



The Ten Sefirot

Shekhinah – The Feminine Half of God

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- (1) אין מקום בארץ פנוי מן השכינה.
1) There is no place empty of *Shekhinah*.¹
- (2) בכל מקום שגלו שכינה עמהם.
2) Wherever [Israel] went in exile, *Shekhinah* was with them.²
- (3) אשריהם הצדיקים שהם משכינים השכינה בארץ.
3) Happy are the righteous! For they cause *Shekhinah* to dwell on earth.³
- (4) רב יוסף כי הוה שמע קל כרעא דאמיה אמר איקום מקמי שכינה דאתיא.
4) When Rav Yosef heard his mother's footsteps, he would say: "I will arise before *Shekhinah* who is approaching."⁴
- (5) ויגרש את האדם.
5) *He drove out* את האדם (*et ha-adam*), *Adam* (Genesis 3:24).

Rabbi El'azar said, "We do not know who divorced whom: if the blessed Holy One divorced Adam, or not. But the word is transposed: *He drove out* את (*Et*)—precisely! Who drove out *Et*? *Adam*. *Adam* actually drove out *Et*! Consequently it is written: *YHVH Elohim expelled him from the Garden of Eden* (Genesis 3:23). Why did He expel him? Because Adam drove out *Et*, as we have explained."⁵

¹ *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:2, in the name of Rabban Gamliel.

² Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 29a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai.

³ *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai.

⁴ Babylonian Talmud, *Qiddushin* 31b.

⁵ *Zohar* 1:53b.

been said.¹⁴³³ At that moment the erect stature of Adam diminished by one hundred cubits.¹⁴³⁴ Separation ensued, Adam was arraigned, earth was cursed, as we have established.”

He drove out אַתְּ הָאָדָם
(*et ha-adam*), *Adam* (ibid., 24).¹⁴³⁵

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Rabbi El'azar said, “We do not know who divorced whom: if the blessed Holy One divorced Adam, or not.”¹⁴³⁶

But the word is transposed: *He drove out Et*? *Adam*. *Adam* actually drove

1433. *fig leaves*... they discovered every kind of sorcery... According to Rabbi Nehemiah (BT *Berakhot* 40a), Adam and Eve sinned by eating from the fruit of a fig tree. The leaves of this Tree of Knowledge convey the knowledge of magic. See *Zohar* 1:56a, 63b, and 36b: “Once they knew of this world and clung to it, they saw that this world is conducted by those leaves of the tree. So they built themselves a stronghold, fortifying themselves with them in this world, discovering every kind of magic. They sought to gird themselves with the weapons of those leaves of the tree for protection.” Cf. BT *Bava Metsi'a* 114b.

“The one below” apparently refers to the demonic realm, though perhaps to *Shekhinah*, identified with the Tree of Knowledge and split off from the other *sefirot* by Adam's sinful act. See *Zohar* 1:35b–36a, 52a, and below.

1434. the erect stature of Adam diminished... See BT *Hagigah* 12a: “Rabbi El'azar said, ‘Adam extended from earth to heaven... As soon as he sinned, the blessed Holy One placed His hands upon him and diminished him...’ Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav, ‘Adam extended from one end of the world to the other... As soon as he sinned, the blessed Holy One placed His hand upon him and diminished him.’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:6: “Rabbi Aivu said, ‘His stature was reduced to one hundred cubits... Rabbi Shim'on said, ‘[His stature was originally] two hundred cubits.’” Cf. *Sifra*, *Behuqqotai* 3:3, 11b; BT *Bava Batra*

75a; *Sanhedrin* 100a; *Araqim* 6 (*Otsar Midrashim* 1:70–71); *Zohar* 1:142b; and Rashbam, *Bava Batra* 75a, who suggests, matching the view here, that his original stature was two hundred cubits and was reduced by half.

For Iranian and Gnostic parallels, see Altmann, “The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends”; Urbach, *The Sages*, 227–32.

1435. *He drove out* אַתְּ הָאָדָם (*et ha-adam*), *Adam* Literally, *He drove out the human*. The preceding verse reads similarly: *YHVH Elohim expelled him from the Garden of Eden*. The apparent redundancy stimulates the following mystical midrash.

1436. We do not know who divorced whom... Several midrashim interpret the biblical word *ויגרש* (*vaygaresh*), *He drove out*, in the sense of *גירושין* (*geirushin*), “divorce.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 21:8; *Midrash Avkir*, in *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 34; and *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 1: “*He drove out Adam*. This teaches that the blessed Holy One divorced him like a wife.” Cf. *Ziqqun de-Nura*, ad loc.; and *Midrash ha-Gadol* on this verse: “This teaches that he was divorced like a wife divorced from her husband because of some indecency.”

Adam's harmonious and intimate relationship with God is ruined by sin. Rabbi El'azar adopts this midrashic view but reassigns the roles.

1437. אַתְּ (*Et*)—precisely! Grammatically, the accusative particle אַתְּ (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Nahum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when *et* appears in a biblical

out *Et!*¹⁴³⁸ Consequently it is written: *YHVH Elohim expelled him from the Garden of Eden* (ibid., 23). Why did He expel him? Because Adam drove out *Et*, as we have explained.¹⁴³⁹

"He placed [... the cherubim] (ibid., 24).¹⁴⁴⁰ He installed them in this site; he was the cause, closing pathways, inflicting punishment on the world, extending curses from that day on."¹⁴⁴¹

verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesahim* 22b; *Hagigah* 12a.

Here, as often in the *Zohar*, *et* becomes a name of *Shekhinah*, who comprises the totality of divine speech, the entire alphabet from *alef* to *tav*. See *Zohar* 1:29b, 247a; 2:90a, 135b; and the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: "I am *alpha* and *omega*."

1438. *Adam* actually drove out *Et!* By dividing the biblical sentence, *He drove out et Adam*, into two units, Rabbi El'azar transforms its meaning. The first unit consists of: *He drove out et*. The second unit identifies the subject of the sentence, which is shockingly not God, but *Adam*. His sin consists in divorcing *Shekhinah*.

In the *Zohar*, the exact nature of Adam's sin is a tightly guarded secret; the biblical account of the Garden story is seen as hiding the true meaning. See *ZH* 19a (*MhN*), where Rabbi Shim'on recounts a conversation he had with Adam while selecting his future site in Paradise: "Adam... was sitting next to me, speaking with me, and he asked that his sin not be revealed to the whole world beyond what the Torah had recounted. It is concealed in that tree in the Garden of Eden." The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolizes *Shekhinah*. Adam's sin was that he worshipped and partook of *Shekhinah* alone, splitting Her off from the other *sefirot* and divorcing Her from Her husband, *Tiferet*, the Tree of Life. See *Zohar* 1:12b, 35b-36a, 221a-b; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 231-32, 236, 404-5, n. 105; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:373-76.

On the psychological plane, the sin corresponds to the splitting off of consciousness from the unconscious. See Jung, *Collected Works*, 8:157; Neumann, *Origins and History*

of *Consciousness*, 102-27; Jaynes, *Origin of Consciousness*, 299; cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 216, 236-37.

