MIDRASH UNBOUND

Transformations and Innovations

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EDITED BY

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AND

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ZOHARIC LITERATURE AND MIDRASHIC TEMPORALITY

ELLIOT WOLFSON

We are at a point in the academic study of the Zohar of great transition and uncertainty, one might even be tempted to say a moment of aporetic suspension. The dominant view for the better part of the twentieth century, spearheaded by Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby,[1] that the bulk of this work, with the exclusion of the *Raya meheimna* stratum and the *Tikunim* (first published in Mantua in 1558), was composed by Moses ben Shem Tov de León, has been challenged from a number of perspectives. The model of single authorship of diverse literary strata lumped together under the rubric *guf hazohar* ('the body of the Zohar') has been replaced by the idea of a circle,[2] or perhaps a multiplicity of circles,[3] which were

[1] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1956), 156–243; Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1989), i. 1–126.

[2] Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. Arnold Schwartz, Stephanie Nakache, and Penina Peli (Albany, NY, 1993), 85–138; id., 'Zohar as Renaissance' (Heb.), *Da'at*, 46 (2001), 5–11; id., 'Zohar and *Tikunei zohar*: From Renaissance to Revolution' (Heb.), *Te'udah*, 21/22 (2007), 251–301.

[3] Ronit Meroz, 'Zoharic Narratives and Their Adaptations', *Hispania Judaica*, 3 (2000), 3–63. Meroz has elaborated and refined her thesis in a number of other studies: 'The Chariot of Ezekiel—An Unknown Zoharic Commentary' (Heb.), *Te'udah* 16/17 (2001), 567–616; ead., 'Der Aufbau des Buches Sohar', *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien*, 11 (2005), 16–36; ead., 'The Weaving of a Myth: An Analysis of Two Stories in the Zohar' (Heb.), in Howard Kreisel (ed.), *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, vol. ii (Be'er Sheva, 2006), 167–205; ead., 'The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah', *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (2007), 39–56; ead., 'R. Joseph Angelet and his "Zoharic Writings"' (Heb.), *Te'udah*, 21/22 (2007), 303–404; ead., 'The Path of Silence: An Unknown Story from a Zohar Manuscript', *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, 1 (2008), 319–42; and ead., 'The Writing of the Zoharic *Sitrei torah*—R. Ya'akov Shatz and His Co-Writers' (Heb.), *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 22 (2010), 253–81. See also Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. i (Stanford, Calif., 2004), p. xvi: 'Within the manuscripts themselves were signs of an editorial process: revision, reformulation, and emendation. After careful analysis, I concluded that certain manuscripts of older lineage reflect an earlier recension of the *Zohar*, which was then reworked in manuscripts of later lineage.' In spite of recognizing that we cannot speak of an 'original' text or even a 'best' manuscript, Matt adopts a conventional methodology of producing an eclectic text based on what he judges to be the better readings from among the variants culled from manuscripts, the first two printed editions, the edition used by Moses Cordovero in his 16th-cent. commentary, *Or yakar*, and a series of

allegedly active in Castile and/or Aragon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It has even been argued that the contours of the text did not assume stability until the sixteenth century, at the time that kabbalists were actively engaged in preparing the material for publication.[4]

At the present stage of research, many of the philological and historical issues that a scholar would ideally be expected to know before proceeding to thematic analyses are still unresolved. In this chapter, I will nevertheless assume the relative coherence and dependability of the zoharic corpus from the standpoint of the first two printed editions (Mantua and Cremona, 1558–60) and the publications of ancillary parts not included in the aforementioned recensions, the *Midrash hane'elam* on Ruth published as *Yesod shirim* or *Tapuḥei zahav* (Thienigen, 1559, Venice, 1566, and Kraków, 1593), also published together with the section on Song of Songs (Salonika, 1597), as well as other units and fragments assembled by Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi Berukhim on the basis of manuscripts that circulated among the Safed kabbalists and printed with the title *Zohar ḥadash* (Kraków, 1603, followed by the second and third editions respectively in Venice, 1658 and Amsterdam, 1701). The justification for doing so is not to deny the advancements of the field and the heightened sensitivity with regard to the fluidity of the redactional boundaries of the collection of textual units that eventually circulated as *Sefer hazohar*. Regarding this matter, let me say that, while I accept the general drift of the current research, I do not think there is sufficient material evidence to afford the scholar the possibility of isolating and identifying 'original' strata set apart from later accretions.[5] I thus agree with the contention of Daniel Abrams regarding the 'textual instability' of the Zohar

other printed sources, including Menahem Recanati's *Perush al hatorah*, Joseph Angelet's *Livnat hasapir*, Abraham Galante's commentary on the Zohar in *Or haḥamah*, Simeon Lavi's *Ketem paz*, the *Derekh emet*, ed. Joseph Hamits, Shalom Buzaglo's *Mikdash melekh*, Yehudah Ashlag's *Perush hasulam* on his zoharic translation, and the marginalia in *Gershom Scholem's Annotated Zohar* [Sefer hazohar shel gershom sholem], 6 vols. (Jerusalem, 1992; see p. xvii n. 8).

[4] Boaz Huss, '"Sefer ha-Zohar" as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 7 (1997), 257–307; id., *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and Construction of Its Symbolic Value* [Kezohar harakia: perakim betoledot hitkablut hazohar uvehavniyat erkho hasemali] (Jerusalem, 2008); Daniel Abrams, 'Critical and Post-Critical Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature: Notes on the History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques', *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 1 (1996), 17–71; id., 'The Invention of the Zohar as a Book: On the Assumptions and Expectations of the Kabbalists and Modern Scholars', *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 19 (2009), 7–142; and the expanded versions of these studies in Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, with a foreword by David Greetham (Los Angeles, 2010), 17–117, and 224–428.

[5] In this matter I differ with Daniel Matt, for whom the printed text of Margaliot, whose format can be traced back to the Mantua edition, continues to serve as a base text whence one determines if a variant is desirable. As Matt himself states, his aim is to remove the 'accumulated layers of revision, thereby restoring a more original text', and thus he believes that it is still meaningful to speak of recovering 'the *Zohar*'s primal texture and cryptic flavor' (*The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. i, p. xviii).

and the prudence of thinking of it as a 'family' of disparate 'literary phenomena'[6] rather than as a 'closed book' whose 'original version' can be 'recovered from a comparison of the scattered manuscripts'.[7] Thus, I accept the mandate that Abrams proposes for scholars to abandon any form of 'textual idealism', that is, the assumption that we can 'carve out' an original text from the 'surviving witnesses',[8] but I would take issue with him inasmuch as I think that it is still possible to posit a coherent textual sense with respect to the homiletical passages gathered together within the margins of this literary artefact in the course of at least three centuries. In my judgement, we can still profitably refer to these passages as expressive of a singular phenomenon classified as the zoharic kabbalah, even if this necessitates extending the boundaries of the text over several centuries to accommodate a principle of anthologizing that unifies through multiplicity.

The very metaphor of 'family' is here instructive: genetic connectivity is the characteristic that holds together the potentially indefinite and incongruent branches on any family tree, linking together individuals who may have no bond in the conventional social-anthropological sense. The conception of time underlying the kabbalistic hermeneutic, to be discussed below, is what upholds expanding the notion of textual kinship to include the dissimilar on equal footing with the similar. On this score, the discord and divergence preserved in the assortment of texts eventually published as the Zohar promoted the harmonization of voices across time. I thus do not accept that it is only the modern scholar who can speak of the 'family resemblance' between the 'multiple efforts to write about certain biblical sections' that were canonized as the book of the Zohar in the sixteenth century.[9] This resemblance was already at play in kabbalistic textual communities from the latter part of the thirteenth century, and hence it is feasible to contemplate authorial intention without succumbing to textual idealism.[10]

A full analysis of this topic lies beyond the concerns of this chapter, but I will illustrate the point by considering Meroz's hypothesis regarding the bilingual text that she has designated the 'Midrash of Rabbi Isaac' and that she traces to eleventh-century Palestine or Egypt. The dating is based, in part, on the statement that Israel would be exiled for one thousand years after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which Meroz assumes would probably have been written sometime in the eleventh century but prior to 1068.[11] The text appears in both the Mantua and

[6] Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, 423–4.

[7] Ibid. 464, 466–7. [8] Ibid. 446. [9] Ibid. 439.

