha.[159] A comparison of the usage of the term "great light" in the three different sources leads to the following conclusions: (1) the specific usage found in *Sefer Josippon* is not present in this Saadianic text; (2) Donnolo employs the term in a theosophic and not an eschatological way as is the case in *Sefer Josippon*; (3) Donnolo, in contrast to Saadiah, never explicitly, or implicitly for that matter, describes the "great light" as being created.[160] Hence, we may conclude that the occurrence of the same expression in the different authors (even of the same time and the same geographical area as in the case of Donnolo and *Sefer Josippon*) does not necessarily mean that they are employing that given expression in the same way.

At this juncture I would like to turn briefly to Donnolo's characterization of this "great light" as the instrument through which God creates the world. This association suggests that this upper form of God, the splendor and fire, is identical with the *logos* or Torah in its pristine sense which is, after all, the instrument of God's creativity according to the standard rabbinic conception, reflected, for example, in the expression used in Genesis Rabbah 1.1: "The Torah declared, I was the artisan's tool of the Holy One, blessed be He" (התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי שׁל הקב"ה ואומנתו).[161] Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that Donnolo mentions in this connection God's wisdom as well as the image of beginning to create the world by means of His great power two thousand years before the world was actually created (טרם שׁיברא העולם אלפי שׁנה מיד התחיל לבראות את העולם בכחו והגדול).[162] One will immediately recognize the rabbinic allusions in this context: in the first instance wisdom is interchangeable with Torah; therefore, if the *koaḥ ha-gadol* is identical with wisdom (and this in fact is suggested by another comment to the effect that "God suspended the entire world by means of wisdom and His great power on emptiness"),[163] it is more than plausible to suggest that it is also to be identified with Torah. Moreover, the expression "two thousand years before the creation of the world" brings to mind the description in midrashic literature (e.g., Genesis Rabbah 8.2) of the Torah preceding the creation of the world by two thousand years. Indeed, in a previous part of this section of *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* Donnolo makes the point rather explicitly, recasting the midrashic image in light of the doctrine of letter-combination expounded in *Sefer Yeṣirah*:

> We have learnt that two thousand years before the creation of the world the Holy One, blessed be He, played around with the twenty-two letters of the

> Torah[164] (והיה הקב"ה משעשע את כ"ב אותיות של תורה),[165] and He combined and rotated them and made from all of them one word (דבור). He rotated [the word] frontwards and backwards through all the twenty-two letters [there then follows a detailed description of the process of combination and rotation which involves both letters and their vowels][166].... All this the Holy One, blessed be He, undertook for He wanted to create the world by means of His word and the epithet of the great name (במאמרו ובכנוי שם הגדול).[167]

It seems to me that in this passage Donnolo has informed us that in his mind the Torah, which is made up of the twenty-two letters,[168] is identical with the word (*dibbur* or *ma'amar*) formed on the basis of those letters as well as with the epithet of the great name of God (*kinnui shem ha-gadol*). The specific connection with the *logos* is brought out in another passage as well which describes God as "containing and bearing everything, above and below, with His word and the power of His one strength (בדברו ובכח גבורתו).... The Creator, blessed be He, contains and bears everything, and He is upon everything, in His word (בדבור), as it says, 'He is the who stretched out the heaven over chaos, who suspended earth over emptiness' (Job 26:7)."[169] The linguistic process (*seruf ha-'otiyyot ve-gilgul ha-dibburim*) is thus the first act of creation, followed by God's arranging in thought the celestial bodies (the dragon [*teli*],[170] stars, constellations, zodiac signs, spheres, etc.) that will ultimately control events in the terrestrial realm. The central position accorded to the celestial bodies in the divine plan of creation is reflected in Donnolo's attributing to astrology the special distinction of being the science that provides the best intellectual means to gain knowledge of God's greatness.[171] Indeed, as has been pointed out by various scholars, for Donnolo astrology becomes the secret wisdom by means of which God created the universe and through which human beings gain knowledge of this process.[172] While it is certainly the case that Donnolo thought of astrology as the highest science it is important to bear in mind that he does allow for a prior stage of divine creativity which we have identified as the linguistic process by means of which the word of God, or the Torah, is formed. The word of God generated on the basis of the twenty-two Hebrew letters is identical with God's great power, also described in terms of various light metaphors, which comprises the ten ineffable *sefirot*. What is further implied in Donnolo's presentation, though not stated explicitly, is that the *sefirot* constitute a sphere beyond the celestial realms, and therefore *gnosis* connected with them, whatever form it takes, must be higher or more sublime than astrology. In the final analysis, for Donnolo, there is no positive *gnosis* of the *sefirot* in the sense of discursive knowledge; on the contrary, he insists on a number of occasions that human beings cannot really know the *sefirot* in any comprehensive or exhaustive way.[173] In my view the unknowability of the *sefirot* derives from the fact that they are identical with God's "great power," *koaḥ ha-gadol*, which is virtually identical with the image of God, *demut ha-'Elohim*, as may be gathered from the similar terms used by Donnolo to describe the two, especially the characterization of each as an immeasurable and unfathomable light.

Let us return to Donnolo's interpretation of *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1.7, "Ten *sefirot belimah*, their measure is ten without end, their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end as a flame bound to the coal:" "Their beginning is God and their end is God, for He is the first and last. He fixed these ten ineffable *sefirot* in His great power as a flame bound to the coal." It is instructive that for Donnolo the ten *sefirot* are said to be contained within the hypostatic glory called God's great power. Whereas the original text of *Sefer Yeṣirah* speaks of the *sefirot* forming a closed circle such that the first is fixed in the last and the last in the first, Donnolo closes the circle with God, i.e., God is the beginning and end of the *sefirot* which are set within His great power. To be sure, this is based in part on the continuation of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, "Know, think, and conceive that the Lord is one and the Creator is one, and there is no second to Him." That is, after the author of *Sefer Yeṣirah* describes the unity of the multiple *sefirot* in terms of the image of circularity, he must emphasize the oneness of God insofar as the plurality of the *sefirot*, which may be construed as divine entities or at least as having the status of such, might pose a challenge to the monotheistic idea of a singular God. Yet, what is lacking in *Sefer Yeṣirah* is the claim that the *sefirot* are indivisibly united or enclosed within God, an interpretation later linked by theosophic kabbalists to the image "as a flame bound to the coal." It is precisely in this vein that Donnolo understands the passage: the *sefirot* are said to be fixed within God's great power like a flame bound to the coal. It is of interest to compare Donnolo's interpretation of this part of *Sefer Yeṣirah* with the above-mentioned passage from the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* XVII, "He [God] is the Beginning and the End. For in Him the six infinite [ones, i.e., the extensions] end, and from Him they take their extension towards the infinite."[174] Even if these extensions are to be viewed numerically, as Pines suggested, it is evident from at least this statement that the extensions constitute the pleroma or realm of fullness for they are said to originate in and project from the divine. A similar claim can be made with regard to Donnolo's conception of *sefirot* which, as I have already noted, are never identified by him as numbers or mathematical units.

That Donnolo operated with a theosophic conception of *sefirot* is evident from other texts in his *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* as well. Thus, for example, in his first extended comment on the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* he writes:

> Ten ineffable *sefirot*, these are arranged in the image (מכוונות בדמיון) of the ten fingers on the hands and the ten toes on the feet, and the one God is set (מכוון) within the ten ineffable *sefirot*.[175] Similarly, the covenant of unity [or covenant of the One, ברית יחיד][176] is set within the ten fingers on the hands, which are five against five, in the tongue and mouth so that one may unify God (ליחד האל). In the same way the covenant of unity is set within the ten toes of the feet, which are five against five, in the circumcision of the foreskin.[177]

Just as the one God is represented by the two covenants set within the fingers and toes of the human body, so the one God is set within the ten powers that are called

in this book by the name *sefirot*. The point is repeated in another comment by Donnolo explaining the passage in *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1.5 (his reading is slightly different from the standard text, but I will cite it according to his reading): "Ten ineffable *sefirot*. Close (בלום) your heart from meditating and your mouth from speaking. If your heart runs, return to God, for thus it says, '[the living creatures] were running to and fro' [Ez 1:14]. Concerning this a covenant has been made." Donnolo comments: "[The covenant is made] by means of the tongue and mouth, i.e., the holy language [through which one proclaims] the unity of God (יחוד האל), and through the covenant of the foreskin so that one will remember God who has given him the covenant,[178] to strengthen his heart and to set in his mind that he cannot contemplate at all His divinity."[179] It follows that comprehension of the *sefirot* would amount to knowledge of God, and it is precisely for such a reason that this knowledge is not attainable by human beings. This step is taken explicitly by Donnolo when he comments on the language of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, "Ten ineffable *sefirot*, their measure is ten without end," *(midatan 'eser she-'ein lahem*[180] *sof)*:

> This is the import of what is written, "they have no end." This instructs us that there is no sage in the world who can know, comprehend, and penetrate the knowledge of God (להעמיק בדעת האל), to discover the end and to reach the limit of these ten profound [impenetrable] sefirot. If a sage pursues them and seeks in his mind all the days of the world to comprehend them, it will not amount to anything. For a person cannot delve with his mind to pursue in order to know these ten things which are infinitely and endlessly deep.[181]

From the above passage, then, it is clear that, for Donnolo, knowledge of God involves knowledge of the ten *sefirot*, but these are beyond the realm of human comprehension. Using his own language, to penetrate the knowledge of God, *le-ha'amiq be-da'at ha-'el*, would consist of discovering and reaching the limit of the impenetrable *sefirot*. The contrast between Donnolo and Saadiah is brought out in clear terms when we compare their respective interpretations of the phrase *midatan 'eser she-'ein lahem sof* in *Sefer Yeṣirah*. According to Saadiah, as I noted above, this characterization of the *sefirot* is meant to convey the notion that the ten primary numbers have no limit with respect to their combinations which human beings can produce, but they are limited in relation to God. Hence, the claim that the *sefirot* have no limit does not at all, for Saadiah, imply that they are intrinsically related to God. For Donnolo this is precisely the force of the claim, viz., the *sefirot* are ten without end for they are indicative of, indeed identical with, God's "great power" which cannot be fathomed by finite human minds.