By his midrashic transposition, Rabbi El'azar teaches that Adam divorced *Shekhinah*, divorcing Her from *Tiferet* and consequently also from himself. See above, page 294: "When Adam sinned by eating from the tree, ... he caused a defect, separating the Woman from Her Husband." Cf. Isaiah 50:1: *Because of your transgressions your mother was divorced*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7: "Rabbi Abba son of Kahana said, 'The essence of *Shekhinah* was in the lower realms. As soon as Adam sinned, it withdrew to the first heaven.'" Cf. Nahmanides on Genesis 3:8; *Gikatilla, Sha'arei Orah*, 15-17.

Adam's sin has driven *Shekhinah* from the Garden and dissolved Her union with *Tiferet*, so She finds Herself abandoned in a no-man's-land. Meanwhile, as a result of his sin, Adam is banished from the Garden. Wandering outside, he finds *Shekhinah*, and together they go into exile. See *Zohar* 3:114a-115b, and 1:237a: "Come and see the secret of the word: Adam was caught in his own sin, inflicting death upon himself and the whole world, causing that tree with which he sinned to be divorced, driven away with him, driven away with his children forever, as is written: *He drove out et Adam*."

1439. Consequently it is written... The apparent redundancy is eliminated. Adam was expelled because he divorced *Shekhinah*.

1440. *He placed*... The verse continues: *east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and a blazing, ever-turning sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life*.

1441. He installed them... As in the beginning of the verse, the subject is not God

Parashat Mishpatim

“LAWS” (EXODUS 21:1–24:18)

סבא דמשפטים SAVA DE-MISHPATIM
*Old Man of Mishpatim*¹

One night Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yose encountered each other at the Tower of Tyre. They lodged there, delighting in each other.²

Rabbi Yose said, “How happy I am to see the face of *Shekhinah*!”³ For just now,

1. SAVA DE-MISHPATIM סבא דמשפטים... “Old Man of [Torah portion] *Mishpatim* (Laws).” Here begins a long narrative (extending to p. 139), relating an encounter between the Companions Rabbi Yose and Rabbi Ḥiyya, and an aged wandering donkey-driver, who turns out to be more than he seems.

On this section, see Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes”; Matt, “New-Ancient Words,” 192–94; Abrams, “Knowing the Maiden without Eyes”; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 87–98; Oron, “Simeni kha-Ḥotam al Libbekha”; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, 35–68; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod ve-Sod ha-Parshanut*.

The material immediately preceding this section (*Zohar* 2:94a–b) belongs to the later Zoharic stratum of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*. See Scholem; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 87, n. 126; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 20–22.

2. Tower of Tyre... In BT *Megillah* 6a, the original name of the city of Caesarea is recorded as מגדל שיר (*migdal shir*), “the Tower of Shir.” Several manuscripts, as well as *Ein Ya’aqov* (which reflects Spanish manuscript tradition), read מגדל צור (*migdal tsor*), “the Tower of Tyre.” Actually, both *shir* and *tsor* are corruptions of Caesarea’s real original name: the Tower of Strato, named after

its builder, King Strato of Sidon (fourth century B.C.E.).

See Rabbinovicz, *Diqduqei Soferim, Megillah* 6a, p. 17, n. 2. Cf. the phrase סולמה של צור (*sullamah shel tsor*), “the Ladder of Tyre” (Scala Tyrionum), a promontory south of Tyre. See *Tosefta Pesahim* 2:16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:8 (and Theodor’s note); BT *Shabbat* 26a, *Eruvin* 64b.

3. How happy I am to see the face of *Shekhinah* According to rabbinic tradition, “whoever welcomes [literally, receives the face of] the wise is considered as if he welcomes *Shekhinah*.”

See *Mekhilta, Amaleq (Yitro)* 1. Cf. JT *Eruvin* 5:1, 22b: “Rabbi Shemu’el said in the name of Rabbi Zeira, ‘...Whoever receives the face of his teacher is considered as if he receives the face of *Shekhinah*.’... Rabbi Yishma’el taught: ‘...One who receives the face of his friend is considered as if he receives the face of *Shekhinah*.’”

The *Zohar* transforms the rabbinic simile into an actual description of the righteous, who are called the face of *Shekhinah* “because *Shekhinah* is hidden within them: She is in concealment, they are revealed” (*Zohar* 2:163b).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:6; *Shir ha-Shirim*

[2:94b]

the whole way, I was pestered by a certain old man, a donkey-driver, who kept asking me [95a] the whole way.⁴

“Who is a serpent that flies in the air, moving in separation, while an ant lies comfortably between its teeth? Beginning in union, it ends in separation.

“Who is an eagle that nests in a tree that never was—its young plundered, though not by created creatures? Ascending, they descend; descending, they ascend. Two who are one, and one who is three.

“Who is a beautiful maiden without eyes, her body hidden and revealed? She emerges in the morning and is concealed by day, adorning herself with adornments that are not.”⁵

Rabbah on 2:5; *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 27; *Zohar* 1:9a, 94b; 2:5a (*MhN*), 38a, 50a; 3:6b, 148a, 298a; *ZḤ* 11c (*MhN*); Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 370. Cf. Genesis 33:10.

4. **donkey-driver** . . . טייעא (*Tayya'a*), “Arab,” Arab caravaner, derived from the name of the Arabian tribe *Tayyi'*.

In the *Zohar*, *tayya'a* usually indicates one of various wandering donkey-drivers encountered by the Companions on the road. See 1:5b; 2:45b, 145b, 155b–157a; 3:21a–23a, 186b; *ZḤ* 83a–d (*MhN*, *Rut*); *TZ* 23, 69a. Cf. the story in BT *Ḥagigah* 14b (and parallels), below, note 14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 25a–b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3.

On *tayya'a*, see BT *Berakhot* 56b, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 26b, *Yevamot* 120b, *Bava Batra* 73b, *Sanhedrin* 110a, *Ḥullin* 7a; Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, 248–54; Pushinski, “Le-Ḥequer Sefat ha-Zohar”; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 46; idem, *Kabbalah*, 227; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 76–79.

The prophet Elijah returns to earth as a *tayya'a* in BT *Berakhot* 6b (printed version), and as an ערבי (*aravi*), “Arab,” in *Rut Zuta* 1:20; 4:11. On Elijah as סבא (*sava*), “an old man,” see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:22; *ZḤ* 25b (*MhN*); *Tosafot*, *Ḥullin* 6a, s.v. *ashkeḥeih*; Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, 37, n. 6.

5. **Who is a serpent** . . . These riddles confuse not only Rabbi Yose; the cryptic language is intended to mystify the reader as well. Cordovero comments (*OY*): “Given

that these words are like a dream without an interpretation, nevertheless we will explain them a little, with God's help.” Liebes (“*Zohar ve-Eros*,” 90) maintains that the old man himself does not initially know the meaning of his riddles, but discovers and formulates their significance as he proceeds.

As we learn eventually, the imagery in the first two riddles alludes to various stages in the process of reincarnation, one of the more esoteric doctrines in the *Zohar*. The third riddle is expounded below at notes 96–103.

On the serpent, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 99:11: “All the animals go in pairs, whereas the serpent goes on the way all alone.” See *Zohar* 1:169b; 2:105b–106a, 112a. Cf. Proverbs 30:18–19.

On the sentence “Beginning in union . . .,” see *Zohar* 3:196a–b. On “Two who are one,” see 2:100a, 111a. On “one who is three,” see 2:100a. On likely traces of trinitarian influence in the *Zohar*, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:973; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 140–45.