[10] See, by contrast, ibid. 526–34. Compare ibid. 13, where Abrams attempts to distinguish his own methodology from my own. While I appreciate the generosity of his tone, I have serious questions about the legitimacy of this contrast, since when it comes to any discussion of ideas embedded in Abrams's investigation of the textual culture of kabbalistic materials, I do not see a radical break with my own thinking. More importantly, not one of my phenomenological and hermeneutical studies would have to be modified by appeal to 'textual instability' or the 'fluidity of the text' (ibid. 446). Simply put, my critical interventions are not based on presuming that an *Urtext* of any document can be recovered.

[11] Meroz, 'The Middle Eastern Origins', 46–9.

Cremona editions of the Zohar, but, as Scholem has already observed, there is an interesting discrepancy with respect to a section of the text: in the Mantua version (2: 16*b*–17*a*) there is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, whereas the parallel in the Cremona edition (Exodus 7*c*, column 27) is entirely in Hebrew.[12] At best, what Meroz has demonstrated is that there is an older midrashic microform that has been incorporated into the zoharic corpus, either in the original Hebrew or translated into Aramaic at some later phase of the editorial process. It is not clear, however, that if we isolate the microform from its redactional context—and, as far as I can tell, there is no manuscript evidence of the microform apart from collections of zoharic material[13]—it should be labelled in some 'originary' sense as part of the Zohar.[14] In my judgement, all attempts to reconstruct the redactional strata of the zoharic text are subject to this criticism and thus remain highly conjectural. This is so even when manuscripts (invariably from a later period than the presumed times of composition of the distinct textual seams) have been used to substantiate the elaborate and at times rather fanciful reconstructions, especially the effort to demarcate the sociological parameters of the zoharic circles based on variants that are essentially orthographical and philological in nature.[15] The import of my suggestion to shift the focus of the discourse from the question of pseudepigraphy to an appreciation of the literary, moral, and religious value of anonymity in medieval kabbalistic fraternities was to loosen the grip of the historiographical concern in the field to pinpoint the authors and date of composition of this text.[16]

In spite of the methodological problems currently at the centre of the scholarly agenda, I readily acknowledge the likelihood that the zoharic text accrued over an extensive period of time and that, in great measure, the taxonomy of a 'book' applied to it is a later invention.[17] We must be attentive not only to the manifold layers of this compilation and the probability of different authors, but also to the fact that many interpolations, particularly from the period of aggressive redaction in the sixteenth century, have found their way into the received text. Notwithstanding the cogency of these claims, it is still viable, in my opinion, to speak of a homogeneous vision underlying the various strata of zoharic literature. Recognition of plurivocality does not undermine the soundness of positing a uniform world-view; on the contrary,

[12] *Gershom Scholem's Annotated Zohar*, 1140. See also Yehuda Liebes, 'Hebrew and Aramaic Languages of the Zohar', *Aramaic Studies*, 4 (2006), 35–52, esp. 42.

[13] The manuscripts mentioned by Meroz, 'The Middle Eastern Origins', 41–2 nn. 9–10 are Zurich Heidelberg 83 (Spanish script *c.*1500), Munich 20 (Spanish script from the 16th cent.), and Moscow Guenzberg 293 (Italian script written in Pisa 1549).

[14] For an independent critique of Meroz's argument, see Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, 346–7.

[15] The comments of Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, i. 100, still seem to me relevant even though today we have a better sense of the scope and diversity of the zoharic manuscripts.

[16] This shift in orientation is the gist of my argument in Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Anonymous Chapters of the Elderly Master of Secrets—New Evidence for the Early Activity of the Zoharic Circle', *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 19 (2009), 143–278.

[17] This is the thesis endorsed most vigorously by Abrams; see references above, n. 4.

heterogeneity may itself be demonstrative of a shared perspective, and repetition may be the impetus for difference.[18] It goes without saying that I no longer accept Scholem's surmise that the multiple explanations of a verse found in any given zoharic pericope bespeak 'homiletical variations on one subject' rather than 'a plurality of writers'.[19] However, one can posit several authors of a treatise—even straddling several centuries—and continue to speak of a unifying factor; indeed, one might make the case on hermeneutical grounds that it is precisely the unifying factor that allows for diversity. The weave of the textual fabric does not disrupt the possibility of an iteration that renews itself indefinitely.[20] It is from that methodological viewpoint that I proceed to discuss the midrashic element in the zoharic compilation.[21]

MIDRASH AND THE SPACING OF TIME

There have been many approaches to Midrash both as a literary genre and as an exegetical modality. For the purposes of this chapter I wish to focus on a somewhat neglected aspect of the midrashic mentality, the intersection of time and hermeneutics, or, more specifically, the discontinuity and reiteration that characterize the assumptions about time underlying the rabbinic approach to the scriptural text that

[18] This point is sorely missed by Idel's erroneous characterization of my work as 'monistic' or 'totalizing' and the appeal to his own alleged sense of *différence* and celebration of diversity, or what he calls polychromatism. For a specific criticism of my reading of zoharic literature, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), 129–30, and my rejoinder in the first reference cited below, n. 20.

[19] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 172. Scholem entertained the possibility that the 'existence of a multitude of writings of apparently very different character, loosely assembled under the title of "Zohar", seems to leave no argument against the view that they do in fact belong to different writers and different periods' (p. 159). However, he reached the conclusion that the different strata 'are the work of one author. It is not true that they were written at different periods or by different authors, nor is it possible to detect different historical layers within the various parts themselves. Here and there a sentence or a few words may have been added at some later date, but in the main the distinction . . . between so-called authentic parts and subsequent interpolations does not bear serious investigation' (p. 163). The argument for the 'constructional unity' of the Zohar, based on similarity of literary style, language, and ideas, is repeated in Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 220–1. The position rejected by Scholem has emerged today as the dominant paradigm of zoharic research.

[20] For a more elaborate discussion, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Structure, Innovation, and Diremptive Temporality: The Use of Models to Study Continuity and Discontinuity in Kabbalistic Tradition', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 6 (2007), 153–6. See also id., *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York, 2005), 47–8.

[21] An alternative way to approach this topic would have been to discuss the impact of midrashic collections (especially from the 11th and 12th cents.) on the zoharic authors, to show the creative appropriation and recasting of the earlier sources, which would also afford the opportunity to assess the proto-kabbalistic elements in the rabbinic *midrashim*. See the concise statement on this literary possibility in Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ, 1987), p. 17. Scholem's assessment is limited to the impact of the *midrashim* edited or redacted by rabbinic circles in Languedoc on the *Bahir*, but his words could be applied to Spanish kabbalists as well, particularly those responsible for the zoharic homilies. On the midrashic sources used in the Zohar, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 173, and compare the reference below, n. 32.

is the subject of interpretation. Critical to this strategy of reading is the spatial bridging of past and future in the irreducible present that is constituted transcendentally within the immanence of consciousness. Phenomenologically speaking, past and future have no temporal density apart from the noematic lived experience of the present, but the latter lacks any ideational content except through the noetic synthesis of the intentional acts of retention and protention, which point respectively to the past and future crisscrossing in the moment, the primordially perceptual present that cannot be represented as presence inasmuch as it always exceeds what can be presented, the now, we might say, that is perpetually not-now. As Heidegger succinctly expressed the archaic poetic wisdom, 'time goes … in that it passes away. The passing of time is, of course, a coming, but a coming which goes, in passing away. What comes in time never comes to stay, but to go.'[22] The temporal comportment, accordingly, is occasioned by the repetition of the indeterminate and the indeterminacy of the repetitious colluding in the living instant, the *tempus discretum*, the cut that binds one synchronically to the diachronic opening of time, the rhythmic discontinuity[23] of the continuous present, the non-coincidental coincidence, the blink of the eye that is both repetitive and diremptive.

This sense of time has far-reaching implications for how we construe the proximity and distance of the present to the past and to the future, a determination that is crucial to appraise the hermeneutical presuppositions of what can be called the midrashic condition. Rather than viewing the temporal as a sequence of punctual nodules strung together in a linear fashion like beads of a necklace, or as a succession of discrete points rotating in a circular manner, time is better considered as a swerve—the linear circle or the circular line—that necessitates the constant accommodation of the recollected past to the bestowal of the future and of the anticipated future to the yielding of the past. In the givenness of the indivisible and nonrepresentable present, every reverberation is a recurrence of what has never transpired. From the perspective of the egological narrative that shapes our perception of the normal lifespan, the duration of time is experienced as a river that flows from birth to death, but from a perspective that is not so constricted, time may be better imagined as a whirlpool, a vortex in which remembrance is as much of the future as expectation is of the past.

This calibration supplies the key to understanding the midrashic approach to Scripture. This is not to deny the current trend in the field of rabbinics to avoid generalizations, and to apply instead a type of literary analysis that rests on a form-critical approach that treats the different parts of the corpus atomistically. I would

[22] Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, with an introduction by J. Glenn Gray (New York, 1968), 96.