The essential unknowability of the *sefirot* is reiterated several times by Donnolo including his comment upon the language of *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1.8, "Ten ineffable *sefirot*, their vision is as swift as the flash of lightning," concerning which he says: "It is forbidden for a person to think about them even for a moment."[182] In one place Donnolo remarks that with the permission of God, the "one who grants knowledge and understanding," he has set out to explain

> something of the solutions to the riddles of *Sefer Yeṣirah* (מקצת מטעמי חידות וספר יצירה)[183] which the Holy One, blessed be He, transmitted to Abraham, our patriarch, in His love for him, to teach him and his descendants after him about His divinity (אלהותו), unity (ייחודו), greatness (גדולתו), power (גבורתו), and His powerful works (כח מעשיו), as it says, "He revealed to His people His powerful works" (Ps 111:6). For if it were not so who would be permitted to consider and think in his heart in order to comprehend the simplest and smallest thing of all these matters?[184]

From this it can again be concluded that in Donnolo's mind *Sefer Yeṣirah* provides one with knowledge not only of the universe, referred to in the above citation as the force of God's action, כח מעשיו, but also of the divine nature itself, i.e., God's unity, greatness, and power. Still, this knowledge is very limited insofar as the finite human mind cannot grasp the ten powers, the *sefirot*, which ultimately comprise this unity, greatness, or power.

VII. Conclusion

It is evident from the above analysis that the term *sefirot* in *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, unlike the other tenth-century commentaries, does not simply denote numbers that are extrinsic to God. On the contrary, the *sefirot* are the incomprehensible entities which constitute the luminous, immeasurable and unfathomable power, the invisible image of God. What is visible within the parameters of human experience is the anthropomorphic form that this *demut* assumes in the moment of prophetic disclosure. The notion of placing the *sefirot* within God's "great power," which is the glory or the twenty-two letters of Torah whence emerges the name of God, brings Donnolo's conception of *sefirot* remarkably close to the theosophic notion proffered by the Provençal and Spanish kabbalists in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While the complicated mythology of the divine world as developed by the later kabbalists is not present in this tenth-century text, it is significant that a theosophic understanding of the *sefirot* is developed at such a relatively early stage on the soil of southern Italy.

The fact that in southern Italy a theosophic interpretation emerges at roughly the same time that in the Muslim East the scientific or rational explanation is prevalent is a significant fact that should be weighed carefully when one sets out to chart the history of Jewish esotericism. This point has been virtually ignored in the scholarly literature. One major exception is David Neumark who noted that the commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣirah* composed in the tenth century reflected a struggle between those oriented towards philosophy, among whom he counts Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim, and those oriented towards kabbalah, e.g., Shabbetai Donnolo.[185] Neumark elsewhere speaks of the relation of Donnolo to kabbalah in terms of the influence of *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* on later kabbalists, including the author/editor of *Sefer ha-Bahir*,

specifically with respect to the macrocosm-microcosm motif as well as the doctrine concerning the permutation of the Hebrew letters and names of God.[186] Neumark's view on this matter is well summarized in the following passage: "Shabbetai Donnolo expresses ideas which are not yet the distinctive teachings of the Kabbalah, but which helped in the development of the latter. Yet at times he expresses ideas in a way that is very close to the formulation of the later Kabbalah."[187] One may question Neumark's peculiar understanding of the evolution of philosophical and kabbalistic thought in medieval Judaism,[188] but with respect to this issue he displayed a remarkable sensitivity to the text of Donnolo, although he did not fully articulate the implications of his own thinking. The importance of Donnolo's *Ḥakhmoni* for the development of "western Kabbalah" has also been noted by Sharf, though his comments are in fact limited to the German Pietists, an influence which has been noted by other scholars including Epstein, Scholem and Dan.[189] Indeed, what I am suggesting goes substantially further than the more limited claims of previous scholars, viz., that already operative in Donnolo is a theosophic notion of the *sefirot* which is the cornerstone for later kabbalistic thought. The appearance of a theosophic reading of *Sefer Yeṣirah* in Byzantine southern Italy should be considered in light of the fact that in that environment older Jewish magico-mystical texts were preserved and studied without the characteristic rationalistic interpretation that one finds in the contemporary Babylonian Geonic material. This is especially evident, as was discussed above, in terms of the profound impact that *merkavah* mysticism had on Hebrew liturgical poetry composed at that time and in this region. Whatever the explanation offered to account for the presence of the theosophic orientation in Donnolo, it may be concluded that the mathematical approach of Saadiah represents a general tendency in his own commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah*[190] (not to mention any of his other works[191]) to reinterpret earlier mystical ideas in a philosophical or scientific vein. Donnolo too is scientifically sophisticated, especially in the areas of medicine and astrology, but he does not employ the scientific mold to recast the Jewish mystical doctrine. The contrast between Saadiah's conception of the *sefirot* and that of Donnolo highlights the different orientations of these authors with respect to Jewish esotericism.

In sum, the reading of Donnolo that I have suggested pushes back a theosophic interpretation of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, and especially the key term *sefirot*, to a date much earlier than is usually conceded in scholarly circles. This possibility must be taken into account by the intellectual historian who seeks to uncover the "origins" of kabbalistic speculation in medieval Europe.

NOTES

An earlier and highly condensed version of this paper was read at the Twenty-Second Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 1990. The comments of those in attendance at that session, and particularly those of Steven Bowman, have been helpful in the formulation of the final draft of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the useful comments and criticisms which I received from my colleagues, Moshe Idel and Ronald Kiener, who read an earlier draft of the paper. Finally, a debt of gratitude is owed Barry Walfish who made a number of important suggestions for stylistic changes.

1. For a review of the wide range of scholarly opinions concerning the date of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, cf. Nehemiah Allony, "Zeman ḥibburo shel *Sefer Yeṣirah*," in *Ṭemirin*, ed. Israel Weinstock, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1981), 41-50, esp. 44-45.
2. See, e.g., A. M. Habermann, *A History of Hebrew Liturgical and Secular Poetry* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Ramat-Gan, 1972), 1:20.
3. The title is obviously derived from the word *ḥokhmah*, or wisdom. Cf. David Castelli, *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo sul Libro della creazione* (Firenze, 1880), 7-8; Andrew Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo* (New York, 1976), 5. Both words, *Taḥkemoni* (cf. 2 Sm 23:8) and *Ḥakhmoni* (cf. 1 Chr 11:11) appear in Scripture as proper names.
4. For the first date given as 4706 (i.e., 946), cf. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 6; and for the second date, 4742 (i.e., 982), cf. Adolf Neubauer, "Un Chapitre inédit de Sabbetai Donnolo," *Revue des études juives* 22(1891): 214-215. Cf. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 11, who concludes that Donnolo wrote his commentary sometime between these two dates. See, however, idem, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971), 169, where Sharf gives the date of composition as 982. For the alternative view of 946, cf. David Flusser, ed., *The Josippon* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1980), 2:82.
5. Cf. Adolph Jellinek, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kabbala*, Heft 1 (Leipzig, 1852), 4-7.
6. Cf. Georges Vajda, "Le commentaire de Saadia sur le Sefer Yeçira," *Revue des études juives* 106 (1941): 64-86. See also other references given below at n. 190.
7. Cf. Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893), 394-402; Georges Vajda, "Quelques notes sur le commentaire kairouanais du Sefer Yesira," *Revue des études juives* 105 (1939): 132-140; idem, "Le commentaire kairouanais sur le Livre de la Création," *Revue des études juives* 107 (1946-1947): 99-156; 110 (1949-1950): 67-79; 112 (1953): 5-33; idem, "Nouveaux fragments arabes du Commentaire de Dunash b. Tamim sur le Livre de la creation," *Revue des études juives* 113 (1954): 37-61; idem, *Introduction à la pensée juive du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1947), 68-70; Haim Zeev Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1974), 1:101, 151, 309.
8. Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, "Mélanges judéo-arabes: XXVIII. Fragment de l'original arabe du commentaire sur le S. Yecirah par Isak Israéli," *Revue des études juives* 52(1906): 187-190; Alexander Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century* (Oxford, 1958), 108, 157-158, 170, 176, n. 1, 189-190, 209-215.
9. I place Dunash ibn Tamim in the same category as Saadiah despite the fact that in the preface to his own commentary Dunash notes that he has examined the commentary of Saadiah and found various mistakes or misreadings that need to be corrected. Cf. *Sefer Yezirah with commentary by Dunash ben Tamim* (Hebrew), ed. Menasseh Grossberg (London, 1902), 17; Georges Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 113-114. For the most recent analysis of Dunash ibn Tamim's commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* and its relationship to that of Saadiah, cf. Raphael Jospe, "Early Philosophical Commentaries on the *Sefer Yezirah*: Some Comments," *Revue des études juives* 149 (1990): 381-388.
10. For a study of Byzantine-Islamic cultural relations, cf. Speros Vryonis, "Byzantium and Islam: Seventh-Seventeenth Century," in *East European Quarterly* 2(1968): 105-140. See also Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12(1958): 219-233; A. A. Vasilieu, "Byzantium and Islam," in *Byzantium: An Introduction to East*

Roman Civilization, ed. Norman H. Baynes and H. St. L. B. Moss (Oxford, 1949), 308-325; Abbas Hamdani, "Byzantine-Fatimid Relations before the Battle of Manzikert," *Byzantine Studies* 1(1974): 169-179. In the eleventh century the relations between Italy and North Africa were considerably strengthened by the arrival of the Italian scholar, Ḥushiel ben Elḥanan, in North Africa where he introduced new methods of talmudic study. This was continued and further developed by his son, Ḥananel (d. 1055/56). Cf. Samuel Poznanski, "Anshe Qairwan," in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A. Harkavy*, ed. David Günzburg and Isaac Markon, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1908), 192-198; Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, 1:322-324.