On the paradoxical style, cf. *Zohar* 1:232a (*Tos*); 2:100a; 3:270b. The phrase “though not by created creatures” can also be rendered “though not created creatures.” The phrase “a beautiful maiden” derives from *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 24:16.

On these riddles, see also *OY*; Vital; Galante; *MM*; *MmD*; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, 63–65; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 30–31.

“All this he asked on the way, and I was annoyed. Now I can relax! If we had been together, we would have engaged in words of Torah instead of other words, of waste.”⁶

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “That old donkey-driver, do you know anything about him?”

He replied, “I know that his words have no substance. For if he knew anything, he would have opened with Torah, and the way would not have been empty.”⁷

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “That donkey-driver, is he here? For sometimes in those empty ones, you may discover bells of gold!”⁸

He replied, “Here he is, getting fodder ready for his donkey.”⁹

They called him, and he came over to them. He said, “Now two are three, and three are like one!”¹⁰

6. **waste** תהו (*Tohu*), which appears in Genesis 1:2: *The earth was תהו ובהו (tohu va-vohu), waste and empty, with darkness over the abyss and the wind of God hovering over the face of the waters.*

7. **the way would not have been empty** Empty of meaning, or empty of the Divine Presence.

On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; *M Avot* 3:7; *BT Eruvin* 54a, *Ta’anit* 10b; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 87a, 115b, 157a, 164a, 230a–b; 2:13a, 138b, 155b. Cf. *M Avot* 3:2–3, 6.

“Empty” renders בריקנייא (*be-reiqanya*), “in emptiness,” recalling *Targum Onqelos’s* rendering of בהו (*vohu*), *empty*, in Genesis 1:2: ריקניא (*reiqanya*). See the preceding note.

8. **sometimes in those empty ones, you may discover bells of gold** His apparently foolish riddles may conceal gems of wisdom.

On “empty ones,” see *BT Berakhot* 57a: “Like a slice of pomegranate is רקתך (*raqatekh*), your forehead (*Song of Songs* 4:3)... Even ריקנין (*reiqanin*), the empty ones, among you [i.e., among Israel] are as full of *mitsvot* as a pomegranate [is full of seeds].”

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3. Cf. *Zohar* 3:157b; Moses de León, *Orhot Ḥayyim*, 20.

The “bells of gold” derive from those worn by Aaron the high priest on the hem

of his robe: *You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson, on its hem all around, and bells of gold within them all around* (*Exodus* 28:33). *Targum Onqelos* translates פעמני זהב (*fa’amonei zahav*), *bells of gold*, as זגין דדהבא (*zaggin de-dahba*), which is adopted here by the *Zohar*. See *Zohar* 2:192b; 3:170b.

In rabbinic literature the bell appears as a symbol of revelation and inspiration. See *BT Sotah* 9b, in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: “*Shekhinah* was ringing before him like a bell”; and *Vayiqra Rabbah* 8:2, in the name of Rabbi Neḥemiah: “When the Holy Spirit rested upon him, his hairs tingled like a bell.” Both of these descriptions of Samson are derived midrashically from *Judges* 13:25: *The spirit of YHVH began to impel him*. See *Zohar* 3:188b.

9. **getting fodder ready for his donkey** According to rabbinic tradition, “A person is forbidden to taste anything until he has given food to his animal.” See *BT Gittin* 62a, in the name of Rav Yehudah, quoting Rav.

10. **Now two are three, and three are like one** As the old man joins the pair of rabbis, two become three, who mingle together as one. His remark may also allude to the later description of three parts of the soul. See *Zohar* 2:100a. Cf. 3:162a; and the old man’s riddle, above at note 5: “Two who are one,

Rabbi Yose said, “Didn’t I tell you that all his words are empty and inane?”

He sat down before them, and said, “Rabbis, I have become a donkey-driver—yet only a short time ago; previously I wasn’t one. But I have a son, and I put him in school; I want him to engage in Torah. When I find one of the rabbis traveling on the road, I goad his donkey behind. Today I thought I would hear new words of Torah—but I haven’t heard anything!”¹¹

Rabbi Yose said, “Of all the words I heard you say, I was astonished by only one. Either you said it out of foolishness, or they are empty words.”

The old man said, “And which one is that?”

He replied, “A beautiful maiden . . .”¹²

The old man opened, “*YHVH is with me, I do not fear. What can a human do to me? YHVH is with me, helping me. . . It is better to take refuge in YHVH [than to trust in a human]* (Psalms 118:6–8). How fine, lovely, precious, and sublime are words of Torah! Yet should I speak in the presence of those from whose mouths, until now, I have not heard a single word? But I should speak—for there is no shame at all in uttering words of Torah in the presence of anyone!”¹³

The old man enwrapped himself.¹⁴ He opened, saying, “*If the daughter of a priest is married to an alien man, she shall not eat of the sacred donations*

and one who is three.” See the accompanying note.

11. **Rabbis, I have become a donkey-driver . . .** Recently he undertook this occupation in order to support his son through school and pay his tuition. Perhaps the phrase “previously I wasn’t one” alludes to his own reincarnation as a donkey-driver.

On the word טעין (*ta’ein*), “goad,” see Radak on Genesis 45:17; idem, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *l’n*; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 42; idem, *Kabbalah*, 227.

12. **A beautiful maiden** The last of the old man’s three riddles. See above at note 5.

13. **YHVH is with me, I do not fear . . .** Before revealing secrets of Torah, the old man invokes divine protection and assistance. He is hesitant, at first, to convey such precious teachings to rabbis who have not proven themselves worthy or learned.

The four adjectives—“fine, lovely, precious, and sublime”—may allude to four levels of meaning in Torah, expounded below at notes 96–103.

On the tension between revealing and concealing, see *M Kelim* 17:16; *Tosefta Kelim (Bava Metsi’a)* 7:9; *BT Bava Batra* 89b; *Zohar* 1:11b (Vol. 1, p. 78, n. 589); 2:100b, 123b, 257b; 3:127b (*IR*); and 3:74b: “Rabbi Shim’on clapped his hands and wept. He exclaimed, ‘Woe is me if I speak and reveal the secret! Woe is me if I do not speak, for the Companions will be deprived of the word.’”

14. **enwrapped himself** In his garment in preparation for revealing secrets of Torah. This description derives from a famous rabbinic story (*BT Hagigah* 14b): “Once Rabbi Yoḥanan son of Zakkai was riding on a donkey, traveling on the road, and Rabbi El’azar son of Arakh was guiding the donkey behind him. He [i.e., Rabbi El’azar] said to him, ‘Master, teach me one chapter of the Account of the Chariot [based on Ezekiel’s vision].’ He [i.e., Rabbi Yoḥanan] replied, ‘Have I not taught you: “Nor [may one expound the Account of] the Chariot in the presence of one, unless he is a sage who understands on his own” (*M Hagigah* 2:1)?’

no one noticed it. Through this *stranger's soul*, the holy soul perceives things of this world, enjoying them.”⁹²

The old man opened, saying, “*Moses entered within the cloud and went up the mountain* (Exodus 24:18). What is this cloud? Well, the same of which is written *My bow I have set in the cloud* (Genesis 9:13). We have learned that the rainbow removed its garments and gave them to Moses. In that garment he ascended; from within it he saw what he saw, delighting in all. Until here.”⁹³

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92. In numerous places... The Torah often refers to the stranger, emphasizing not to oppress him. Within these passages lies concealed the profound significance of the convert's soul—a secret that momentarily reveals itself in the phrase *the stranger's soul*, but is then immediately concealed in the historical justification that follows: *for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*. Only the wise glimpse the deeper meaning: *You know the convert's soul*, since your soul is clothed in it! Further, *you know* things of this world by means of *the convert's soul*. See above, note 90.