[23] I borrow this expression from Eftichis Pirovolakis, *Reading Derrida and Ricoeur: Improbable Encounters between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY, 2010), 43–81. While many of the insights expressed in this essay repeat what I have written about time and hermeneutics in several previously published studies, the formulation here has benefited from the analysis offered by Pirovolakis.

appeal nonetheless to the philosophical truism that plurality is discernible only against the backdrop of uniformity, just as uniformity is discernible only against the backdrop of plurality; the dialectical relation of identity and difference should forestall setting them in antithetical conflict. The dialectic I envision does not involve overcoming the difference between identity and difference by affirming the identity of identity and difference, but rather the paradoxical identification of their identity in virtue of their difference.[24] In my judgement, it is still theoretically warranted and heuristically feasible to ponder the variant expressions of the midrashic sensibility in different textual settings by identifying patterns of thought and unified systems. I hasten to add that these patterns are expressive of an *infinite genetic multiple*,[25] that is, the systemic assumptions that provide the relatively stable framework through and in which the changing patterns evolve, dissolve, and revolve. We are justified, then, in presuming that sameness is precisely the criterion that engenders difference and, as such, there is no need to bifurcate the two. Echoing the words of Theodor Adorno, we could say that it is unity alone that transcends unity,[26] for the 'nonidentical' itself is the 'thing's own identity against its identifications'.[27] The cognitive ideal 'combines an appetite for incorporation with an aversion to what cannot be incorporated, to the very thing that would need to be known', the 'essence' of the individual—as opposed to the universal—about whom it can always be said that it 'is more than it is', a 'more' that 'is not imposed upon it but remains immanent to it', the 'innermost core of the object' that 'proves to be simultaneously extraneous to it, the phenomenon of its seclusion'.[28] Adorno approvingly mentions Husserl's insight that 'the universal dwells at the centre of the individual', but he adds that 'absolute individuality is a product of the very process of abstractions that is begun for universality's sake. The individual cannot be deduced from thought, yet the core of individuality would be comparable to those utterly individuated works of art which spurn all schemata and whose analysis will rediscover universal moments in their extreme individuation.'[29]

Based on this calculation, I would proffer that it is still prudent to speak collectively of the literary culture of the rabbis as long as we are mindful that the general will constantly be recovered from the extreme individuation of the particular. The notion of an indissoluble individual is as much an abstraction as that of an immutable universal. This supposition has a direct impact on the viability of thinking about a concept of temporality endemic to the midrashic imagination, predicated on

[24] The articulation of this logic has been central to much of my work. See e.g. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. xix–xx, 64–5, 99–105. For a magisterial analysis of the history of dialectical thinking and its persistence in contemporary currents of Western philosophy, see Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London, 2009).

[25] My coinage is indebted to the 'infinite generic multiple' mentioned by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, *Philosophy in the Present*, ed. Peter Engelmann, trans. Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano (Cambridge, 2010), 26–48.

[26] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York, 1979), 158.

[27] Ibid. 160. [28] Ibid. 161 [29] Ibid. 162.

configuring time in such a way that the past is appropriated and thereby determined by the present, even as the present is appropriated and thereby determined by the past. The possibility of a future arises from this reversal of the prevailing paradigm of causality. Applying this hermeneutically, we can similarly speak of the text delineated by the interpretation that is delineated by the text. Within this circle of reciprocity—a circle that is open at both termini—the timeline of exegesis, which allows for the creative recasting of biblical law and narrative in accord with the impressional exigencies of the moment, can be drawn.

ZOHARIC EXEGESIS AND THE FOURFOLD TEMPORALITY OF THE NARRATIVE

The conception of time that informed the midrashic mindset reaches a crescendo in the homilies that were eventually included in what may be called the zoharic literature.[30] In spite of the complexity of the history of the text, we can assert with relative confidence that the decisive redactional strategy was to organize the exegetical sermons as a commentary on the Pentateuch. Here it is apposite to recall Scholem's observation that the literary composition of the Zohar 'outwardly imitates the form of the Midrash. It is evident that the author had no clear perception of the difference between the old Midrash, whose tradition he tried to carry on, and the medieval homily which issued from his pen without his being aware of it.' Scholem goes on to note that 'in the old Midrash' the introductions that precede the interpretation of the relevant verse from the Pentateuch 'display a loose mosaic of authentic remarks and sayings', whereas in the 'mystical Midrash' of the Zohar they 'are really like homilies carefully built up with an eye to formal unity and coherence of thought'.[31] Not only did the zoharic authors draw freely from rabbinic *midrashim*, including, to name a few of the most important sources, the various texts that were eventually published as *Midrash Rabbah*, *Tanḥuma*, *Pesikta derav kahana*, *Pesikta rabati*, *Midrash tehilim*, and *Pirkei derabi eli'ezer*,[32] but structurally and rhetorically, the Zohar is essentially midrashic, and this extends from the earliest stratum, the *Midrash hane'elam*, which is made up of exegetical narratives closest in spirit to the aggadic *midrashim*, to the latest stratum, the *Tikunim*, which is organized around seventy different interpretations of the first word of Genesis. Rather than simply repeating the rabbinic dicta, the medieval kabbalists fabricated a more coherent narrative laid

[30] The locution, which has become prevalent in contemporary scholarship following the lead of Liebes, was already used by Scholem, *Major Trends*, 159.

[31] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 171. See ibid. 174, where Scholem characterized the imagination of the zoharic author in terms of a 'tendency towards dramatization, equally apparent in the architecture of whole compositions and in the manner in which brief Talmudic stories or legends are converted into lively Aggadoth on the same subject. Where an Aggadah already contains mystical elements, these are of course duly emphasized and occasionally woven into an entirely new myth.' On the mystical reinscription of myth in zoharic homilies, compare Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford, 2003), 313–14.

[32] Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, i. 75.

atop the biblical account,[33] one that reflects a distinctive metaphysical scheme that renders the scriptural idiom symbolically based on the identification of the Torah and God.[34] I am inclined to accept that there are traces of this idea in older sources, but it does not become explicit until the Middle Ages, whence it emerges as an axiom—one might say ground concept—of Jewish esotericism. In the specific location of the zoharic homilies, the identity of God and Torah fosters the ideal of textual embodiment,[35] which effectively narrows the gap between revelation and interpretation. To study the text is to behold the image of the divine.[36] Michael Fishbane well captured the hermeneutical stance of the zoharic kabbalists when he noted that 'there is no separation between living the truth of Scripture and living the truth of God … Scripture suffuses all; for it is the real myth of God … God's truth is refracted in fragments of myth bound by the syntax of Scripture.'[37]

The zoharic kabbalists creatively expanded the sense of time at play in the collections of midrashic dicta from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. To be sure, the kabbalistic reworking of the earlier material is enhanced by two assumptions: first, as I have already noted, the belief that the Torah is the body or the image of the divine, and second, the pseudepigraphic attribution of the zoharic dicta to the ancient sages. The combination of these tenets extended the twofold nature of time operative in the rabbinic sources to a quaternal conception. Thus, in the zoharic homilies we can distinguish four temporal modalities corresponding to four identities that mould the interpretation of the scriptural narrative: (1) the divine emanations, (2) the biblical personae, (3) the rabbinic figures, and (4) the unnamed kabbalists.[38]

[33] On the zoharic exegetical creativity as an *ars poetica*, see Yehuda Liebes, 'Zohar and Eros' (Heb.), *Alpayim*, 9 (1994), 67–115.

[34] This principle has been discussed by several scholars. See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1965), 37–44; id., 'The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala', *Diogenes*, 79 (1972), 79–80; 80 (1972), 178–80, 193–4; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, iii. 1079–82; Moshe Idel, 'The Concept of Torah in Hekhalot Literature and Its Metamorphosis in Kabbalah', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 1 (1981), 23–84, esp. 49–58; id., *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*, foreword by Harold Bloom (New Haven, Conn., 2002), 69–74, 119–24, 298–9, 459–60; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 26, 41, 124–5, 137–8, 239–40, 243–6, 248–9, 255–8.

[35] For an extensive discussion of what I call the 'textual embodiment' and 'poetic incarnation', see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 190–260.

[36] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 375–7.

[37] Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 309. For an earlier formulation, see id., *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 41–3. On the 'exegetical spirituality' and the hermeneutical process in the Zohar, see id., *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 105–22. Fishbane duly notes how zoharic interpretation develops 'through the exegetical transformation of biblical passages' (p. 114). See also the analysis of language, experience, and myth in Maurizio Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah: Interpretive Projections of the Sanctuary and Ritual* (Los Angeles, 2007), 336–65.