11. Cf. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 4. On the possible stylistic influence of an Arabic form of writing on Donnolo's introduction to *Ḥakhmoni*, cf. Marcus Salzman, *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* (New York, 1924), 4-5. On another possible use of Arabic philology in the work of Donnolo, cf. Andrew Sharf, "Shabbetai Donnolo's Idea of the Microcosm," in *Studi sull'ebraismo italiano: in memoria di Cecil Roth*, ed. Elio Toaff (Rome, 1974), 218, n. 58. See also Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Athens, 1939), 51-52, 158-159, n. 101, 164-165, n. 110. Starr bases his comments on the works of Moritz Steinschneider, *Donnolo, Fragment des ältesten medicinischen Werkes in hebräischer Sprache* (Berlin, 1867); *Donnolo, Pharmakologische Fragmente aus dem zehnten Jahrhundert, nebst Beiträgen zur Literatur der Salernitaner, hauptsächlich nach handschriftlichen hebräischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1868). See also Süssmann Muntner, *R. Shabbetai Donnolo (913-985), First Section: Medical Works* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1949), esp. 45-108, 145-151. On Donnolo's presumed knowledge of Arabic, see also Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), 62. For those who question Donnolo's facility with Arabic, cf. Hirsch J. Zimmels, "Science," in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711-1096*, ed. Cecil Roth, The World History of the Jewish People, series 2, vol. 2 (Israel, 1961), 298-299; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v., Donnolo, Shabbetai; Colette Sirat, *Jewish Philosophical Thought in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1975), 378. On the issue of Arabic-Hebrew contact in the tenth century, see Rina Drory, *The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic Literary Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1988). (Reference supplied by Ronald Kiener.) Knowledge of Arabic was far more central in the case of the medical school at Salerno where relevant material was translated into Latin by the Muslim convert, Constantine the African (d. 1085), at the monastery of Monte Cassino. Cf. Charles H. Talbot, "Medicine," in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg (Chicago, 1978), 396, and references to other scholarly literature given on 424, n. 15. For discussion of the Salerno school, cf. the magisterial study of Paul O. Kristeller, "The School of Salerno: Its Development and Its Contribution to the History of Learning," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 17(1945): 138-194; Robert Browning, "Greek Influence on the Salerno School of Medicine," in *Byzantium and Europe: First International Byzantine Conference (Delphi, 1985)* (Athens, 1987), 189-194. On the legendary relation of Donnolo to this school, cf. Süssmann Muntner, "Donnolo et la contribution des Juifs aux premières oeuvres de la médecine Salernitaine," *Revue d'histoire de la médecine hebraïque* 9(1956): 144-161.

12. The transmission of Palestinian forms of cultural and religious expression to Italy and from Italy to centers in northern Europe, especially France and Germany, is to be explained at least in part by the economic trade-routes of the medieval world. Cf. Cecil Roth, "Economic Life and Population Movements," in *The Dark Ages*, 43-44.

13. Cf. Robert Bonfil, "Between Eretz Israel and Babylonia," (Hebrew) *Shalem* 5(1987): 1-30, esp. 10-12, 19; idem, "Myth, Rhetoric, History? A Study in the *Chronicle of Aḥima'aẓ*," (Hebrew) in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson*, ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson, Robert Bonfil, and Joseph R. Hacker (Jerusalem, 1989), 99-136, esp. 103-107. See also Adolf Neubauer, "The Early Settlement of Jews in Southern Italy," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s., 4(1892): 606-625, esp. 611ff. This account has been discussed by a variety of scholars. Cf. Adolf Neubauer, "Abou Ahron, le Babylonien," *Revue des études juives* 23(1891): 230-237; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 63-64; Starr, *The Jews in*

the Byzantine Empire, 70, 114-118; Benjamin Klar, ed., *Megillat 'Aḥima'aṣ* (Jerusalem, 1974), 120-121. See also Joseph Marcus, "Studies in the *Chronicle of Ajjmaaz*," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 5(1933/34): 85-91; Steven D. Benin, "The *Chronicle of Aḥimaaz* and its Place in Byzantine Literature," (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 4(1984/85): 237-250.

14. Cf. Klar, *Megillat 'Aḥima'aṣ*, 118. This resonates with the view of Scholem that Palestine was "the cradle of the movement" of *merkavah* mysticism even though later traditions report the transmission of this lore from Mesopotamia to Italy and then to other parts of Europe. See, in general terms, Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3d ed. (New York, 1954), 41, 47; idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 14-15, 20; and the detailed studies in his *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960). See also the article of Bonfil referred to below at n. 20. On the Romaniote mystical tradition in the case of the Byzantine poets, Benjamin ben Samuel, Isaac ben Judah, and Tobias ben Eliezer, presumably deriving from Palestinian antecedents, cf. Leon J. Weinberger, *Anthology of Hebrew Poetry in Greece, Anatolia and the Balkans* (University, Alabama, 1975), 8-11 (Hebrew section), 2-3, 9 (English section). See also idem, "A Note on Jewish Scholars and Scholarship in Byzantium," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91(1971): 143-144. For the influence of *heikhalot* literature on the twelfth-century Balkan poet, Moses ben Hiyya, cf. idem, *Early Synagogue Poets in the Balkans* (University, Alabama, 1988), 3-4.

15. Cf. B.T. Megillah 13a.

16. Klar, *Megillat 'Aḥima'aṣ*, 12; English translation by Salzman, *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz*, 61-62 (with some important modifications).

17. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 85; Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 58-59; A. M. Habermann, ed. *Liturgical Poems of R. Shim'on bar Yiṣḥaq* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1938), 17-18; Shalom Spiegel, "On Medieval Hebrew Poetry," in *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed. Louis Finkelstein, 2 vols. (New York, 1949), 1:875; Jefim Schirmann, "The Beginnings of Hebrew Poetry in Italy and Northern Europe," in *The Dark Ages*, 249-266, esp. 254; idem, *Studies in the History of Hebrew Poetry and Drama* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1979), 2:9-29, esp. 14; Ezra Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1975), 454; idem, *The Yozer: Its Emergence and Development* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1984), 252-267, 522, 620, 671. The relationship between *heikhalot* hymns and formalized synagogue prayers, especially the *qedushah*, of Palestinian origin has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. Cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, "Angelic Songs, the Qedushah and the Problem of the Origin of the Hekhalot Literature," in his *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 145-173, and references to other scholarly literature on 145-146, nn. 3-7. See also Meir Bar-Ilan, *The Mysteries of Jewish Prayer and Hekhalot* (Hebrew) (Ramat-Gan, 1987), 20, 25, 37, 64-65, 141-143, 151; Philip S. Alexander, "Prayer in the Heikhalot Literature," in *Prière, mystique et judaïsme: colloque de Strasbourg (10-12 septembre 1984)*, ed. Roland Goetschel (Paris, 1987), 43-64. For a more detailed study on the influence of *merkavah* motifs on the Palestinian *payyeṭan* Yannai, cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, "Yannai and Hekhalot Literature," (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 36 (1967): 257-277. The influence of *merkavah* literature and *Shi'ur qomah* on the poems of Eleazar Kallir, presumably of sixth-century Palestine, has also been noted in scholarly literature; cf. Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1853-1878), 3:xxiii; Leopold Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin, 1865), 6-7, n. 7; Saul Lieberman, "Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim," in Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 124, n. 30, and see Scholem's own comment, 129-130; idem, *Kabbalah*, 17, 30; Martin S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham, Md., 1983), 61-65. See also Nicolas Séd, "Le Sefer Yesira, l'edition critique, le texte primitif, la grammaire et la métaphysique," *Revue des études juives* 132(1973): 526. By emphasizing the continuity between the Palestinian and Italian-German liturgical traditions, I do not mean to suggest that the former did not also influence the Andalusian poetic tradition. For a discussion of this relationship, cf. Aharon Mirsky, *Ha'Piyut: The*

Development of Post Biblical Poetry in Eretz Israel and the Diaspora (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1990), 166-177, 617-625. See also Elliot R. Wolfson, "Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb: Judah Halevi Reconsidered," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 57(1991): 225-241.