“Stranger” renders Aramaic גיירא (*giyyora*) and Hebrew גר (*ger*), both of which can mean “stranger” or “convert.” On the Torah's numerous references to the stranger, see BT *Bava Metsi'a* 59b; *Tanḥuma, Vayiqra* 2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayiqra* 3; Rashi on Exodus 23:9. “Matter” renders מלה (*millah*), “word, matter.”

The full verse in Exodus reads: *A stranger, you shall not oppress: you know the stranger's soul, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*.

93. *Moses entered within the cloud...* The old man equates this cloud at Sinai with an earlier cloud from the days of Noah. After the Flood, God displayed a rainbow in the clouds as *a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth*, guaranteeing that life would never again be annihilated. See Genesis 9:12–15.

In Exodus the cloud signifies the Divine Presence. Here, it enwraps *Shekhinah*, who is

Herself symbolized by the rainbow. This symbolism derives from Ezekiel, who compares the Divine Glory to *the appearance of the bow in the cloud on a rainy day* (Ezekiel 1:28). In Kabbalah the rainbow of *Shekhinah* displays the colors of the *sefirot*. The old man teaches that She removed Her garment of cloud and gave it to Moses. Shielded by this cloud, Moses ascended Mount Sinai and encountered the beyond. As holy souls enjoy things of this world by being clothed in converts' souls, so Moses enjoyed supernal delights by being clothed in the cloud.

Alternatively, the rainbow may symbolize *Yesod*, clothed within the cloud of *Shekhinah*. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 337–38, n. 40; 386–87; Idel, *New Perspectives*, 227–29. Cf. Vol. 4, p. 365, n. 584.

With the words “until here,” the old man pauses. See above, notes 53, 79.

For the significance of the cloud in Exodus, see Exodus 13:21–22; 16:10; 19:9, 16; 24:15–16; 33:9–10; 40:34–38. On Moses and the cloud, see BT *Yoma* 4a: “Moses ascended in the cloud, was covered by the cloud, and made holy within the cloud, to receive Torah for Israel in holiness.” See BT *Shabbat* 88b, *Yoma* 4b; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20; *Zohar* 1:66a; 2:51b, 58a, 197a, 229a; 3:2a–b, 59a, 78b.

On the rainbow and the Divine Presence, see also *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:3; BT *Ḥagigah* 16a; Naḥmanides on Genesis 9:12; *Zohar* 1:1b, 71b, 72b, 117a, 232a, 247a; 2:66b; 3:84a, 15a–b; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 334, n. 30. On the garments of *Shekhinah*, see *Sifra, Tsav, millu'im*, 1:6, 41a.

The Companions came and fell down before him, and weeping they said, “If we have come into the world just to hear these words from your mouth, it is enough for us!”⁹⁴

The old man said, “*If another woman he takes for him* (Exodus 21:10). Companions, not for this alone did I begin to speak, for an old man like me doesn’t rattle or call with just a single word.⁹⁵ Inhabitants of the world are so confused in their minds! They do not see the path of truth in Torah. Torah calls to them every day, cooing, yet they do not want to turn their heads. Although I said that a word of Torah emerges from her sheath, is seen for a moment, then quickly hides away—certainly so, but when she reveals herself from her sheath and quickly hides, she does so only for those who know her and recognize her.⁹⁶

“This may be compared to a beloved maiden, beautiful in form and appearance, concealed secretly in her palace. She has a single lover unknown to anyone—except to her, concealedly. Out of the love that he feels for her, this lover passes by her gate constantly, lifting his eyes to every side. Knowing that her lover is constantly circling her gate, what does she do? She opens a little window in that secret palace where she is, reveals her face to her lover, and quickly withdraws, concealing herself. None of those near the lover sees or notices, only the lover, and his inner being and heart and soul follow her. He knows that out of love for him she revealed herself for a moment to arouse him.”⁹⁷

94. **If we have come into the world...** Similar exclamations appear in rabbinic literature and often in the *Zohar*. See BT *Be-rakhot* 16a, 24b; *Shabbat* 41a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 6:2; *Qohelet Zuta* 5:17; *Zohar* 1:2a, 129b (*MhN*), 148b, 164b, 235b, 240a; 2:121b–122a, 193b; 3:26a, 121a, 203a.

95. **If another woman...** The old man continues his exploration of this verse. See above at notes 55, 85, 88.

“Rattle” renders עביר קיש קיש (*aveid qish qish*), “make (the sound) *qish qish*,” which derives from a folk saying in BT *Bava Metsi’a* 85b: “A coin in a bottle goes *qish qish*.” There, the point is that a scholar in a family of empty-headed fools is conspicuous. See *Zohar* 1:197b (Vol. 3, p. 209, n. 183).

96. **Torah calls to them every day, cooing...** On daily divine cooing, see BT *Be-rakhot* 3a.

The clause “Although I said...” refers to the old man’s teaching above at notes 91–92.

97. **This may be compared to a... maiden...** The old man begins to expound one of his riddles (above at note 5): “Who is a beautiful maiden without eyes, her body hidden and revealed? She emerges in the morning and is concealed by day, adorning herself with adornments that are not.” Apparently, the description “without eyes” means that no one (but her lover) has set eyes upon her: “None of those near the lover sees or notices.”

On the Torah as an unrecognized divine princess in the palace, see *Devarim Rabbah* 8:7. Cf. *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 4; *Bahir* 43 (63). See also Maimonides’ parable of the ruler in his palace in *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51; *Gikatilla*, *Sha’arei Orah*, 46a, 48b–49b.

On the parable here, see Bacher, “L’exégèse biblique dans le Zohar,” 36–38; Lachower, *Al Gevul ha-Yashan ve-he-Ḥadash*, 40–51; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 55–56; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1084–85; Talmage, “Apples of Gold,” 316–18; Idel, *New Perspec-*

“So it is with a word of Torah: she reveals herself only to her lover. Torah knows that one who is wise of heart circles her gate every day. What does she do? She reveals her face to him from the palace and beckons him with a hint, then swiftly withdraws to her place, hiding away. None of those there knows or notices—he alone does, and his inner being and heart and soul follow her. Thus Torah reveals and conceals herself, approaching her lover lovingly to arouse love with him.

“Come and see! This is the way of Torah: At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a person, she beckons him momentarily with a hint. If he perceives, good; if not, she sends for him, calling him ‘simple’: ‘Tell that simple one to come closer, so I can talk with him.’ As is written: *Whoever is simple, let him turn here, he who lacks understanding* (Proverbs 9:4). As he approaches, she begins to speak with him from behind a curtain she has drawn, words suitable for him, until he reflects little by little. This is *derasha*.⁹⁸ Then, she converses with him from behind a delicate sheet, words of riddle, and this is *haggadah*.⁹⁹

“Once he has grown accustomed to her, she reveals herself to him face-to-face, and tells him all her hidden secrets and all the hidden ways, concealed in

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tives, 227–30; Wolfson, “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience,” 321–24; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 16–19; idem, “Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes”; idem, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 384–88; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 94–98; Oron, “Simeni kha-Ḥotam al Libbekha,” 10–13; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, 304–5; Abrams, “Knowing the Maiden without Eyes”; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 191–266 passim.