[38] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 37–8. The relationship of temporality and narrativity in zoharic exegesis, based on my prior observations, is noted as well by Nathan Wolski, *A Journey into the Zohar: An Introduction to the Book of Radiance* (Albany, NY, 2010), 213–14, 255 n. 48 (where the author's indebtedness to me is acknowledged).

These four can be grouped under two types of temporality: the first, which stands by itself, comprises the genus of eternal time, the unfolding of the infinite darkness in the innumerable folds of light that constitute the eternality of time and the temporality of eternity; and the remaining three, which constitute the genus of temporal time, the time of temporality measured by human technology and recorded as the annals of historical epochs. The movement through these four gradations is presented at times as an exegetical journey of a linear sort, passing hierarchically from the mundane to the divine, the lower to the upper, the corporeal to the spiritual. The journey, however, is anything but linear. For the kabbalists, the line (*kav*) must always be considered in conjunction with the circle (*igul*), the two dominant geometric prisms through which the constellation of the divine pleroma, and indeed the whole concatenation of being, is constructed in the human imagination.[39] Rather than viewing the linear and circular as antinomical, the kabbalistic mindset requires the paradoxical identification of the two, epitomized, for instance, in Abraham Abulafia's arresting image of the 'circular ladder' (*sulam agol*),[40] to which he also refers as the 'spherical ladder' (*hasulam hakaduri*).[41] Time and space are arranged in the same dual pattern. Focusing on the former, I would conjecture that to be attuned to the linear circularity of the timeswerve is to traverse the commonplace threefold demarcation of the temporal: the past is the present as future, the present, the future as past, and the future, the past as present.[42]

The compresence of the three tenses of time—a notion derived by kabbalists from a longstanding understanding of what is implied by the Tetragrammaton, that God is, was, and shall be concurrently—renders simultaneity and sequentiality coterminous: what is experienced as sequential from one vantage point is in fact simultaneous from another. In this regard, the conception of time enunciated by the voices preserved in the Zohar is quintessentially poetic, since the poem entails, as Paul Celan has eloquently articulated it, the 'mystery of encounter', which takes place in the 'one unique, momentary present'—the 'here and now' that transforms 'its already-no-longer [*Schon-nicht-mehr*] into its always-still [*Immer-noch*]'.[43] This corresponds

[39] Ronit Meroz, 'Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching' [Hage'ulah betorat ha'ari], Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988, 232–4, 239–42; Mordecai Pachter, *Roots of Faith and Devequt: Studies in the History of Kabbalistic Ideas* (Los Angeles, 2004), 131–84.

[40] Abraham Abulafia, 'Sefer hamelits', in *Matsref hasekhel vesefer haot*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), 30.

[41] Ibid. 31. See Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY, 1988), 109–11; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia—Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy* (Los Angeles, 2000), 128 n. 92, 135, 152 n. 157.

[42] For a more elaborate discussion of linear circularity, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley, Calif., 2006), 55–117, esp. 58–9.

[43] Paul Celan, *The Meridian: Final Version—Drafts—Materials*, ed. Bernhard Böschenstein and Heino Schmull with assistance from Michael Schwarzkopf and Christiane Wittkop, trans. and with a preface by Pierre Joris (Stanford, Calif., 2011), 8–9; German: Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung–Entwürfe–Materialien*, ed. Bernhard Böschenstein and Heino Schmull with assistance from Michael Schwarzkopf and Christiane Wittkop (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 8–9. I have also consulted the

exactly to the enigmatic locution in one zoharic passage, *milin ḥadetin atikin*, 'new ancient words',[44] that is, the words of Torah that are concomitantly novel and ancient.[45] Analogously, according to a second passage, the disciples of the school of Rav—probably a cipher for the Spanish kabbalists—are described as 'renewing the ancient words every day, and the Shekhinah dwells upon them and listens to their words'.[46] In zoharic kabbalah, moreover, textual interpretation is similarly akin to Celan's depiction of poetry as 'language-become-shape' (*gestaltwordene Sprache*)—to express it in terminology germane to Jewish esotericism, the *shiur komah* of the divine body, the name that is the Torah[47]—a process of poiesis that is perpetually 'underway' (*unterwegs*), a verbal gesticulation that 'wants to head toward some other', to let 'the most essential aspect of the other speak', albeit in the 'immediacy and nearness' of 'its time' (*dessen Zeit*).[48] Its time—the momentary present, 'already-no-longer' but 'always-still', indeed, always-still precisely because already-no-longer.

THE TIME OF WALKING AND THE HERMENEUTICAL PATH

It is this conception of time that underlies the centrality of the image of walking in the visionary landscape[49] of the zoharic anthology.[50] Prima facie, one might be tempted to gauge the importance of this activity from the vantage point of spatiality.[51] This is

alternative translation in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner (New York, 2001), 401–13, esp. 409.

[44] Zohar iii. 166*b*.

[45] On the relationship of the old and new in zoharic exegesis, see Daniel C. Matt, '*Matnita Dilan*: A Technique of Innovation in the Zohar' (Heb.), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 8 (1989), 123–45; id., '"New-Ancient Words": The Aura of Secrecy in the Zohar', in Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (eds.), *Gershom Scholem's 'Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism': 50 Years After* (Tübingen, 1993), 181–207. Speaking about Moses de León's pseudepigraphic activity, Matt writes that 'Ramdal liberates himself from the fetters of time, space and ego. He has surrendered his identity as author, but in the process, he has gained ancient authority' ('"New-Ancient Words", 184). Although I would not quibble with the main point, I think it is more accurate to say that de León (or any of the other historical personae whose voices are preserved in the zoharic text) enters another dimension of time and space rather than being liberated therefrom. To speak without qualification of the creative process as liberation from the confinement of space and time presupposes a monolithic understanding of these phenomena.

[46] Zohar iii. 197*b*.

[47] Ibid. ii. 87*a*, 90*b*, 124*a*; iii. 13*b*, 75*a*, 159*a*. See above, n. 34.

[48] Celan, *The Meridian*, 9; *Der Meridian*, 9–10.

[49] The phrase is appropriated from Paul Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory* (Montreal, 1971).

[50] This motif of walking was explored extensively by my student David Greenstein, 'Aimless Pilgrimage: The Quotidian Utopia of the Zohar', Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003. On the mystical praxis of wandering on the path or walking on the way, see also Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, trans. Nathan Wolski (Stanford, Calif., 2009), 116–20; Nathan Wolski, 'Don Quixote and Sancho Panza Were Walking on the Way: El Caballero Andante and the Book of Radiance (*Sefer ha-Zohar*)', *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 27 (2009), 24–47; id., *A Journey into the Zohar*, 10–12, 143.

[51] Greenstein, 'Aimless Pilgrimage', 199–323.

a reasonable assumption—the stations of the crossing are determined by the points of departure and destination—but, as it happens, in these texts the sense of expedition seems to be primarily an orientation of time. I do not mean to suggest that one can actually separate the spatial and the temporal or that the spatial is to be conceived of as an epiphenomenon of the temporal; I agree with thinkers who have argued that the two dimensions of experience cannot be disentangled,[52] an idea that finds support in kabbalistic literature as well.[53] In the jargon of quantum mechanics, objects that exist—understood either as 'solid material bodies' or as 'localized fields of energy'—are characterized by the 'spatiotemporal extensiveness of actualities and systems of actualities'.[54] We may infer, kabbalistically, that the tensiveness of the event is similarly grasped by this notion of spatiotemporal extensiveness. Insofar as the nature of being is linguistic, the actual occasion, the eventfulness of becoming, can be specularized ontically or hermeneutically. Hence, the task of reading that may be elicited from zoharic texts, as I have argued elsewhere, is a gesture of meandering in the 'imaginal time-space' wherein one finds 'oneself always in the middle, along the path, betwixt and between, conceiving the imagined as real and the real as imagined'.[55] The homiletical language of these kabbalists may be likened poetically to a mirror of temporal spaces and spatial intervals in and through which the image of the imageless is refracted.[56] Nevertheless, there is a sense in which time is granted a privileged position in a manner that is consonant with the way that in the Western philosophical tradition (noticeably since Kant) the correlation of consciousness and time has engendered an epistemological preference for the temporal,[57] an idea that culminates in the phenomenological and post-phenomenological conceptions, most notably, Husserl's specification of time as the self-temporalization of intentional consciousness, Heidegger's notion of being-toward-death as the ground of the ecstatic temporality of human existence, and Levinas's conception of diachrony as the endless continuity that proceeds from the relationship of the self with the Other, a relationship that precludes the possibility of coincidence, since the other to which the self is related always exceeds the capacity of that self to know or to experience. Without ignoring the medieval context within which the kabbalistic ideas arose, it seems to me defensible to think of the zoharic texts in light of the post-Kantian temporocentrism.