18. Cf. Gershom Scholem, "Has a Legacy been Discovered of Mystic Writings Left by Abu Aaron of Baghdad?" (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 32(1963): 253-254. See also idem, *Major Trends*, 84-85.
19. Cf. Joseph Dan, "The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe," in *The Dark Ages*, 283; idem, *The Esoteric Theology of the Ashkenazi Hasidim* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1968), 19.
20. Cf. Robert Bonfil, "The Cultural and Religious Traditions of French Jewry in the Ninth Century, as Reflected in the Writings of Agobard of Lyons," (Hebrew) in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Joseph Dan and Joseph Hacker (Jerusalem, 1986): 327-348, esp. 347-348.
21. Cf. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 169.
22. MS. Bibliothèque Nationale [henceforth BN] (Paris) héb. 772, fol. 60a. This text has been discussed by a number of scholars. Cf. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 14-19, and the extensive bibliographical references given there, 14-15, n. 1. To those may be added the following studies: Avraham Grossman, "The Migration of the Kalonymos Family from Italy to Germany," (Hebrew) *Zion* 40(1975): 154-185; idem, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1981), 29-44; Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, 1987), 206-207; and, most recently, Ivan G. Marcus, "History, Story and Collective Memory: Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture," *Prooftexts* 10(1990): 365-388, esp. 372-375. Cf. MS. Jewish Theological Seminary of America [henceforth JTSA] Mic. 8122, fol. 88b, where it is reported that Moses b. Qalonymos was the disciple of Abu Aaron b. Samuel, the "father of all secrets," אבי כל הסודות.
23. As noted by Bonfil, "Between Eretz Israel and Babylonia," 22. Regarding the channel of transmission from Italy to Germany, see the suggestive remarks of Ronald Kiener, "The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadiah Gaon's *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa'l-I'tiqādāt*," *AJS Review* 11 (1986): 24-25, concerning the possible Byzantine/Italian milieu for the composition of the anonymous paraphrase of Saadiah's philosophical text.
24. Cf. Marcus, "History, Story and Collective Memory," 373.
25. A strong case for such a possibility was made by Israel Weinstock, "Discovered Legacy of Mystic Writings Left by Abu Aaron of Baghdad," (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 32(1963): 153-159, and his response to Scholem's critique (see n. 18), "'Oṣar ha-sodot shel 'Abu 'Aharon – dimyon 'o meṣi'ut," *Sinai* 54(1964): 226-259. See also idem, *Be-ma'gelei ha-nigleh ve-ha-nistar* (*Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism*) (Jerusalem, 1969), 81-83.
26. See, however, Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 19.
27. Thus, for example, in his writings, Eleazar of Worms often cites and comments upon poems of Eleazar Kallir which deal with matters pertaining to *merkavah* speculation. Here I provide only a few examples of the many that could have been mentioned: cf. *Sodei razaya*, ed. Israel Kamelhar (Bilgoraj, 1936), 14; *Sodei razaya*, ed. Shalom Weiss (Jerusalem, 1988), 143, 147; MS. BN (Paris) héb. 772, fol 123a. See also Eleazar's own commentary on the *piyyuṭ*, האוחז ביד, attributed to Yannai (cf. Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt, *Maḥazor la-Yamim ha-nora'im*, vol. 1: Rosh ha-Shanah [Jerusalem, 1970], 225), MS. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, hebr. 92, discussed by Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Alan Arkush (Philadelphia, 1987), 125, n. 129. In my study, "The Image of Jacob Engraved on the Throne of Glory: Further Speculation on the Esoteric Teaching of the German Pietists," (Hebrew) *Efraim Gottlieb Memorial Volume* (Tel-Aviv, forthcoming), I have shown that in some critical passages Eleazar is dependent on earlier *payyeṭanim* such as Kallir even if he does not mention them by name. The interpretation of liturgical poems of Palestinian as well as Italian, Northern French, and German provenance which have to do with matters pertaining to *merkavah* mysticism is, of course, one of the the key features of the voluminous commentary on *piyyuṭim* by one of Eleazar's students, Abraham ben Azriel, *Sefer 'Arugat ha-bosem*, ed. Ephraim E. Urbach, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1939-1963). On

Eleazar's dependence on earlier *piyyuṭim*, see ibid., 4:110-111; Haym Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in the *Sefer Ḥasidim*," *AJS Review* 1(1976): 352.

28. Cf. Bonfil, "Between Eretz Israel and Babylonia," 20-21.
29. Dan, "The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe," 282.
30. Cf. Ex 30:23.
31. MS. JTSA Mic. 2430, fol. 65b. Regarding this manuscript, cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 376, n. 122; Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 48, 255; idem, "Goralah ha-hiṣtori shel torat ha-sod shel Ḥasidei 'Ashkenaz," in *Meḥqarim be-Qabbalah u-ve-datot mugashim le-Gershom Sholem* (= *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*), ed. Chaim Wirszubski, R.J.Z. Werblowsky, E.E. Urbach (Jerusalem, 1967), 91 (Hebrew section).
32. See esp. article of Bonfil referred to above, n. 20.
33. Cf. Heinrich Graetz, "Die mystische Literatur in der gaonischen Epoche," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 8(1859): 103-118, 140-153; Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1892), 175-179; Philipp Bloch, "Die *Yorede merkavah*, die Mystiker der Gaonenzeit, und ihr Einfluss auf die Liturgie," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 37(1893): 18-25, 69-74, 257-266, 305-311; Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (Philadelphia, 1955), 194-195; and see, most recently, Peter Schäfer, "The Ideal of Piety of the Ashkenazi Hasidim and Its Roots in Jewish Tradition," *Jewish History* 4(1990): 14. A Babylonian provenance for *Shi'ur qomah*, perhaps in the early Geonic period, has been suggested again by Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, 65-67.
34. This point was recognized by Scholem; see references above, n. 14.
35. On the mystical and homiletical preoccupation of Byzantine Jewry, cf. the remarks of Ṣalo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 8 (Philadelphia, 1958), 30-31. On the continuity of astrological traditions in Palestinian midrash and *piyyuṭ*, and then in later Byzantine sources which, in turn, influenced Ashkenazi sources, cf. Gad Sarfatti, "I segni dello zodiaco nell'iconografia ebraica," in *Scritti in memoria di Umberto Nahon: Saggi sull'ebraismo italiano*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Jerusalem, 1978), 180-195. For a discussion of mystical tendencies in Byzantine Jewry, concentrating mostly on the Palaeologan period (1258-1453), cf. Steven B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204-1453* (University, Alabama, 1985), 156-161. On the links between Byzantium and the East, with special reference to the continuity of Gnostic traditions, see Alexander Böhlig, "Byzanz und der Orient: Gedanken zu ihrer Begegnung," in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), 105-116, reprinted in Alexander Böhlig, *Gnosis und Synkretismus*, 2 vols. (Tübingen, 1989), 1:181-197. See also Ioan P. Couliano, *Les Gnoses dualistes d'occident* (Paris, 1990), 233-281.
36. The point I am making was already noted in some detail by Klar, *Megillat 'Aḥima'aṣ*, 118-119.
37. Cf. Benjamin M. Lewin, ed. *'Oṣar ha-Ge'onim*, vol. 4, pt. 2, Tractate Ḥagigah (Jerusalem, 1931), 16.
38. For discussion of the derivation of this meaning of Edom, cf. Gerson D. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 19-48.
39. Lewin, *'Oṣar ha-Ge'onim*, 4.2:16, 20.
40. Ibid., 20.
41. Cf. Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*, 3 vols. (London, 1925-1928), 1: 288-337; 3: 69-103. See also Peter Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981), §§598-622, 640-650.
42. For discussion of this text and its possible relations to *Sefer ha-Bahir*, cf. Scholem, *Origins*, 106-123.
43. Lewin, *'Oṣar ha-Ge'onim*, 4.2:20-21. In another responsum (cf. ibid., 10-12) issued by Hai Gaon and his father, Sherira Gaon (906-1006), it is evident that they had knowledge of *Shi'ur qomah*.

They mention as well the book on physiognomy and chiromancy called *Toledot 'Adam* which is cited by various medieval authors.