The expression “beautiful in form and appearance” is a playful variation on *Targum Onqelos*, Genesis 29:17.

98. **words suitable for him... *derasha*** Torah begins to unfold gradually through *דרשא* (*derasha*), equivalent to Hebrew *דרשה* (*derashah*) and *מדרש* (*midrash*), “searching for meaning, interpretation, homiletical interpretation.” Through hermeneutical techniques and imaginative midrash, the meaning of Torah expands.

99. **from behind a delicate sheet... riddle... *haggadah*** Now Torah reveals more of herself through *הגדה* (*haggadah*), “telling, homiletics, tales,” but here referring specifically to allegorical interpretation of

Torah, which was employed by medieval Jewish and Christian thinkers to convey philosophical truths. The marriage of Abraham and Sarah, for example, could represent the union of form and matter.

On the various levels of meaning in Torah, see *Zohar* 3:202a; *ZH* 83a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 56; Bacher, “L'exégèse biblique dans le Zohar,” 34–40; idem, “Das Merkwort פֶּרְדֵּס”; Sandler, “Li-V'ayat 'Pardes”); Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 50–62; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1077–92; Heide, “PARDES”; Talmage, “Apples of Gold,” 319–21; Idel, “PaRDeS”; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, 429–37; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 213–19.

On *חידה* (*hidah*) as allegory, see *ZH* 83a (*MhN, Rut*); Scholem; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, 55; Talmage, “Ha-Munnaḥ ‘Haggadah.” For a different interpretation, see *OY*.

“Sheet” renders *ששיפא* (*shushifa*), “garment, cloak, mantle, towel.” See *Targum Onqelos*, Genesis 38:18; Deuteronomy 22:17; *Targum Yonatan*, 1 Kings 19:19; 2 Kings 2:8, 13–14; Isaiah 3:22; Nahmanides on Genesis 38:18; *Zohar* 2:44a.

her heart since primordial days.¹⁰⁰ Then [99b] he is a complete man, husband of Torah, master of the house, for all her secrets she has revealed to him, concealing nothing.¹⁰¹

“She says to him, ‘Did you see the hinting word with which I beckoned you at first? These are the secrets! This is what it is!’¹⁰²

“Then he sees that one should not add to these words or diminish them. Then *peshat* of the verse, just like it is. One should not add or delete even a single letter. So human beings must be alert, pursuing Torah to become her lover, as has been said.¹⁰³

100. **since primordial days...** According to rabbinic tradition, Torah existed two thousand years before the creation of the world.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:2; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 19:1; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 12:24; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:11; *Midrash Shemu'el* 5:2; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayeshev* 4; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Yitro* 16; *Midrash Tehillim* 90:12; *Bahir* 4 (5); *Zohar* 2:49a, 84b, 161a; 3:128a (IR), 159a.

101. **a complete man, husband of Torah...** Fulfilled and wedded to his beloved source of wisdom. Now Torah is “concealing nothing,” which may solve part of the old man’s riddle: “adorning herself with adornments that are not” (above at note 5). The encounter with Torah yields various meanings, but eventually the lover sees through these apparent “adornments” and discovers the naked reality of revelation. See *Zohar* 3:152a.

The expression גבר שלים (*gevar shelim*), “complete man,” derives from *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 25:27. The verse itself reads: *The boys grew up. Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was איש תם (ish tam), a simple man, dwelling in tents.* The word *tam* means “simple, innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome, complete, perfect.” *Targum Onqelos* renders *ish tam* as גבר שלים (*gevar shelim*), “a complete (or perfect, consummate) man.”

“Husband of Torah” renders תורה בעל (*ba'al torah*), “master of Torah,” whose simple meaning is a scholar; here the old man

implies another meaning of *ba'al*, “husband.” See Galante.

Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, the phrase מארי דביהמא (*marei de-veita*), “master of the house,” designates both Jacob and Moses (as well as the Divine Male), each of whom is husband of *Shekhinah*. Here, the old man applies the phrase to one who masters the secrets of Torah.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 138b, 152b, 236b, 239a; 2:22b, 133b, 134b, 235b, 238b, 244b (*Heikh*); 3:163b. Cf. Numbers 12:7: *Not so My servant Moses, in all My house he is trusted.* On Moses as husband of *Shekhinah*, see below, p. 223, n. 94. For the association of “house” with “wife,” see *M Yoma* 1:1.

On the erotic nature of engaging in Torah, see BT *Eruvin* 54b, *Pesahim* 49b; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Issurei Bi'ah* 22:21; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 98.

102. **the hinting word...** The word that Torah momentarily revealed.

103. **one should not add... or diminish...** The text must be safeguarded to preserve and convey its secrets. See Deuteronomy 13:1: *Everything which I command you—that shall you be careful to do. You shall not add to it and you shall not diminish it.*

The פשט (*peshat*) is the “simple meaning.” The verbal root *psht* means “to spread, stretch, strip, make plain, explain.” Often, the *peshat* is contrasted with deeper layers of meaning, but here the old man adopts a more dialectical approach. The *peshat* is the starting point, the simple word on the page.

“Come and see: *If another woman he takes for him* (Exodus 21:10). How great and supernal the cycles revolving in this verse! For all souls enter a cycle, and human beings do not know the ways of the blessed Holy One: how the scales stand, how humans are judged every day at all times, and how souls stand in judgment both before they enter this world and after leaving this world.¹⁰⁴

“How many revolutions, how many concealed actions does the blessed Holy One perform with souls! How many naked spirits roam that world, not entering the curtain of the King! How overturned by them is the world, overturned by countless sealed wonders! And human beings do not know or notice—and how souls whirl like a stone in a sling, as is said: *The soul of your enemies He will sling from the hollow of a sling* (1 Samuel 25:29).¹⁰⁵

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As meaning unfolds, layer by layer, the seeker eventually encounters the face of Torah, experiencing revelation. This seemingly ultimate moment, however, leads back to the initial word: *peshat* reappears, now overflowing with meaning. One emerges from the mystical experience of Torah with a profound appreciation of her form.

On the significance of every element of Torah, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 336; *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 32:47; BT *Eruvin* 13a; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 37–38; *Zohar* 1:54a, 135a, 145b, 163a, 187a, 201a, 234b; 2:12a, 55b–56a, 59b, 65b, 95a, 124a; 3:79b, 149a, 152a, 174b, 202a, 265a; *ZH* 6d (*MhN*). Cf. BT *Menahot* 29b; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:50. On the appreciation of the outer, literal form of Torah, see *Zohar* 3:152a.

104. *If another woman*... The old man returns again to this verse. See above, note 95.

On a person being judged constantly, see *Tosefta Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:13; JT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:2, 57a; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16a. On human characteristics (such as strength, intelligence, wealth) being determined before birth, see BT *Niddah* 16b. On the cosmic scale, see above, note 22.

“Cycle” renders גלגולא (*gilgula*), “rolling, revolution, circulation, transmigration.” See above, notes 37, 85; below, note 108.