[52] Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 46–9.

[53] Ibid. 56, 86–7, 106; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Kenotic Overflow and Temporal Transcendence: Angelic Embodiment and the Alterity of Time in Abraham Abulafia', *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 18 (2008), 182–6. On the convergence of time and space in kabbalistic doctrine, see as well Haviva Pedaya, 'The Divinity as Place and Time and the Holy Place in Jewish Mysticism', in Benjamin Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land—Proceedings of the International Conference in Memory of Joshua Prawer* (Jerusalem, 1998), 85.

[54] Michael Epperson, *Quantum Mechanics and the Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York, 2004), 164–5.

[55] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 37.

[56] Ibid. 43.

[57] See the comment of John Sallis, cited in Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 17, and my own remarks on Schelling and Heidegger, ibid. 29–34. On the relationship of time and space in the later Heidegger, see ibid. 42–6.

Time, not space, is the measure of what is considered ultimate reality, the substance of that which exists in the divine, human, and cosmic planes of being.[58]

The temporal essence of walking as a hermeneutical praxis is thematized in the following passage:

> Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Yose were walking on the way. Rabbi Judah said to Rabbi Yose: Open your mouth and engage in [the study of] the Torah, since the Shekhinah is found with you. For whenever words of Torah are engaged, the Shekhinah comes and joins, and all the more so on the way, since the Shekhinah precedes and arrives, and walks before those who are worthy of the faith of the blessed Holy One.[59]

The author of this text combines two rabbinic principles, the first that the divine presence (Shekhinah) is found with those who are occupied in the study of Torah,[60] and the second that scholars who travel on the road should engage in study.[61] Note that the exposition of Scripture is not envisioned as the cause that theurgically occasions the presence of the divine, but rather it is the presence of the divine that occasions the exposition of Scripture. The Shekhinah is thus described as coming before—in both a temporal and a spatial sense—those who are worthy of the faith (*meheimanuta*) of God, a technical term in zoharic kabbalah that denotes either the last of the ten sefirotic potencies or the totality of the pleroma envisioned as the union of the masculine impulse to overflow and the feminine capacity to receive.[62]

The exegesis that immediately follows ostensibly reverses the positioning of Shekhinah on the outside:

> Rabbi Yose opened and said: 'Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within the recesses of your house; your sons shall be like olive saplings around your table' [Ps. 128: 3]. 'Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine'—the whole time that your wife is within the recesses of the house and does not venture outside, she is chaste [*tsenuah*] and fit to produce worthy offspring. 'Like a fruitful vine'—just as a vine is planted only with its species, not with another species, so a laudable woman does not produce saplings with another man. Just as a vine cannot be grafted with another tree, so too, a laudable woman. See her reward: 'your sons shall be like olive saplings around your table'—just as the leaves of olive saplings do not fall all year round, and they are all constantly attached, so too, 'your sons, like olive saplings around your table'. What is written after it? 'So shall the man who

[58] With regard to this matter, my thinking is in accord with Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was influenced by many of the same sources. See my comments in *Alef*, *Mem*, *Tau*, 204–5 n. 361, and 205 n. 3.

[59] Zohar i. 115*b*.

[60] Mishnah *Avot* 3: 2; BT *Ber.* 6*a*.

[61] BT *Eruv.* 54*a* (one who travels alone should be engaged in Torah study) and *Ta'an.* 10*b* (in that case, the teaching deals with two scholars travelling together). The rabbinic sensibility is likely to have been informed by the language of Deut. 6: 7.

[62] See Jonathan Garb, 'The Secrets of Faith in the Book of the Zohar' (Heb.), in Moshe Halbertal, David Kurzweil, and Avi Sagi (eds.), *On Faith: Studies in the Concept of Faith and its History in the Jewish Tradition* [Al ha'emunah: iyunim bemusag ha'emunah uvetoledotav bimesoret hayehudit] (Jerusalem, 2005), 294–311. References to previous scholarship can be found in Garb's essay.

fears the Lord be blessed' [*hineh ki khen yevorakh gaver yere yhvh*] [Ps. 128: 4]. It should have been written *hineh khen*! [It is written *hineh ki khen*] in order to augment another matter, for we learn from this that the whole time that the Shekhinah is hidden appropriately in her place, as it were, 'your sons shall be like olive saplings', this refers to Israel when they dwell on the land. 'Around your table'—eating, drinking, offering sacrifices, and rejoicing before the blessed Holy One, and the ones above and below are blessed on account of them. After the Shekhinah departed, Israel were expelled from their father's table, and they were among the nations, crying out every day. There was no one to heed them but the blessed Holy One, as it is written, 'Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies [I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling my covenant with them: for I the Lord am their God]' [Lev. 26: 44].[63]

In contrast to the exteriority associated with the Shekhinah in the introductory part of the passage, which is attributed to Rabbi Judah, the acceptable code of conduct for the Jewish woman below, as it emerges from Rabbi Yose's exegesis, is for her to stay confined within domestic boundaries. The spatial constraint signifies that the chastity suitable to the feminine is linked inherently to a state of interiority, to her being sheltered on the inside[64]—the word *tsenuah* has the double connotation of modesty and concealment.[65] Another facet of this timidity and containment is that the commendable woman cohabits only with her husband—she is not out there prowling around the street—and, as a consequence, she merits producing worthy offspring. From the example of Jewish women, the zoharic author generalizes about the status of the Shekhinah: when she is hidden in her place—a reference to the Jerusalem Temple—Israel dwell joyously on the land, but when she is exiled, the nation, too, is displaced. Even though the literary conceit of the text is that the walking mentioned at the beginning of the homily supposedly takes place within the boundaries of the land of Israel, we may assume that it is, in fact, emblematic of the exilic wandering of the divine feminine when she is no longer restricted to her place. Rootlessness is a sign of alienation and dislocation, but it is also the catalyst that stimulates textual exegesis. The image of the mystic itinerants, therefore, is symbolic of the hermeneutic predilection. In the sedentary state, the feminine is the interior *par excellence*, the container that encompasses and encircles the male—metaphors that reflect the medieval kabbalistic understanding of the female genitals and, by extension, the dynamics of heterosexual eros—the sheltering that gives form to and thereby reveals that which is concealed, the opaque mirror in

[63] Zohar i. 115*b*–116*a*.

[64] On the depiction of the redemptive state as a sheltering of the feminine within her boundaries like the point enclosed in the centre of a circle, see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 382–3.

[65] The image of the princess being hidden in the king's chamber appears in the bahiric anthology. See Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts* (Los Angeles, 1994), §104, pp. 187–9. Regarding this theme, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Secrecy, Modesty, and the Feminine: Kabbalistic Traces in the Thought of Levinas', in Kevin Hart and Michael A. Signer (eds.), *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas Between Jews and Christians* (New York, 2010), 64–5.

which the supernal images that are invisible are seen,[66] the light that is a canopy that covers and, consequently, exposes the hidden light of Yesod, the phallic potency of the divine anthropos.[67] Here we touch on a vital nerve of the gender implication of the intertwining of esotericism and eroticism in the theosophic symbolism: the female is assigned the role of the veil or the garment, different terms that express the idea that the feminine is the agency that discloses the concealment of the masculine, albeit by concealing it—a point perhaps best illustrated by the liturgical tradition of pronouncing the name YHVH by the epithet Adonai, that is, the epithet makes the ineffable name audible even as it preserves its ineffability.[68]

The motif of the members of the fraternity studying Torah as they walk on the way recurs frequently in the zoharic corpus.[69] In one passage, which may be considered illustrative, the master of the imaginary fraternity, Shimon bar Yohai, is said to be travelling with his son, Rabbi Eleazar, Rabbi Yose, and Rabbi Hiya; while they are walking, his son says to him: 'The way is prepared before us; we desire to hear

[66] Zohar ii. 149*b*.