44. Thus we find in later literature as well that specific texts are designated as *sod ha-merkavah*. See, for example, Eleazar of Worms' commentary on the prayers, MS. BN (Paris) héb. 772, fol. 38b, where a passage from *Shi'ur qomah* is introduced in this way (the manuscript actually reads בסוף המרכבה, but it is evident that this is a scribal error and should be corrected to בסוד. (The reading in MS. Bodleian Library [henceforth BL] (Oxford) Opp. 160 (Ol. 1010) (Neubauer 1204), fol. 29d is (בספר המרכבה). It should be noted as well that the second part of Eleazar's large compendium of esoteric teachings, *Sodei razaya*, is called *Sod ha-merkavah* which corresponds more or less to the text published by Kamelhar (see n. 27). Eleazar also uses the term *sod ha-merkavah* in a doctrinal and non-textual way; see source cited by Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 83.
45. Cf. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 69-72, who adduces various examples of magical and mystical traditions connected with Byzantine Jewry, especially in southern Italy.
46. It is unclear to what this title refers. From the writing of another Karaite author, living in Jerusalem in the tenth century, it appears that this term refers to two separate works. Cf. Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1935), 2:82, and nn. 66-67. See also Scholem's tentative suggestion in *Origins*, 106.
47. The text reads הריזים but I have corrected it to הרזים, following Mann's suggestion, *Texts and Studies*, 2:76, n. 15.
48. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2:75-76.
49. Ibid., 2:82-83.
50. Cf. Scholem, *Origins*, 24.
51. Moses b. Maimon, *Responsa* (Hebrew), ed., Jehoshua Blau, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1957), 1:200-201. For discussion of the Maimonidean passage, cf. Alexander Altmann, "Moses Narboni's 'Epistle on *Shi'ur Qoma*,'" in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 231-232.
52. Cf. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 72, 237, n. 185; Weinberger, "A Note on Jewish Scholars and Scholarship in Byzantium," 144. Apparently, the *Shi'ur qomah* and *Sefer Yeṣirah* were known in ninth-century France as may be gathered from the polemical comments of Agobard, the archbishop of Lyons (779-840), in his *De Judaicus superstitionibus X*, in Migne *PL* 104:86. Cf. Graetz, "Die mystische Literatur," 110-111; Dan, "The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe," 289; Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 80.
53. Baron, *History*, 288, n. 34.
54. Cf. *Major Trends*, 47. Such an understanding of the transmission of esoteric doctrine from Babylonia to Italy to Germany and Provence underlies Scholem's reconstruction of the origins and literary redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir*. See *Origins*, 97-123. Cf. David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 133-134. Biale (134) points out that Scholem's theory is very close to Nachman Krochmal's description of the evolution of kabbalistic theosophy. For a Mesopotamian milieu for the *Bahir*, see also O. H. Lehmann, "The Theology of the Mystical Book Bahir and Its Sources," *Studia Patristica* 1(1957): 477-483, esp. 482.
55. Cf. the references to David Neumark given below at nn. 185-187. See also Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 80, 125; Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 161. With respect to the influence of Donnolo on the German Pietists, particularly Eleazar of Worms, cf. Abraham Epstein, *Mi-qadmoniyyot ha-Yehudim*, ed. A. M. Habermann (Jerusalem, 1957), 206-210, 211, 214-216; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 113, 376, n. 115 (to the sources cited by Scholem one might add the following passages which utilize Donnolo's notion of the great fire in an innovative way: Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei razaya*, ed. Kamelhar, 32; idem, MS. BN (Paris) héb. 772, fol. 30a); Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 18, 23, 39, 48, 63, 85, 129, 214. For Donnolo's influence on subsequent Jewish mysticism, see also Georges Vajda, "Quelques traces de Sabbatai Donnolo dans les commentaires medievaux du Sefer Yeçira," *Revue des études juives* 108(1948): 92-94. On Donnolo as an important link in the chain of transmission of ancient mystical traditions, see also

Colette Sirat, *Les Théories des visions surnaturelles dans la pensée juive du Moyen-Age* (Leiden, 1969), 89.

56. See references given above, n. 11.
57. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 33-34.
58. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v., Donnolo, Shabbetai.
59. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 6, 127.
60. Shlomo Pines, "Points of Similarity between the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Sefirot in the Sefer Yezira and a Text of the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 7(1989): 82, n. 156.
61. Cf. Elias Lipiner, *The Metaphysics of the Hebrew Alphabet* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1989), 146.
62. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 76; Ithamar Gruenwald, "Some Critical Notes on the First Part of Sēfer Yeṣīrā," *Revue des études juives* 132(1973): 484. For a convenient list of other scholars who accepted the mathematical approach, cf. Castelli, *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 22.
63. *Origins*, 26-27.
64. Ibid., 27.
65. Cf. *Kabbalah*, 23-24; *Origins*, 27-28. See also Joseph Dan, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, The Seventh Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies (Cincinnati, 1984), 20-23; idem, "The Religious Experience of the Merkabah," in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York, 1987), 302-304; idem, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1989), 146-152.
66. Predictably, Saadiah interprets this allegorically; see *Sefer Yeṣirah (Kitāb al-Mabādī) 'im Perush R. Se'adyah bar Yosef Fayyumi*, ed. Yosef Kafiḥ (Jerusalem, 1970), 73.
67. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, version A, ch. 37, ed. Solomon Schechter (Vienna, 1887), 110. In this connection it is of interest to note the following language employed in a poem attributed to Kallir: אין לעמוד על ספר מדותיך, which should be rendered, "one cannot comprehend the enumeration of [God's] attributes." Cf. *Collection of Piyyute Sepharad (Poems from the Golden Age of Spain), Based on a Manuscript 197, in the David Guenzburg Collection in the Lenin Public Library in Moscow*, ed. by David Samuel Loewinger (Jerusalem, 1977), 110. Is it possible that the association of the words *middah* and *sefirot* in *Sefer Ye ṣirah* has a similar connotation as the expression *sefer midotekha*? Here it may be worthwhile to recall the expression used by Kallir in his *silluq for parashat Sheqalim*, in S.I. Baer, ed., *Seder 'Avodat Yisra'el* (Berlin, 1868), 656: והיא קצבה כל מדות ספרורות.
68. Cf. A. Peter Hayman, "Sefer Yeṣirah and the Hekhalot Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987): 71-85 (English section).
69. Pines, "Points of Similarity," 83-114. Pines's comparison of the Pseudo-Clementine homilies and *Sefer Yeṣirah* is a revival of a view propounded by Heinrich Graetz, *Gnostizismus und Judentum* (Krotoschin, 1846), 110-115. See also G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York, 1969), 172-173. On the Jewish character of the Pseudo-Clementine homilies, cf. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen, 1949); idem, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia, 1969); Oscar Cullmann, *Le Problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin: étude sur la rapport entre le gnosticisme et le judéo-christianisme* (Paris, 1930), 121-131, 170-220; Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin, 1981).
70. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 314.
71. *Origins*, 81. The critical passage appears in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Reuven Margaliot (Jerusalem, 1978), §125.
72. See, e.g., P.T. Pesaḥim 8:1; Sifra, 'Emor, 12:3; B.T. Menaḥot 65b; Niddah 73a. This point was made by David Castelli (cf. *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 22), but largely overlooked in more recent scholarship.
73. Cf. *Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Kafiḥ, 42, 51-52, 67-68, 90-92.
74. Ibid., 54; cf. 90, 105.

75. Cf. *Sefer Yezirah with commentary by Dunash ben Tamim*, 19; Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 126-127, 130-132.
76. Cf. Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, ed. *Liqquṭim mi-Sefer Meqor ḥayyim* 2.27, in Salomon Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe* (Paris, 1859), 9 (Hebrew text) = Abraham Zifroni, ed., *Meqor ḥayyim*, trans. Jacob Bluwstein, (Jerusalem, 1926), 2:21, 46. For a discussion of this passage, cf. Yehuda Liebes, "Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Use of the *Sefer Yeṣira* and a Commentary on the Poem 'I Love Thee'," (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6(1987): 78-79. See, however, Moshe Idel, "The Sefirot Above the Sefirot," (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 51(1982): 278, who notes that the term *sefirot* in the poem, *Shokhen 'ad me-'az*, of Solomon ibn Gabirol functions in a specifically theological sense and does not connote mere numbers: by means of contemplating the ten *sefirot* one attains knowledge of the unity of God. As Idel also notes this interpretation bears a strong similarity to the view of Eleazar of Worms who, in turn, was undoubtedly influenced by Donnolo. For further discussion of these passages in ibn Gabirol, see Pines, "Points of Similarity," 122-126; and Jospe, "Philosophical Commentaries," 390-392. Finally, in this connection mention should be made of the usage of the term *sefirot* in a *piyyuṭ* on the Ten Commandments for Shavu'ot (falsely attributed to Saadiah Gaon; cf. Israel Davidson, *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry*, 4 vols. [New York, 1924-1938], 1:277, no. 6071); cf. *Maḥazor Romania* (Constantinople, 1574), 129b. In this poem the Ten Commandments, referred to as the *ma'amarot*, i.e., sayings of God, are said to parallel the ten *sefirot* which are the principles of everything created: הלא הנם עשׂרת כעשׂרת בראשׁית כל ועשׂר הספירות וסודותיו ואדותיו יסודות. For a wide-ranging discussion of the correlation between the ten *ma'amarot*, the ten *dibberot*, and the ten *sefirot*, cf. Idel, "The Sefirot Above the Sefirot," 268-277.
77. See, e.g., Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary to Ex 3:15.
78. Cf. *Kuzari* 4.25, and extended discussion of Halevi's text in Jospe, "Philosophical
79. Commentaries," 394-402.
80. Cf. *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Solomon J. Halberstam (Berlin, 1885), 144, 185.
81. Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 127. For a slightly different reading, see ibid., 126, and the edition of Grossberg, 19-20.
    On the division of sciences see Grossberg, 36, 71; Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 113.
82. Grossberg, 34. For an entirely different reading of this passage, see text established by Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 148: הפרק הזה ... ומורה על חכמת האומר אותו לפי שהוא דמיון יותר יפה לעשׂר ספירות, and translation on 147: "Ce chaptire...montre la sagesse de son auteur, car c'est une représentation encore plus belle des dix *sefirot*."
83. Grossberg, 46; cf. the reading in Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 78.
84. See above, n. 8.
85. Cf. Wilhelm Kutsch, ed., *Tābit b. Qurra's arabische Ubersetzung der 'Αριθμητικὴ εἰσαχοχή des Nikomachos von Gerasa* (Beirut, 1958). On the possibility of at least one Jewish disciple of Thābit b. Qurra, see Shlomo Pines, "A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 24 (1955): 134, n. 106.
86. Cf. Sonja Brentjes, "Die erste Risala der Rasā'il Ihwān as-Safa' über elementare Zahlentheorie: Ihr mathematischer Gehalt und ihr Beziehungen zu spätantiken arithmetischen Schriften," *Janus* 71(1984): 181-274. On Pythagoreanism in the Arabic milieu, see also Franz Rosenthal, "Some Pythagorean Documents Transmitted in Arabic," *Orientalia* 10(1941): 104-115 (my thanks to Ronald Kiener for drawing my attention to this article). For a discussion on Pythagoreanism in eleventh-century Byzantine thought, cf. Perikles Joannou, *Christliche Metaphysik, I: Die Illuminationslehre des Michael Psellos und Joannes Italos*, Studia Patristica et Byzantina, Heft 3 (Ettal, 1956), 55-59.
87. Cf. Moritz Steinschneider, *Mathematik bei den Juden* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1893-1899; reprint, Hildesheim, 1964), 62-63; Solomon Gandz, "The Origin of the Ghubar Numerals or the Arabian Abacus and the Articuli," *Isis* 16(1931): 393-424; idem, "Saadia Gaon as a Mathematician," in *Saadia Anniversary Volume* (New York, 1943), 141-195.