105. *naked spirits*... If a person dies without having lived virtuously, his spirit lacks a garment of good deeds and is con-

demned to roam the upper worlds aimlessly, barred from entering the divine realm.

On naked spirits, see *Zohar* 1:14b; 2:150a. On being naked of good deeds, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; *Bahir* 141 (200); *Zohar* 1:224a–b. Soon the old man focuses on the lack of a specific good deed, the first commandment of the Torah: procreation. This lack, in particular, bars entrance through the royal curtain. See *Zohar* 1:13a, 48a, 90a, 115a, 186b; *ZH* 37a, 89b (*MhN*, *Rut*).

On nakedness and childlessness, cf. the rare biblical term ערירי (*ariri*), which apparently means “stripped,” hence “stripped of children, childless.” See Genesis 15:2; Leviticus 20:20–21; Jeremiah 22:30; *Targum Onqelos* and Rashi on Leviticus 20:20. In this section of the *Zohar*, the term for “naked” is ערטירא (*artira*), pl. ערטיראין (*artira'in*), instead of the normal form ערטילאי (*artilai*), pl. ערטילאין (*artila'in*). Perhaps the strange spelling *artira('in)* is influenced by *ariri(n)*.

On the image of the sling, see BT *Shabbat* 152a: “Rabbi Eli'ezer said, ‘...The souls of the wicked are continually muzzled, while one angel stands at one end of the world and another stands at the other end, and they sling their souls [the souls of the wicked] to each other, as is said: *The soul of your enemies He will sling from the hollow of a sling.*”

See Radak on the verse in Samuel; *Zohar* 1:77b, 128a, 217b; 2:59a, 103a, 106a, 142b;

“Although He had already admonished them in Egypt, now He commanded them a second time in the place where all the commandments of Torah were given. Thus, *in the second year*.⁸⁷

“Why *in the second year, in the first month*? Well, that is a sublime mystery. One, a *year*; another, a *month*. What is the difference between them? *Month* is the moon; *year* is the sun illumining the moon. Then was the time when all the commandments of Torah were transmitted.”⁸⁸

Rabbi Shim'on said, “Woe to the person who says that Torah intended to present a mere story and ordinary words! For if so, we could compose a Torah right now with ordinary words, and more laudable than all of them. If to display matters of the world, even worldly potentates possess words more sublime. If so, let us follow them and make a Torah of them! But all the words of Torah correspond to the following pattern.”⁸⁹

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87. Although He had already admonished them . . . Now Rabbi Abba offers another explanation of why the command was repeated: God wanted to include the Passover offering along with all the other commandments given at Mount Sinai. On the chronology of this biblical chapter within the context of Israel's departure from Mount Sinai, see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 67.

88. Why *in the second year, in the first month*? . . . Rabbi Abba concludes with yet another explanation, this one revealing the sefirotic significance of *year* and *month*. *Month* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is often pictured as the moon, while *year* alludes to *Tiferet*, identified with the sun. The combination of the two in this verse signifies the union of the divine couple at Mount Sinai, which generated all the commandments of Torah, including (or especially) the Passover offering, the first commandment for the whole people, initially given to them back in Egypt.

The verse reads: *YHVH spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai in the second year of their going out from the land of Egypt, in the first month.*

89. Woe to the person who says . . . If the Torah were simply a book of stories in ordinary language, we could write one

“more laudable than all of them,” that is, than all of Torah's words and stories. If the Torah's purpose is simply to describe the world and offer edifying tales, there are finer books of fables possessed by earthly rulers. But the seemingly mundane words and stories of Torah conceal deeper meaning.

On this entire passage, see above, pp. 496–500; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 342. Notice that in the immediately preceding paragraph, the factual detail *in the second year . . . in the first month* yields new meaning.

The word “potentates” renders קפסירי (*qafsirei*), a Zoharic neologism that apparently means “rulers.” See *Zohar* 1:37a, 177a. Scholem suggests that *qafsirei* may be a play on Caesar. Cf. the rare biblical noun טפסר (*tifsar*), “a military or administrative official; marshal.” Tishby (*Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1126) prefers a different translation of *qafsirei*, based on the context: “books” or “booklets.”

According to *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 191, s.v. *qafsirei*, “Rulers have many stories and chronicles from which they learn wisdom and morality, such as *Meshal ha-Qadmoni* and the like.” *Meshal ha-Qadmoni* (The Fable of the Ancient) is a collection of fables and homilies written in the early 1280s in Castile by the poet, physician, and kab-

“Come and see: The upper world and the lower world are evenly balanced: Israel below, supernal angels above. Of the angels is written *He makes His angels spirits* . . . (Psalms 104:4). This pertains to the celestial realm. But when they descend below, although they descend, they don garments of this world. If they are not clothed in a garment befitting this world, they cannot endure in this world, nor can the world endure them.⁹⁰

“If this is so with the angels, then concerning Torah—who created them and created all worlds, which exist for her sake—when she descends to this world, if she does not clothe herself in garments of this world, the world cannot endure.⁹¹

balist Isaac ibn Sahula, who was an acquaintance of Moses de León. This book was influenced by *Kalila wa-Dimna* (Kalila and Dimna), an Indian collection of fables in the genre of “Mirrors for Princes,” books designed to instruct new kings. *Kalila wa-Dimna* was translated into Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, and then into Castilian under the auspices of Prince Alfonso in 1251 (a year before he became King Alfonso X). In *Meshal ha-Qadmoni*, ibn Sahula quotes or paraphrases several passages from *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* (one of the oldest components of the *Zohar*). Here, the author of the *Zohar* is apparently referring to collections such as *Kalila wa-Dimna* and *Meshal ha-Qadmoni*.

See *Derekh Emet*; *Nitsotsei Orot*; Scholem, “Ha-Tsitat ha-Rishon min ha-Midrash ha-Ne'lam,” 181–83; Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:436–37, n. 17; idem, *Toledot ha-Yehudim bi-Sfarad ha-Notsrit*, 508–9, n. 61a.

90. **The upper world and the lower world . . .** The angels in heaven and Israel on earth correspond to one another, sharing holiness. Above, the angels are purely spiritual, but when they manifest on earth to fulfill a mission they assume physical form—for example, when they appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18). Otherwise they could not endure the material nature of the world, nor could the world survive their intense spiritual power.

The verse in Psalms reads: עושה מלאכיו רוחות משרתיו אש לוהט (*Oseh mal'akhav ruhot, mesharetav esh lohet*), whose simple meaning

is: *He makes winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers*. Here, drawing on a midrashic tradition, Rabbi Shim'on reads the words according to their precise order: *He makes His angels spirits* [or: *winds*]. See above, pp. 309–10, n. 64.

On the relation between the upper and lower worlds, see *Tosefta Kareitot* 4:15, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on: “[Heaven and earth] are evenly balanced.” See *Mekhilta, Pisha* 1; JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77d; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:15; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:1; *Midrash Shemu'el* 5:1; *Tanḥuma, Bo* 5; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 14, 19. On the similar theme of “as above, so below,” see above, pp. 175–76, n. 344.

91. **If this is so with the angels . . .** If they must assume physical form when they manifest below, then certainly when Torah is revealed in the world she must appear in an earthly guise.