[67] Ibid. iii. 204*b*. This is not the context to respond in detail to the use of this passage in Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 168–70, to challenge my understanding of the gender construction of the feminine in zoharic kabbalah. Briefly, let me state that I have never denied that the feminine functions symbolically as the veil that simultaneously reveals and conceals the masculine, nor have I disavowed that the feminine is the potency with which the masculine desires to unite. As a matter of fact, if one reads my work carefully, it should be abundantly clear that a crucial part of my presentation of kabbalistic esotericism is based precisely on assigning this role to the feminine. I have touched on this theme in numerous studies, but see especially 'Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah', in Elliot R. Wolfson (ed.), *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Revelation of Secrets in the History of Religions* (New York, 1999), 113–54, slightly revised in id., *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings From Zoharic Literature* (London, 2007), 258–94. Furthermore, I have repeatedly commented on the desire of the female to receive the overflow of the male as part of the drama that rectifies the split of the primordial androgyne. What I have argued, however, is that this desire is characteristic of the exilic state of separation, but that the consummation of that longing results in the restoration of the feminine to the masculine in accord with the kabbalists' interpretation of the creation of Adam in Genesis 1: 26–7 in light of the account in Genesis 2: 21–4. Since the first stage is one in which male and female must be reunited, heteroerotic imagery is appropriate, but in the second stage, once the split has been repaired, there is a turn to the homoerotic. See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 109–10, 147–9, and the concise summary of my view in id., *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford, 2006), 85. Finally, I have duly noted that the feminine is the locus of the imagination and therefore crucial to kabbalistic poetics. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 306–17. Hellner-Eshed's insinuation that I one-sidedly depict the feminine in words such as 'lack and absence, ruthless penetration, negation, and submersion in the masculine' is a misleading and simplistic portrayal of my work. Even so, I would still contend that her insistence on the 'reciprocal drama of the feminine's yearning to joyfully fill her living, spacious, and desiring womb with all the variegated qualities that flow into her' falls short of providing a 'feminine erotics' that is not informed by the overarching phallocentricism. The depiction of the womb as a space craving to be filled with the overflow of the male is a rather standard expression of a phallocentric point of view.

[68] Zohar i. 39*b*, 145*a*, 232*b*; ii. 230*b*; iii. 65*b*, 71*b*. See Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, 31–3; id., *Language, Eros, Being*, 71.

[69] Zohar i. 7*a*, 69*b*, 83*a*, 87*a*, 145*a*, 204*b*, 205*a*, 213*a*, 219*a–b*; ii. 68*b*, 80*a*, 87*b*, 121*b*, 149*a*; iii. 55*b*.

words of Torah.'[70] Significantly, the master begins by interpreting a verse that sheds light on the nature of the way:

Rabbi Shimon opened and said: 'A fool's mind[71] is also wanting when he travels [and he says to everybody that he is a fool]' [Eccl. 10: 3]. When a person desires to establish his way before the blessed Holy One, prior to setting out on the way, he should confer with Him and pray to Him concerning the way, as we have learned,[72] for it is written 'Righteousness goes before him, and he sets out on his way' [Ps. 85: 14], and, then, the Shekhinah will not depart from him. And what is written concerning one who does not trust his Lord? 'A fool's mind is also wanting when he travels.' What is 'his mind'? This is the blessed Holy One, who will not accompany him on the way. That person is lacking his escort on the way because he did not trust his Lord before he set out on the way and he did not seek His assistance. And even when he is walking on the way, he does not engage in words of Torah, and hence 'his mind is also wanting', for his Lord does not walk with him and He is not found in the way. 'And he says to everybody that he is a fool,' even when he hears a word of the faith of his Lord, he utters that it is foolish to engage in it. Like the time that someone was asked about the sign of the covenant engraved on the flesh of the person, and he said that it is not [a matter of] faith. Rabbi Yeiva the Elder heard and gazed upon him, and he turned into a heap of bones.[73] We, who are on the way with the support of the blessed Holy One, must speak words of Torah.[74]

It is plausible to interpret this passage literally, since it is based on the two rabbinic principles previously mentioned, which purportedly presume an actual excursion. I am doubtful, however, of the validity of this tactic when assessing material in which it seems virtually impossible to distinguish the factual and the fantastic.[75] Hence, it is equally plausible to interpret the text metaphorically, so that the 'way' should be decoded as a reference to the hermeneutical path, and that walking figuratively denotes the act of textual explication. The end of the passage clearly indicates that the imaginary sojourn in the zoharic homily is meant to be understood in this fashion. Moreover, inasmuch as the kabbalists equate Torah and God, it is reasonable to depict exegesis of the text as a mode of embellishing the divine.[76] To embark on

[70] Zohar i. 58*b*.

[71] The expression *libo*, which is translated as 'his mind', literally denotes 'his heart', but biblically and rabbinically the heart is the locus of cognition as well as of emotion. See Isa. 6: 10; BT *Shab.* 33*b*. Obviously, many more examples could have been mentioned.

[72] The allusion is probably to the prayer for travelling on the way (*tefilat haderekh*) mentioned in BT *Ber.* 29*b*.

[73] Based on earlier rabbinic descriptions of the destructive power of the gaze of the sages; see BT *Ber.* 58*a*; *Shab.* 34*a*; *BB* 75*a*; *San.* 100*a*.

[74] Zohar i. 58*b*–59*a*.

[75] My approach has affinity with the position articulated by Daniel Boyarin, *Sparks of Logos: Essays in Rabbinic Hermeneutics* (Leiden, 2003), 89–113.

[76] Cf. Zohar i. 145*b*: 'All that the blessed Holy One made in the earth was in the mystery of wisdom, and everything was to manifest the supernal wisdom to human beings, so that they may learn from that action the mysteries of wisdom. And all of them are appropriate, and all of the actions are the ways of the

that path demands a preliminary act of placing one's trust in God. Only by this gesture can one be assured that the divine presence will accompany one on that path. The fool lacks this trust—indeed foolishness is innately a lack of trust—and thus when he journeys, he is alone, effectively undermining the way, even to the point that he does not discern that the covenantal sign of circumcision is a matter of faith. It is unlikely that the specific example was chosen arbitrarily. Given the correlation of circumcision and the Tetragrammaton,[77] and the further identification of the latter and the Torah,[78] this rite assumes gargantuan significance in zoharic homilies. The place of this covenant, the male organ, which corresponds to the attribute of Yesod, is the locus of secrecy *par excellence*—the name that is the Torah, which comprises the totality of the sefirotic emanations, the mystery of faith (*raza dimeheimanuta*). The fool who denies this matter—a position that is on a par with the standard Christian perspective that diminishes the spiritual worth of the physical circumcision[79]—is worthy of death. By contrast, those who get on the way properly are empowered by bearing the sign on their flesh, a prerequisite for the Shekhinah escorting them.

The midrashic prowess from the zoharic perspective is encapsulated in the dynamic of venturing along the path to gain gnosis of the words of Torah (*leminda milei de'oraita*), the very words that constitute the ontological foundation of existence.[80] Hence, it is incumbent that the way be arrayed by the exegetes, as we see, for instance, in a passage where Rabbi Hiya and Rabbi Yose were travelling; when they saw Rabbi Yeisa the Elder[81] walking behind them, they sat down, waited for him to join them, and then proclaimed, 'Now the way is rectified before us!'[82] The rectification (*tikun*) of the way is made dependent on the aggregation of three sages, who presumably correspond to the three columns of the divine pleroma or the balance of the right and the left in the centre. Be that as it may, what is critical is the presentation of walking as a trope to convey the revelatory nature of hermeneutics

Torah, for the ways of the Torah are the ways of the blessed Holy One, and there is not even a minuscule word that does not contain several ways, paths, and mysteries of the supernal wisdom.'

[77] For discussion of this theme, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 78 (1987), 77–112.

[78] See above, n. 34.

[79] On the motif of circumcision in the kabbalistic polemic against Christianity, accentuated in the zoharic corpus, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Remembering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness, and the Construction of History in the Zohar', in Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers (eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover, 1998), 214–46, esp. 222–4, revised version in Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 185–227, esp. 196–8; id., *Venturing Beyond*, 94–6, 151–4.

[80] Zohar i. 83*a*. In that context, R. Shimon is walking on the way with R. Eleazar, R. Abba, and R. Judah, and the secret that is disclosed relates to the nocturnal ascent of the soul, which is linked to the verse 'My soul desires you in the night, the spirit within me in the morning' (Isa. 26: 9).

[81] I have here followed the reading of the Cremona edition of the Zohar, p. 338; the reading of the Mantua edition, i. 145*a*, and all subsequent editions based on it, is 'R. Yose the Elder'.