88. Cf. Jospe, "Philosophical Commentaries," 378. On the closeness of the Pythagorean theory of numbers and the doctrine of *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeṣirah* according to Saadiah's explanation, despite his own effort to classify them as two distinct theories, cf. Vajda, "Le commentaire de Saadia sur le Sefer Yeçira," 75.
89. Cf. Castelli, *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 21-27, esp. 24, who concludes that according to Donnolo (and Eleazar of Worms) the *sefirot* are the "primary elements of the universe" which form an absolute unity. Cf. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 55, who translates the word *sefirot* as used by Donnolo as "spheres," without however elaborating in any detail.
90. Cf. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 73-93.
91. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 15. The microcosmic-macrocosmic motif is not entirely lacking in the thought of Saadiah. See, e.g., his *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Kafiḥ, 102-103.
92. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 16.
93. Cf. Castelli, *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 39-40.
94. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 77-87.
95. Ibid., 86-87. The anti-mystical tendency of Donnolo, especially in reference to his interpretation of Gn 1:26, is emphasized as well by Sharf in his essay, "Shabbetai Donnolo's Idea of the Microcosm," 205-226.
96. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 14-15.
97. Cf. Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tübingen, 1985), 269-70. See also Scholem's remarks in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York, 1991), 29, concerning the probable use of the word μορΦὴ to refer to physical stature in 2 Enoch, 13. For a study on the anthropomorphic connotation of the word μορΦὴ in early Christian and Gnostic texts, in some cases reflecting Jewish attitudes, see Gedaliahu Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *Harvard Theological Review* 76(1983): 269-288, and *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964-1976), s.v. "μορΦὴ." In this connection mention should be made of the poem, "On an Image of the Archangel Michael," written by the sixth-century poet, Agathias, published in Barry Baldwin, *An Anthology of Byzantine Poetry* (Amsterdam, 1985), 67, which begins: "Ἀσκοπον ἀχχελίαρχον, ἀσωματον εἴδει μορφῆς." For the technical usage of the term *ṣurah* in later kabbalistic literature and its philological affinity with earlier sources, cf. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), 122-128.
98. Cf. Michael Fishbane, "Some Forms of Divine Appearance in Ancient Jewish Thought," in *From Ancient Judaism to Modern Israel: Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Nahum M. Sarna, 4 vols. (Atlanta, 1989), 2:261-270, esp. 265-268.
99. Cf. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, Parah, 4, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, 2 vols. (New York, 1962), 1:65; *'Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, ed. Solomon Schechter, version A, ch. 39, 116. See also the passage published by Ephraim E. Urbach, "Fragments of *Tanḥuma-Yelammedenu*" (Hebrew), *Qoveṣ 'al yad* 6(1966): 24.
100. As pointed out by Fishbane, "Some Forms," 266-267. Concerning the passage from *'Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, see already Saul Lieberman, "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 141.
101. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 23.15, 41.3.
102. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 29.3; Song of Songs Rabbah 1.2.3.
103. Cf. Schäfer, *Synopse*, §§ 7, 183, 581, 813.
104. This is the reading of the printed text (see following note for reference) as well as most of the manuscript versions which I consulted. One exception (not noted by Castelli in his edition even though he used this manuscript; see *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 11-12) is MS. Biblioteca Palatina [henceforth BP] (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 95b which reads בשום in place of בכלום.

105. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 9.

106. See, e.g., the interpretations of Ex 33:20 attributed to R. Aqiva and R. Shimon ben Azzai in Sifra on Lv 1:12, to the effect that neither the celestial beasts who bear the throne nor any of the angels can behold the divine Glory. Cf. *Sifre 'al Be-midbar*, ed. H. S. Horovitz (Jerusalem, 1966), 103, 101.

107. Cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), 94. For a different approach to this literature, see Ira Chernus, "Visions of God in Merkabah Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 13(1982): 123-46. See also Samuel Leiter, "Worthiness, Acclamation and Appointment: Some Rabbinic Terms," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 41-42(1973-74): 137-168, esp. 143-45; Rachel Elior, "The Concept of God in Hekhalot Mysticism," (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6(1987): 13-64, esp. 27-31. For a later and somewhat modified formulation of Gruenwald, see his "Literary and Redactional Issues in the Study of the Hekhalot Literature," in *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, 184.

108. Cf. Is 40:18, 25; 46:5. The view expressed in Deutero-Isaiah must be seen as a direct polemic against the Priestly tradition that man is created in God's image. Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, "God the Creator in Gen. I and in the Prophecy of Second Isaiah," (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 37(1968): 124-125; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1983), 325-326.

109. Joseph Gutmann, "Deuteronomy: Religious Reformation or Iconoclastic Revolution?" in *The Image and The Word: Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula, Mont., 1977), 5-26.

110. For an example of such epigrams written in praise of icons, probably composed around 900 in southern Italy, cf. Robert Browning, "An Unpublished Corpus of Byzantine Poems," *Byzantium* 33(1963): 289-316, and the more recent discussion in Barry Baldwin, "The Language and Style of Some Anonymous Byzantine Epigrams," *Byzantium* 52(1982): 5-23. See also the discussion of the anti-iconoclastic affirmation of the divine image in Theodore the Studite (759-826) discussed by John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, 1974), 46-48. For a discussion of the involvement of Jews in the iconoclast controversy, cf. Joshua Starr, "An Iconodulic Legend and Its Historical Basis," *Speculum* 8(1933): 500-503; André Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantine* (Paris, 1957), 99-103, 135-136; Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 61-81; idem, "Jews in Byzantium," in *The Dark Ages*, 57-58.

111. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 84; Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 80.

112. Klar, Megillat *'Aḥima'aṣ*, 82. Cf. Yannai, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai according to the Triennial Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays* (Hebrew), ed. Zevi M. Rabinovitz, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1985), 118: צורתן אין לצור.

113. Cf. Leopold Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin, 1865), 99; Leser Landshuth, *'Amudei ha-'avodah* (Berlin, 1857-1862), 83; Israel Davidson, *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry*, 4 vols. (New York, 1933), 1:267, no. 5861.

114. Cf. Habermann, *A History of Hebrew Liturgical and Secular Poetry*, 1:71; Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 118. See, however, Mirsky, *Ha'Piyut*, 168, who considers Yoḥanan ben Yehoshua ha-Kohen to be Italian.

115. Cf. *Maḥazor la-Yamim ha-nora'im*, ed. Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt, vol. 2: Yom Kippur (Jerusalem, 1970), 368.

116. Castelli's reading here: הבין כי הוא לה' is based on MSS. BP (Parma) 2123 (De Rossi 399) and 2425 (De Rossi 417). See, however, MS. Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana [henceforth BML] (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 91a: והבין כי יי' הוא and similarly in MS. BN (Paris) héb. 770, fol. 47b and MS. JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 1b: והבין כי הוא ה'. But see MS. BN (Paris) héb. 767, fol. 1a: הבין את כבוד ה'.

117. The words in brackets, which are lacking in Castelli's text, have been added according to the following MSS: BML (Florence) Plut. 44.16, fol. 91a; BN (Paris) héb. 767, fol. 1a; BN (Paris) héb. 770, fol. 47b; BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 95b; and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 2a.