The statement that Torah “created [the angels] and created all worlds” reflects the midrashic view that Torah served as the instrument by which God created the universe. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1, in the name of Rabbi Osha'ya: “I was by Him as אמן (*amon*), a nursling . . . אמן (*amon*)—אומן (*umman*), an artisan. Torah says, ‘I was the artistic tool of the blessed Holy One.’ According to the custom of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace he does not build it by his own skill but rather by the skill of an architect. And the architect does not build it out of his own knowledge, but rather has parchments and tablets [with plans and diagrams] to know how to make the rooms and doors. Similarly,

“So this story of Torah is a garment of Torah. Whoever thinks that the garment is the real Torah and not something else, may his spirit expire! He will have no share in the world that is coming! Therefore David said: *Uncover my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah* (Psalms 119:18)—what is beneath the garment of Torah.⁹²

“Come and see: There is a garment visible to all. Those fools, when they see someone in a good-looking garment, look no further. Yet the significance of that garment is the body; the significance of the body is the soul.

“Corresponding to this pattern, Torah has a body—and words of Torah called ‘bodies of Torah.’ This body is clothed in a garment, namely stories of this world. Fools of the world look only at that garment, the story of Torah. Those who know more do not look at the garment, but rather at the body beneath that garment. The wise—servants of the supernal King, those who stood at Mount Sinai—look only at the soul, root of all, real Torah. And in the world that is coming, they are destined to gaze upon the soul of soul of Torah.⁹³

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the blessed Holy One gazed into Torah and created the world.” See Vol. 7, p. 208, n. 1.

On the notion that the world exists for the sake of Torah, see BT *Pesahim* 68b, in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “Were it not for Torah, heaven and earth would not endure.” See above, p. 253, n. 7. On the garments of Torah, see *Zohar* 1:155b.

92. **may his spirit expire!** . . . תיפח רוּחֵהּ (Tippah ruheih). This curse, which appears often in rabbinic literature, is equivalent to “May he breathe his last!” “May he drop dead!” See above, note 22.

The search for the *wonders* of Torah has an erotic quality. See *Zohar* 2:99a–b. On the verse in Psalms, see *Zohar* 1:131b–132a, 135a, 145b.

93. **Torah has a body . . .** Whereas the stories of Torah constitute her garment, the words and commandments of Torah form her body. Sometimes the commandments are clothed in stories; for example, the account of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel conveys the tradition of not eating the sciatic nerve (or generally the hindquarter) of an animal. See Genesis 32:25–32. Cf. Numbers 9:6–13; 15:32–36; 27:1–11. Furthermore, the narratives of the Torah often transmit moral teaching, as noted by Cordovero (*Or Yaqar*): “The entire Torah consists of ethical teach-

ings, laws, and pious deeds conveyed through stories.”

Fools appreciate only the stories of Torah, neglecting her words of teaching. Those who know more do not linger on the garment, but concentrate on the Torah’s message and *mitsvot* beneath (“the body beneath that garment”). The truly wise penetrate through both the narrative garment and bodily teaching to a deeper, secret level—the soul of Torah—which they contemplate. (This soul is identified further below.) In the time to come they will gaze upon an even deeper level.

The phrase “bodies of Torah” renders גופי תורה (*gufei torah*), which in rabbinic literature denotes the essential components of Torah. See M *Hagigah* 1:8: “Laws of property and rules of sacrifices, what is pure and impure, and forbidden sexual relations—these have scriptural support; it is they that are *gufei torah*.”

On the phrase *gufei torah*, see BT *Hullin* 60b, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Lakish, “Many verses seem fit to be burned, yet precisely these are *gufei torah*.” See above, note 21. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 63a, in the name of Bar Kappara: “What is a short passage upon which depend all *gufei torah*? *In all your ways know Him, and He will smooth [or: level, straighten] your paths* (Proverbs 3:6).” See

“Come and see: So, too, above—there is garment, body, soul, and soul of soul. The heavens and their hosts are the garment. Assembly of Israel is the body who receives the soul, *Tif'eret Yisra'el* (Beauty of Israel), so She is the body for the soul. The soul that we have mentioned is *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, who is real Torah. The soul of soul is the Holy Ancient One—and all are linked to one another.”⁹⁴

“Woe to the wicked who say that Torah is merely a story! They look at this garment and no further. Happy are the righteous who look at Torah properly! As wine must sit in a bottle, so Torah must sit in this garment. Therefore, concerning Torah, one should look only at what is beneath the garment. So all these words and all these stories are garments.”⁹⁵

also *Tosefta Shabbat* 2:10; *Sifra*, *Qedoshim* 1:1, 86c; BT *Berakhot* 11b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 24:5; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:16; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 37.

The “wise” are described as “those who stood at Mount Sinai.” According to rabbinic tradition, the souls of all future generations were present at Sinai. Here, Rabbi Shim'on implies that only the souls of the wise (who penetrate to the secret soul of Torah) were present there. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 41; *Tanhumah*, *Yitro* 11, *Pequdei* 3, *Nitsavim* 3; *Tanhumah* (Buber), *Nitsavim* 8; *Zohar* 1:91a; 2:83b. Cf. BT *Shabbat* 146a; *Shemot Rabbah* 28:6; *Nitsotsei Orot*. See also, p. 453, n. 463.

On the multiple meanings of Torah, see *Zohar* 2:99a–b; Vol. 5, p. 34, n. 99. On the body and soul of Scripture, see Philo's description of the Therapeutae (*De vita contemplativa* 10:78): “The whole of the law seems to these people to resemble a living being, with the literal commandments for its body, and for its soul the invisible meaning stored away in its words.”

Cf. Origen, *De principiis* 4:2:4: “Just as a human being is said to be made up of body, soul, and spirit, so also is sacred Scripture.” See also Rumi, *Mathnawi* 3:4247–48: “The outward sense of the Qur'an is like the body of a person, whose features are apparent and whose soul is hidden.”

94. **So, too, above...** The heavens form a garment clothing *Shekhinah* (known as Assembly of Israel). She constitutes a body, receiving the soul: *Tif'eret*.

The clause “so She is the body for the soul” sounds redundant, but it probably alludes to a Talmudic description of a heavenly “body” containing all souls, which the *Zohar* sometimes identifies with *Shekhinah*. See BT *Yevamot* 62a; Vol. 5, pp. 6–7, n. 19. *Shekhinah* receives the soul of *Tif'eret* and thereby carries all human souls, which are engendered by the union of the divine couple.

The clause “the soul that we have mentioned” refers not only to the immediately preceding lines, but also to the preceding paragraph: “The wise... look only at the soul, root of all, real Torah.” Now it becomes clear that the soul of Torah is none other than *Tif'eret*, who is symbolized by the Written Torah. The essence of Torah is divine; so intense study culminates in revelation.

The title “the Holy Ancient One” refers to *Keter*, the primal manifestation of *Ein Sof*. The phrase “soul of soul” derives from Solomon ibn Gabirol, *Keter Malkhut* 4:47: “You are alive but not through... soul, for You are soul of soul.” See *Zohar* 1:45a (*Heikh*), 79a–b (*ST*), 103b, 245a; 2:118b (*RM*), 156b; 3:109b (*RM*); *ZH* 45d, 75a (*MhN*, *Rut*), 82c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97. On body, soul, and soul of soul, see *ZH* 45d.