[82] Zohar i. 145*a*.

and the hermeneutical nature of revelation. Again, Rabbi Shimon, the master of the fictional circle, exemplifies the point. According to one passage, Rabbi Isaac reports that once he was walking with Rabbi Shimon and when the latter began to expound words of Torah, he saw

> a pillar of cloud fixed from above to below, and a splendour was radiating from within the pillar. I experienced great fear, and I said, 'Praiseworthy is such a man [Rabbi Shimon] that such a thing is summoned for him in this world.' What is written with respect to Moses? 'When all the people saw the pillar of cloud poised at the entrance of the Tent, all the people would rise and bow low, each at the entrance of his tent' [Exod. 33: 10]. This was appropriate for Moses, the trustworthy prophet, superior to all other prophets of the world, and that generation, which received the Torah on Mount Sinai, saw several miracles and several wonders in Egypt and on the [Reed] Sea. But the supernal merit of Rabbi Shimon facilitates miracles to be seen by this generation on his account.[83]

Much is revealed in this text about the midrashic inclination of the zoharic authors, and especially about its revelatory nature. As traditional kabbalists and critical scholars alike have noted, there is a homology between the biblical Moses and the imaginary Shimon bar Yohai. The power of the one, as the power of the other, is essentially supernatural. Just as the Israelites experienced miracles when they departed from Egypt, so the generation of Rabbi Shimon is worthy of seeing miraculous wonders. In spite of the fact that this propensity is attested in earlier sources, there is no question that it is elevated and prioritized in the zoharic material. To be engaged in midrashic activity is to undergo an ecstatic transformation on a par with being illumined by the radiance of the splendour of the pillar of cloud. The dichotomy between contemplation and action is rendered completely irrelevant. Contemplative absorption in the study of the text is the supreme form of piety, of acting in the world in such a way that the coarse materiality is transfigured into the superior form of the hyletic, the body that is composed of the letters that are contained within the Tetragrammaton.

MIDRASHIC POIESIS AND THE PARABOLIC WAY

Countless other examples could have been adduced from the zoharic collection to illustrate this seminal point. By walking the path, one merits to receive the 'hint of wisdom' (*remiza deḥokhmeta*)[84] whence one can unlock the mystery of the text that fosters an ecstatic vision of or union with the divine. The emphasis on mystery in the zoharic homilies intimates that midrashic activity consists primarily of explicating Scripture parabolically, a stance that resonates formally with the Maimonidean hermeneutic. One of the ways that this is expressed is in the remark

[83] Zohar ii. 149*a*.

[84] Ibid. i. 219*b*. Cf. ibid. iii. 158*b*. The Aramaic *remiza*, as its Hebrew equivalent *remez*, in the zoharic lexicon has a broader connotation than allegory. On this usage, see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, i. 65–6.

that the Song of Songs is the 'principle of all the Torah' (*kelala dekhol oraita*).[85] Building on an idea implicit in several rabbinic dicta, the author of this comment affirms explicitly that the Song of Songs is the one biblical book that is commensurate with the whole Torah.[86] When translated into a theosophic register, this can be explained in terms of the heteroerotic imagery of the Song, that is, the reciprocal desire of the male and female signifies the dynamic between the King and the Matrona in the sefirotic pleroma, a dynamic that is indicative of the union of the divine potencies, expressed in sundry images including the dual Torah (written and oral) of the rabbinic tradition. In this sense, the dramatic narrative of the Song portends the mystical crux of the revealed word. The secret of this pairing is encoded in the first four words of the book, *shir hashirim asher lishelomoh*, 'The Song of Songs by Solomon', which allude to the fourfold conjunction of Malkhut and the three emanations, Hesed, Gevurah, and Rahamim, the four legs of the chariot.[87]

The zoharic assertion that the Song encompasses the entire Torah can also be interpreted midrashically as indicating that this text is the one whose literal meaning is figurative. This book, accordingly, illumines the mythopoeic nature of Torah as inherently parabolic.[88] The exemplar of the kabbalistic hermeneut—the wise of heart (*ḥakimei liba*), to whom the 'supernal mystery' (*raza ila'ah*) is bestowed—is offered in the following passage:

> It is written, 'He uttered three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered one thousand and five' [1 Kgs. 5: 12]. This verse was established by the companions. But [the meaning of] 'he uttered three thousand proverbs' is that surely each and every word that he spoke contained three thousand proverbs, like the book of Ecclesiastes, which is in the supernal mystery, and it is in the way of the parable [*be'oraḥ mashal*], for there is no verse in it that is not in the supernal wisdom and in the way of the parable, even the smallest verse in it. When the first Rabbi Hamnuna the Elder reached this verse, 'O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth' [Eccl. 11: 9], he would cry, and he would say, 'Surely, this verse is appropriate and it is in the way of parable. Who can explicate this parable homiletically [*uman yakhil lemebad derasha vemashal da*]? And if there is a homiletical meaning [*derasha*], then it is only with regard to what is seen with the eyes. And if there is wisdom [*ḥokhmeta*], who can know it?' Immediately, he responded and said, 'It is written, "These, then, are the generations of Jacob: Joseph at seventeen years of age [tended the flocks with his brothers]" [Gen. 37: 2]. The verse from Ecclesiastes is a parable for the wisdom of the verse of the Torah, the one is a parable for the other. … "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph"—Joseph was contained in Jacob. Who can know the mysteries of the secrets of the Torah [*razin desitrei torah*]? This parable extends into three thousand parables, and they are all in this parable. At the moment that Joseph was contained

[85] Zohar ii. 143*b*.

[86] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 335–6, 359.

[87] Zohar ii. 144*a*. See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 367.

[88] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 360–1; id., 'Suffering Eros and Textual Incarnation: A Kristevan Reading of Kabbalistic Poetics', in Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller (eds.), *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline* (New York, 2006), 346–52.

in Jacob, three thousand are in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all of them are in this parable in the mystery of wisdom [*beraza deḥokhmeta*].'[89]

A full exposition of this text lies beyond our immediate concern. I will focus instead on the most important exegetical issues that illumine the midrashic approach in the zoharic corpus. The framework of this passage is the talmudic reading of 1 Kings 5: 12 attributed to Rabbi Hamnuna—signalled by the reference to the companions (*ḥavraya*)—that 'Solomon uttered three thousand proverbs for every single word of the Torah and one thousand and five reasons for every single word of the Scribes.'[90] According to the zoharic reworking, this maxim is invoked to explain another rabbinic tradition (transmitted in the name of Samuel bar Isaac) that raises concern about the legitimacy of canonizing Ecclesiastes, based on the seemingly heretical implication of the verse 'O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth' (Eccl. 11: 9).[91] Unlike the rabbinic version, in which the verse is justified by its conclusion, the zoharic author accomplished this feat by juxtaposing it with Genesis 37: 2. The juxtaposition yields the insight that the parable (*mashal*) can refer either to the homiletical sense (*derasha*) or to the esoteric wisdom (*ḥokhmeta*). The former, apparently, is what can be discerned empirically by the vision of the eyes, whereas the latter is a matter of an inner vision of the theosophic intent of the text, the mysteries of Scripture, as we see in the example of the biblical verse that informs us of the containment of Joseph (Yesod) in Jacob (Tiferet). What is worthy of underscoring here is that the literal meaning is accorded no standing apart from the parabolic, and thus there is an overlapping of the exoteric and the esoteric. For the kabbalists, whose views are conserved anonymously in the zoharic homilies, enlightenment consists of discerning that these are not in binary opposition.[92] Thus, the emphasis on the dual nature of the Torah being concealed (*setim*) and revealed (*galya*) is set alongside the tradition that the name is concealed and revealed.[93] Obviously, what undergirds this correspondence is the aforementioned identity of the name and the Torah, but an additional conceptual point is to be elicited: just as, in the case of the name, the revealed and the concealed cannot be separated performatively—one vocalizes YHVH as Adonai—so in the case of the Torah, the hidden and the manifest cannot be

[89] Zohar ii. 145*a*.

[90] BT *Eruv.* 21*b*.

[91] *Lev. Rabbah* 28: 1 (*Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah: A Critical Edition Based on Manuscripts and Genizah Fragments with Variants and Notes*, ed. Mordecai Margulies, 2 vols. (New York, 1993), pp. 648–9); *Pesikta derav kahana*, 8: 1 (*Pesikta de Rav Kahana According to an Oxford Manuscript with Variants from all Known Manuscripts and Genizoth Fragments and Parallel Passages with Commentary and Introduction*, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, 2 vols. (New York, 1962), p. 135); *Pesikta rabati*, 18: 1 (*Pesiqta Rabbati: A Synoptic Edition of Pesiqta Rabbati Based upon All Extant Manuscripts and the Editio Princeps*, ed. Rivka Ulmer, 3 vols. (Atlanta, Ga., 1997), pp. 382–5); *Eccles. Rabbah* on Eccles. 1: 3, 11: 9.

[92] Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes: Peshat and Sod in Zoharic Hermeneutics', in Michael Fishbane (ed.), *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History* (Albany, NY, 1993), 155–203; repr. with corrections in Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 56–110.