118. Cf. MSS (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 91a: לא ראו כבודו באות וסימן אבל ראו כבודו שתחת רגליו; BN (Paris) héb. 767, fol. 1a: לא ראו את כבודו באות וסימן אבל ראו כבודו שתחת רגליו; and BN (Paris) héb. 770, fol. 47b and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 2a (which from Castelli's transcription, 8, n. 3, appears to be the same as MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria (Turino) 88 [cat. Pasini] or 159 [cat. Peyron]: לא ראו אלא כבודו באות וסימן אבל ראו כבודו שתחת רגליו.
119. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 6-8.
120. Ibid., 10.
121. Ibid., 8. Moshe Idel called my attention to the fact that the views of Donnolo as I have outlined them share several interesting features with ideas expressed by some of the Byzantine monks, especially St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) and St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). On the centrality of the metaphor of light to describe the uncreated glory of God in the case of the former, see, e.g., Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses*, trans. by C. J. DeCatanzaro and intro. by George Maloney, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1980), 193-197, 295-307. Gregory similarly maintained that the transcendent and incomprehensible God manifests Himself in an "hypostatic" light (φῶs ενυποστατως) which is further described as "an illumination immaterial and divine, a grace invisibly seen and ignorantly known." Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, ed. John Meyendorff (Louvain, 1959), 403; English trans. by Nicholas Gendle in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1983), 57. The "uncreated light" (ακτίστου φωτος) is identified as "the glory of God" which is characterized further as Christ the Lord (Ὅ Θεοῦ ἐστι δόεα και Χριστοῦ Θεοῦ). Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, 525; idem, *The Triads*, 67. Although Gregory insists time and again that this light is not identical with the essence of God, he emphasizes that it is the "uncreated" glory which "cannot be classified amongst the things subject to time...because it belongs to the divine nature in an ineffable manner." Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, 405, 419; idem, *The Triads*, 57, 60. Employing the language of Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite (*Mystical Theology*, V), Gregory in one context describes this hypostatic light as the "not-being by transcendence" (καθ ὑπεροχὴν μὴ ὤν) "which is definitely not the divine essence, but a glory and radiance inseparable from His nature" (Gregory Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, 461; idem, *The Triads*, 66). On the identification of the divine as light, see also Gregory Palamas, "Argumenta Ex Codicibus Coislinianis," in Migne *PG* 150:818; idem, "Theophanes," ibid., 150:919.
122. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 40.
123. On the possible terminological connection between the expression employed here, *yoredei ha-yam*, and the title used in some of the *heikhalot* sources to designate the mystics, *yoredei merkavah*, cf. David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen, 1988), 226-27. Concerning this designation, cf. Elliot R. Wolfson, "Yeridah la-Merkavah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in *Typologies of Mysticism*, ed. Robert Herrera (forthcoming).
124. Let me note that the association of the lower glory and the feet, based on Ex 24:10, is further developed in the esoteric theosophy of the German Pietists, especially in the writings of Eleazar of Worms, whose knowledge of Donnolo has been well noted in the scholarly literature. See above, n. 55. For a discussion of this aspect of Eleazar's theosophy, see my study referred to above, n. 27. To the sources discussed there one could add the treatise on prophecy, perhaps written by Eleazar of Worms, extant in MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 77a and JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 10b. The second part of this text, or perhaps an independent source attached to the former, which consists of citations from Saadiah and Ḥananel ben Ḥushiel on the nature of the glory and prophetic experience, is printed in *'Arugat ha-bosem*, 1:199-200.
125. *Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Kafiḥ, 106-109.
126. *Sefer Ha-Nivḥar be-'emunot u-ve-de'ot*, ed. Y. Kafiḥ (Jerusalem, 1970), 2.10, 103-104. Dunash ibn Tamim likewise speaks of the light of the Creator (אור הבורא) which is distinct from God, though it is not clear if it is a created or emanated light. Cf. Perush Sefer Yeṣirah, ed. Grossberg, 31; Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 145.

127. See the description of the *kavod* in Donnolo's thought as an "emanation from divinity" (una emanazione della divinità) in Castelli, *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 40. Cf. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 112-113, who similarly suggests that the *kavod* in Donnolo "alludes to the actual divine glory which is not created but is closer to the nature of the divine power that emanates through the concatenation of lights in a Neoplatonic way." Dan relies on an interpretation of Donnolo which he heard orally from his teacher, Isaiah Tishby (see 113, n. 29; cf. 175, n. 9), but does not mention Castelli's earlier observation. On the philosophic influences on Donnolo, see Giuseppe Sermoneta, "Il Neo-platonismo nel pensiero dei nuclei ebraici stanziati nell'occidente latino (Riflessioni sul 'Commento al Libro della Creazione' di Rabbi Sabbetài Donnolo)," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto medioevo*, 2 vols., Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 26 (Spoleto, 1980), 2:867-925.
128. In this regard, then, Donnolo's view is to be contrasted sharply with that of Judah ben Barzillai; cf. the latter's *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Halberstam, 12-14, *passim*.
129. Cf. *'Oṣar ha-Ge'onim*, Tractate Ḥagigah, "Responsa," 14. Cf. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 90; Cohen, *The Shi'ur qomah*, 5-6. For a different understanding of R. Hai's statement, cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 49; David Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, 1978), 3, 88-89, 177; idem, "A New Edition of the Heikhalot Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104(1984): 544, 547, 550-551; idem, *Faces of the Chariot*, 5-6, 32, 359-360.
130. See R. Ḥananel's talmudic commentaries cited in *'Oṣar ha-Ge'onim*, Tractate Ḥagigah, 61; ibid., Tractate Berakhot, Appendix, 3; Tractate Yevamot, "Responsa," 123-24.
131. Cf. Nathan ben Jehiel, *Aruch completum*, ed. Alexander Kohut, 8 vols. (Vienna, 1878-1892). 1:14, s.v. אבני שיש טהור.
132. It is of interest to note that the German Pietists already blurred the distinction between Donnolo and the Geonic view expressed by Saadiah, Nissim ben Jacob (ca. 960-1062), and Ḥananel ben Ḥushiel. Thus see the statement in MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 78b, and JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 12b (cf. *'Arugat ha-bosem*, 1:200), after the citations from Saadiah's *'Emunot ve-de'ot* on the nature of the created glory and Ḥananel's commentary on Berakhot denying that God has an image, the author (presumably Eleazar of Worms) writes: "And so R. Nissim Gaon explained [the matter], as well as Shabbetai the doctor and sage, and I received it from my teacher, R. Judah [the Pious], who received it from our teacher, R. Samuel the Pious, his father."
133. Here Donnolo adds the words, לדעת אותם (cf. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 37), which do not reflect a variant reading of the text of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, but rather the commentator's exegetical gloss. Cf. Epstein, *Mi-qadmoniyyot ha-Yehudim*, 204-205, and examples adduced in n. 3. See also Nicolas Séd, *La Mystique cosmologique juive* (Paris, 1981), 244-246.
134. Cf. the reading in MSS. Cambridge University Library, Add. 651, fol. 246b, and JTSA Mic. 1903, fols. 2b-3a: תחילתן הוא הבורא וסופן הוא הבורא.
135. Cf. Is 44:6.
136. MS. BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 101b: ונעוץ; MS. BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 61a: ונעוצים.
137. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. Castelli, 38.
138. Cf. ibid., 34. Donnolo's usage of *koaḥ ha-gadol* has a parallel in Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Keter malkhut*, 22; cf. *The Liturgical Poetry of Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol* (Hebrew), ed. Dov Jarden, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1977), 1:51.
139. Cf. Ex 32:11; Dt 4:37, 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Jer 27:5; 32:17; Neh 1:10. It is evident from these occurrences that the expression כח גדול when applied to God in Scripture is used to refer exclusively to the manifestation of the divine creative (Jer 27:5; 32:17) or redemptive (Ex 32:11; Dt 4:37, 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Neh 1:10) power. Moreover, the term is paired frequently with other technical expressions for God's power, such as יד חזקה (Ex 32:11, Neh 1:10) or זרוע נטויה (Dt 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Jer 27:5, 32:17).
140. In New Testament passages as well the power (δύναμις) is equated with the glory (δόξα). For references, see *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v., δύναμαι/δύναμις (2:305, n. 76).

141. Cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 67.
142. Cf. the usage יכולה רבה to refer to the manifestation of God in *Tibat Marqe: A collection of Samaritan Midrashim*, ed. Zeev Ben Ḥayyim (Jerusalem, 1988), 127. Cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 133. It is of interest to note that in the Samaritan amulet published by Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, 3:109-130, God is frequently addressed as יהוה הגדול. Cf. Hegesippus's account of James the Just's description of Jesus recorded in Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.23.13: "He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great power (μεχάλγς δυνάμεως), and he will come on the clouds of heaven." Cf. Mk 14:62 where a similar description is placed in the mouth of Jesus himself, but in that case mention is made of the power (δυνάμεως), without the adjective "great." Cf. *Ascension of Isaiah* 11:32 where the visionary is said to have seen Christ seated at the right hand of the great glory. All of these traditions are exegetically linked to Ps 110:1; cf. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, 1973).
143. As suggested by Ben-Ḥayyim, *Tibat Marqe*, 40, n. 2. Cf. Geo Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book* (Uppsala, 1950), 48-52 (noted by Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 67, n. 7); Hans G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge* (Berlin, 1971), 328-349.
144. See, e.g., *Synopse*, §§ 557, 588, 590.
145. Cf. *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai*, ed. J. N. Epstein and E. Z. Melamed (Jerusalem, 1955), 154-55.
146. *Synopse*, §§ 9, 22, 858 (3 Enoch); 568 (*Ma'aseh merkavah*). See also *Massekhet Heikhalot*, MS. BP (Parma) 3531, fol. 2a: כבוד גדולה שכל המלאכים והרוזנים נוהגים בו. The expression "the great glory," הכבוד הגדול also identified as the "splendor," הוד, and the "glory of the Presence," כבוד השכינה occurs frequently in the writings of the German Pietists from the circle of Judah the Pious. See, e.g., Joseph Dan, "Sefer Sha'arei ha-sod ha-yiḥud ve-ha-'emunah le-R. 'El'azar mi-Vorms," in *Temirin*, ed. Israel Weinstock, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1972), 149; Eleazar of Worms, "Perush ha-tefillot," MS. BN (Paris) héb. 772, fols. 97b, 102b, 140a; idem, *Sodei razaya*, ed. Kamelhar, 32; commentary on the *merkavah* hymn, *Ha-'Adderet ve-ha-'emunah*, MS. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. ebr. 228, fol. 105b (for a slightly different version, see *Siddur Mal'ah ha-'areṣ de'ah* [Tiengen, 1560], Yom Kippur, 10a-13a [pagination supplied by author]). Concerning this text, and particularly its relationship to Eleazar of Worms, see Joseph Dan, "Ashkenazi Hasidic Commentaries on the hymn *Ha-'Adderet ve-ha-'emunah*," (Hebrew) *Tarbiẓ* 50(1981): 396-404]; MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 75b; JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 9b.
147. Cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 68.
148. On the knowledge of this work by the author of *Sefer Josippon*, a work written in the same milieu and at the same time as Donnolo, see Flusser, *The Josippon*, 1:144, n. 6, and 2:132.
149. Wisdom of Solomon, 7:25. Cf. Philo, *Legum allegoria* 2.86.
150. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 40.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid., 62. The expression is based on the biblical idiom used by the Deuteronomist to refer to the fire out of which the Israelites heard the divine voice at Sinai; cf. Dt 4:36, 5:22, 18:16.
153. Ibid., 28.
154. Ibid., 28, 38.
155. Cf. Flusser, *The Josippon*, 1:301, 2:110.
156. See the sources noted by Flusser, *The Josippon*, 1:301, n. 26. The term also occurs in some *heikhalot* texts, but not in a technical theosophic sense. Cf. Schäfer, *Synopse*, §§ 105, 270; idem, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1984), 133.
157. Cf. Yitzhak Baer, "The Hebrew Book of Josippon," (Hebrew) in *Sefer Dinaburg*, ed. Y. Baer, J. Guttmann, and M. Shoval (Jerusalem, 1949), 192, n. 9.
158. See Israel Davidson, Introduction to Salmon ben Yeruḥim, *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* (New York, 1934), 25-26, who identifies this responsum as part of Saadiah's *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-mutaḥāmil* ("Refutation of an Overbearing Antagonist") which is, in his view, the second part of

the *Kitāb al-Radd "alā Ibn Sākawaihi* ("Refutation of Ibn Sākawaihi"). Concerning these two works, see Henry Malter, *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works* (Philadelphia, 1921), 265-67, 382-84. Malter himself, following the views of Hirschfeld and Eppenstein (see references on 266, n. 558), maintains the possibility that the antagonist in the former treatise may in fact be that of the latter. According to Davidson, moreover, Ibn Sākawaihi is to be identified with Salmon b. Yeruḥim. See, however, the criticism of Mann in his *Texts and Studies*, 2:1469-70.

159. *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Halberstam, 20.

160. Cf. the expression אורה רבה and its association with כבוד and חכמה in *Tibat Marqe*, 351. Cf. Fossum, *The Name of God*, 91. On the possible relation between this Samaritan work and early Jewish esotericism, cf. Nicolas Séd, "Le Memar samaritan, le Sefer Yesira et les trente-deux sentiers de la Sagesse," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 170 (1966): 159-184.

161. Cf. M. Avot 3:14 where the Torah is referred to as the "precious vessel," *keli ḥemdah* (cf. Jer 25:34, and elsewhere). On the description of the Torah as the "great instrument" (כלי גדול) of God, cf. BN (Paris) héb. 596, fol. 63a.

162. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 34.

163. Ibid., 38.

164. This image is based on the interpretation of Pr 8:30 in Genesis Rabbah 1:1; see also Ps 119:77. The midrashic motif is reworked in the *piyyuṭ* literature as well. Here I will provide only two examples from relatively early sources. Cf. *Piyyuṭei Yose ben Yose*, ed. Aharon Mirsky (Jerusalem, 1977), 123: אמון שחקו דת שעשועיו היא הגיונו; and the anonymous poem, presumably written in southern Italy in the ninth or tenth century, in Simon Bernstein, *Piyyuṭim u-faytanim ḥadashim me-ha-tequfah ha-bi ṣanṭinit* (Jerusalem, 1941), 20 (originally published in *Ḥorev* 5 (1939): 63): ושעשוע לפניו כמקדם חכמת רשומו.

165. This is the reading of MSS. BML (Florence) Plut. 44.16, fol. 87b and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 10a. See, however, MS. BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 100a: היה הקב"ה משעשע האותיות של תורה and MSS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170a and BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 60b: היה הקב"ה משעשע בכ"ב אותיות של תורה .

166. According to the reading of MSS. BP (Parma) 2123 (De Rossi 399) and 2425 (De Rossi 417); cf. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 33, n. 2, and see parallel passage on 54. The presence of the technique of letter-combination in relation to combination of vowels in Donnolo was already noted by Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany, 1990), 75, n. 35.

167. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 32-33; cf. Lipiner, *The Metaphysics of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 130-131, n. 68.

168. On the identification of Torah with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in later Jewish mystical texts, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Letter Symbolism and Anthropomorphic Imagery in the Zohar," (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8(1989): 179-181.

169. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 83.

170. Donnolo interprets the *teli* of *Sefer Yeṣirah* in terms of the concept of the celestial dragon which possesses astrological and astronomical functions.

171. Cf. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 82.

172. Cf. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 12-13; Ronald Kiener, "The Status of Astrology in the Early Kabbalah," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6(1987): 14 (English section).

173. Cf. Kiener, "The Status of Astrology," 12-13.

174. See above, n. 69. Cf. Pines, "Points of Similarity," 68, 85. It is important to recall here the observation of Gruenwald, "Some Critical Notes on the First Part of Sefer Yezira," 492, that in some Neoplatonic texts, including Plotinus, there are to be found similar notions concerning the indivisibility of the emanations in their source. While Gruenwald does not rule out the possibility of some connection between *Sefer Yeṣirah* and the Neoplatonic writings, he does caution against such a position on the grounds that the terminology of *Sefer Yeṣirah* is "vague and slippery" and thus defies any scientific exactitude.

175. See the reading in MS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170b: ויהוה מכוון אחד בתוך עשר ספירות.

176. Cf. MSS. BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 60b, and JTSA Mic. 1640, fol.170b: ברית ייחוד. For these different readings, cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, "A Preliminary Critical Edition of Sefer Yezira," *Israel Oriental Studies* 1(1971): 141 (ad *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1.3).
177. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 35.
178. Cf. Dunash ibn Tamim's commentary, ed. Grossberg, 26; Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 134.
179. See Dunash ibn Tamim's commentary, ed. Grossberg, 38. Cf. Idel's interpretation of a statement of Solomon ibn Gabirol cited above, n. 76, to the effect that contemplation of the *sefirot* leads one to knowledge of the divine unity.
180. The text of *Sefer Ḥakhmoni* adds here the word ראשית, a reading not attested to in any other version but representing rather an exegetical gloss of Donnolo. See above, n. 133.
181. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 35-36.
182. Ibid., 37.
183. MSS. BML (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 88b; BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 101a; BN (Paris) héb. 843, fol. 50b; BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 61a; and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 11a, add: מטעמי חדות התורה. And cf. MSS. Cambridge University Library, Add. 651, fol. 246a, and JTSA Mic. 1903, fol. 2a: מטעמי הדור התורה. The only manuscript which I examined that corresponds to the printed text is MS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170b.
184. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 36-37.
185. Cf. David Neumark, *History of Jewish Philosophy* (Hebrew), 2 vols. (New York, 1921), 1:121.
186. Ibid., 188, 190. Cf. Weinstock, *Be-ma'gelei ha-nigleh ve-ha-nistar*, 49.
187. Neumark, *History*, 1:258, n. 4.
188. Regarding Neumark's approach to the history of Jewish philosophy and mysticism, see the interesting speculations of Scholem, *Origins*, 8, n. 7.
189. *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 80, 125. See references above, n. 55.
190. Cf. Georges Vajda, "Sa'adya commentateur du 'Livre de la Création'," *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sciences religieuses* (1959-60): 5 (reprinted in *Mélanges Georges Vajda*, ed. Gerard Weil [Hildesheim, 1982], 39); Scholem, *Origins*, 33; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Goal in his Commentary on *Sefer Yeẓira*," in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Ruth Link-Salinger et al. (Washington, D.C., 1988), 1-9; Jospe, "Philosophical Commentaries," 372-376.
191. Cf. Scholem's summary of Altmann's treatment of Saadiah's theory of the glory as "a rationalization of the older teaching of Merkabah mysticism on the same subject" (*Major Trends*, 375, n. 100). Cf. Alexander Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, 1969), 153-154. Weinstock's chapter on the appropriateness of the designation *ba'al sod* for Saadiah, in his *Be-ma'gelei ha-nigleh ve-ha-nistar*, 81-105, entirely misses the point. On this designation, cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 86; Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, 23, n. 5; idem, *Studies in Ashkenazi-Hasidic Literature* (Hebrew) (Ramat Gan, 1975), 32, n. 9; Kiener, "The Hebrew Paraphrase," 23.

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