[93] Zohar ii. 230*b*; iii. 75*a*, 159*a*.

separated exegetically—one can fathom the mystery only through the sheath of the letters.

According to one oft-cited passage, Shimon bar Yohai laments that some people think the Torah is nothing more than a storybook and hence they fall short of ascertaining that 'all the words of Torah are supernal words and supernal mysteries'.[94] The hermeneutical precept of analogical meaning[95] is supported by the doctrine of ontic parallelism, which echoes the archaic theory of correspondence expressed, perhaps most famously, in the beginning of the *Tabula Smaragdina*, a series of gnomic utterances attributed to the legendary Hermes Trimegistus, 'What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.'[96] In the zoharic language:

> Come and see: The supernal world and the lower world are weighed on one scale, Israel below and the supernal angels above. Concerning the supernal angels it is written, 'He makes his messengers spirits' [Ps. 104: 4]—when they descend below they are garbed in the garment of this world, and if they were not garbed in the garment in the likeness of this world, they could not exist in this world and the world could not endure them. And if this is so with respect to the angels, how much more so with respect to the Torah, which created them and all the worlds, and on account of which they exist. When [the Torah] descends to this world, if it were not garbed in the garments of this world, the world could not endure. Thus the stories of the Torah are the garment of the Torah. The one who thinks that this garment is the actual Torah and not another matter, let his spirit deflate, and he has no portion in the world to come. Therefore, David said, 'Open my eyes that I may perceive the wonders from your Torah' [Ps. 119: 18], from what is beneath the garment of the Torah.[97]

In this part of the homily, a twofold conception of the text is embraced: the garment, which refers to the narratives, and that which is underneath the garment. The matter is explained incarnationally: just as the angels, which are spiritual beings, must don the garment of the physical world when they descend thereto, so the immaterial essence of the Torah must be garbed in images that relate to the material of this world.[98] In the continuation of the passage, the external/internal distinction yields a fourfold delineation: the garment is correlated with the narratives, the body with the laws, the soul with the mystical meaning, and the soul of soul with the even deeper meaning that will be revealed in the messianic future. The four strata are

[94] Zohar iii. 152*a*.

[95] For an extensive discussion of this theme, see Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah*.

[96] John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry: An Outline of Alchemy, Its Literature and Relationships* (Cambridge, 1966), 54.

[97] Zohar iii. 152*a*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 63–4; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 45–6; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 379; id., *Language, Eros, Being*, 221–2.

[98] On the theme of the garments of Torah, see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, iii. 1083; Dorit Cohen-Alloro, *The Secret of the Garment in the Zohar* [Sod hamalbush umareh hamalakh besefer hazohar] (Jerusalem, 1987), 45–9; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 376 n. 172.

associated, moreover, with four ontic planes in the following sequence: the garment corresponds to the heavens, the body to the tenth emanation Keneset Yisra'el, that is, the Shekhinah, the soul to the sixth emanation Tiferet Yisra'el, and the soul of soul to the first emanation Atika Kadisha. It is possible to view these vertically, ascending from the garment to the soul of the soul. On the face of it, this vantage point is substantiated by the alignment of the latter with what will be disclosed in the endtime. And yet, it is equally possible to view the levels concentrically, the one contained in the other. Just as cosmologically there are no gaps in the chain of being, so hermeneutically, each degree of meaning is contained in the one that precedes and succeeds it. The progression implied in the second model, therefore, entails the presumption that the fourth rank is comprised in the first, that the innermost soul of the text is discernible from the garment. Shifting from a vertical to a concentric model puts into relief the inadequacy of Scholem's assessment that this passage attests to a 'devaluation of the simple literal meaning'.[99] I would counter that the passage does not belittle the simple literal meaning as much as it imparts another view about its nature. The zoharic perspective sanctions a hyperliteral understanding of the literal, that is, the literal relates predominantly to the actual letters of the text. From this vantage point, the *peshat* is venerated as the only way to gain access to the secrets.[100]

The four grades of meaning are demarcated alternatively—in a manner that is closer to the well-known classification associated with the word *pardes* read acrostically as a reference to *peshat* (literal), *remez* (allegorical), *derash* (homiletical), and *sod* (mystical)[101]—in a second zoharic passage, the parable of the beautiful maiden and the castle: *remizah* (sign), *derashah* (homily), *ḥidah* (allegory) or *hagadah* (narrative), and *razin setimin* (hidden mysteries).[102] The four levels are presented sequentially

[99] Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 63.

[100] On the tendency of kabbalistic hermeneutics to 'save' the letter of the text, see the comments of Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah*, 306–8.

[101] For scholarly discussions of the kabbalistic doctrine of the fourfold sense of Scripture, see Wilhelm Bacher, 'L'Exégèse biblique dans le Zohar', *Revue des études juives*, 22 (1891), 33–46, esp. 37–40; id., 'Das Merkwort PRDS in der Jüdischen Bibelexegese', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 13 (1893), 294–305; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 53–62; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, iii. 1077–89; Albert van der Heide, 'Pardes: Methodological Reflections on the Theory of the Four Senses', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 34 (1983), 147–59; Moshe Idel, 'Pardes: Some Reflections on Kabbalistic Hermeneutics', in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (eds.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany, NY, 1995), 249–68; id., 'The Zohar as Exegesis', in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (Oxford, 2000), 89–91; id., *Absorbing Perfections*, 429–37.

[102] I have discussed this zoharic text previously in several studies. See Wolfson, 'Beautiful Maiden'; id., *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 384–8; id., *Language, Eros, Being*, 222–4. This section has been discussed by several other scholars. For instance, see Michal Oron, '"Place Me As a Seal Upon Your Heart": Reflections on the Poetics of the Author of the Zohar in the Section of *Sava demishpatim*' (Heb.), in Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (eds.), *Masuot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* [Masuot: meḥkarim besifrut hakabalah uvemaḥshevet yisra'el mukdashim lezikhro shel profesor efrayim gotlib] (Jerusalem, 1994), 1–24; Pinchas Giller, 'Love and Upheaval in the Zohar's *Sabba de-Mishpatim*', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 7 (1997), 31–60;

as stages of an ever-increasing disclosure: the first offered through the barrier of a wall, the second from behind a curtain, the third through a more subtle screen, and finally, the fourth, ostensibly clearing away all obstructions, is marked as a face-to-face encounter, which idiomatically signifies union of the most intimate sort. But as the Torah exposes herself fully to her lover, he realizes that the secret was already present in the initial hint. At the moment of enlightenment he understands that *peshatei dikera*, the 'literal' text—the text in its linguistic embodiment—must be as it is, with no word added or subtracted. The linear progression from the exoteric (*peshat*) to the esoteric (*sod*) turns out, in fact, to be circular—one learns that the mystical meaning disclosed at the end is the same as (or was already contained in) the literal sense revealed at the beginning.

To detect the mystery of the original insinuation at the termination confirms the hermeneutical point that the secret, which is the light,[103] can be seen only through the cloak of the letters. The uncovering of the innermost meaning in the culminating leg of the journey is thus a recovery of the overt sense disclosed allusively in the beginning. If it is true that every translation is interpretation, it is equally true that every interpretation is translation, literally a 'crossing over', by which one gives expression to the inward sense through the outward forms. The somewhat unusual choice of the term *remizah* to denote *peshat* underscores that the literal and figurative should not be viewed in binary terms. Once again, we confront the circularity of the interpretative enterprise and the reversibility of the timeline implied thereby: the reader begins with the literal and advances to the symbolic, but the literal cannot be truly known except through the symbolic. Apprehending this truth affords us a glimpse of the midrashic process that informed the inimitable approach of the zoharic kabbalah.

id., *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of Kabbalah* (Oxford, 2001), 35–68; Daniel Abrams, 'Knowing the Maiden Without Eyes: Reading the Sexual Reconstruction of the Jewish Mystic in a Zoharic Parable', *Da'at*, 50–2 (2003), pp. lix–lxxxiii; Oded Yisraeli, *The Interpretation of Secrets and the Secret of Interpretation: Midrashic and Hermeneutic Strategies in 'Sava demishpatim' of the Zohar* [Parshanut hasod vesod haparshanut: megamot midrashiyot vehermene'utiyot besaba demishpatim shebazohar] (Los Angeles, 2005), 191–266; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, 68–9, 160–2.

[103] The identification of the secret and the light is substantiated by kabbalists through the numerical equation of the words *raz* and *or*, that is, the sum of the numerical values of their Hebrew letters both equal 207. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 63, and other sources cited in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 375 n. 170.