On the divine aspect of Torah, see above, p. 7, n. 23. On Assembly of Israel as a title of *Shekhinah*, see above, p. 11, n. 32.

95. **Woe to the wicked...** Who dismiss the Torah as nothing but a bunch of tales, lacking any deeper meaning. Rabbi Shim'on urges his listeners not to be content with the superficial narrative garment of Torah, but

ויעשו בני ישראל (Ve-ya'asu venei Yisra'el), *Let the Children of Israel perform, the Passover offering at its set time* (Numbers 9:2). What is meant by ve-ya'asu, *let them make*? Rabbi Yose said, "As has already been said, whoever displays an action below fittingly is as if he 'makes' it above, for because of him that entity is aroused above. As it were, he makes it. This has already been said."⁹⁶ [152b]

"איש איש (Ish ish), *Any person, who becomes טמא לנפש (tame la-nefesh), impure for the soul, or is on a distant journey* . . . (Numbers 9:10). *Ish ish, A person, a person—why twice? Well, a person who is a person, worthy of receiving a sublime holy soul, and he impaired himself, and supernal Shekhinah does not settle upon him. Why? Because he inflicted it, defiling himself. So, ish ish, a person, a person—a person worthy of being a person, yet he defiles himself, so that holiness from above does not settle upon him.*"⁹⁷

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to penetrate deeper and deeper. Yet the garment has a vital function: to preserve the valuable contents.

The *Zohar* seems to be polemicizing here against contemporary skeptics and radical rationalists who read the Torah critically. See *Zohar* 1:163a; 2:264b; 3:149a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 391–92; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 55–56; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 203; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 403–14; Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:236–305; Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 2:403; idem, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1082, 1127.

On the image of the wine and its bottle, cf. *M Avot* 4:20, in the name of Rabbi Me'ir (per Kaufmann MS): "Do not look at the bottle, but rather at what it contains."

96. What is meant by ve-ya'asu, *let them make*? . . . The verse could have read *let them slaughter*, or *let them eat*.

In this verse the simple sense of ve-ya'asu is *let them perform (the Passover offering)*, but Rabbi Yose focuses on the hyperliteral meaning: *let them make*. Invoking a kabbalistic principle, he explains that a person engaged in a *mitsvah* with *kavvanah* "makes," or stimulates, the sefirotic root of that *mitsvah* above.

Rabbi Yose's hyperliteral reading of ve-ya'asu derives from midrashic sources. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 35:7, where Rabbi Hama

son of Hanina interprets the verse *If by My statutes you walk, and My commands you keep ועשיתם אתם (va-asitem otam), and you do them* (Leviticus 26:3): "[God] said to them, 'If you keep the Torah, I consider it as though you made [the commandments], as is written: ועשיתם אתם (va-asitem attem), and you yourselves make [them].'"

See above, p. 215, n. 20. Cf. above, p. 230, n. 23. On the principle "By an action below is aroused an action above," see above, pp. 41–42, n. 122.

97. איש איש (Ish ish), *Any person* . . . The context in Numbers discusses the case of a person who is in a state of ritual impurity and thereby disqualified from participating in the Passover offering.

The expression *ish ish*—literally, *a man, a man* (or: *a person, a person*)—means *any person*, but Rabbi Yose focuses on the hyperliteral sense. The expression now denotes *a person* who is really *a person*—deserving a divine soul—but he impairs himself by wrong action and thereby loses the opportunity of holiness.

The simple sense of the verse is: *Any person who becomes טמא לנפש (tame la-nefesh), defiled by a corpse* . . . , but Rabbi Yose construes *tame la-nefesh* as *impure for the soul*, too defiled to obtain a holy soul.

On the hyperliteral sense of *ish ish*, see

There was a man who lived in the mountains. He knew nothing about those living in the city. He sowed wheat and ate the kernels raw. One day he entered the city. They offered him good bread. The man asked, "What's this for?"

They replied, "It's bread, to eat!"

He ate, and it tasted very good. He asked, "What's it made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

Later they offered him thick loaves kneaded with oil. He tasted them and asked, "And what are these made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

Later they offered him royal pastry kneaded with honey and oil. He asked, "And what are these made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

He said, "Surely I am the master of all of these, since I eat the essence of all of these: wheat!"

Because of that view, he knew nothing of the delights of the world, which were lost to him. So it is with one who grasps the principle but is unaware of all those delectable delights deriving, diverging from that principle.¹

<p>מִתְּלָא לְבַר נֶשׁ דְּהוּה דְּיוֹרָה בִּינֵי טוֹרִין וְלֹא יָדַע בְּדִיּוּרֵי מִתָּא, זֶרַע חֲטִיין וְאָכַל חֲטִיין בְּגוּפֵיהוּ. יוֹמָא חַד עָאֵל לְמִתָּא אֶקְרִיבוּ לֵה נַחְמָא טָבָא. אָמַר הוּוּא בְּר נֶשׁ דְּנָא לְמָה. אָמְרוּ נַחְמָא הוּוּא לְמִיכַל. אָכַל וְטַעַם לְחָדָא לְחֵבָה. אָמַר וּמִמָּה אֲתַעְבְּד דָּא. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיין. לְבַתַּר אֶקְרִיבוּ לֵה גְרִינִין דְּלִישִׁין בְּמִשְׁחָא.</p>	<p>מִשְׁל לְבוּ אָדָם שֶׁהִיָּה דְיֹורוּ בֵין הַהָרִים וְלֹא יָדַע בְּדִיּוּרֵי עִיר, זֶרַע חֲטִיִּים וְאָכַל חֲטִיִּים בְּעַצְמָם. יוֹם אֶחָד נִכְנַס לְעִיר הַגִּישׁוֹ לוֹ לֶחֶם טוֹב. אָמַר אוֹתוֹ בֶּן אָדָם זֶה לְמָה. אָמְרוּ לֶחֶם הוּוּא לְאָכּוֹל. אָכַל וְטַעַם מְאֹד לְחָכּוֹ. אָמַר וּמִמָּה נַעֲשֶׂה זֶה. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיִּים. אַחֲרַי כִּד הַגִּישׁוֹ לוֹ חֲלוֹת שְׁנִילוּשׁוֹ</p>
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<p>בְּשִׁמּוֹן. טַעַם מֵהֶם, אָמַר וְאֵלּוּ מִמָּה נַעֲשׂוּ. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיִּים. אַחֲרַי כִּד הַגִּישׁוֹ לוֹ תַעְרוּבוֹת מְלָכִים שְׁנִילוּשִׁים בְּדַבֵּשׁ וְשִׁמּוֹן, אָמַר וְאֵלּוּ מִמָּה נַעֲשִׂים. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיִּים. אָמַר וְדָאֵי אֲנִי הַבְּעָלִים שֶׁל כָּל אֵלּוּ, שְׂאֲנֵי אוֹכְלֵי עֵיקַר כָּל אֵלּוּ שֶׁהוּוּא חֶטֶה, וּמִפְּנֵי אוֹתָהּ דַּעְהָ, מַעֲדוּנֵי הָעוֹלָם לֹא יָדַע וְנֶאֱבַדוּ מִמֶּנּוּ, כִּד מִי שֶׁתּוֹפֵס הַכֶּלֶל וְלֹא יָדַע בְּכָל הַעֲדוּנִים שְׁמוּעִילִים שְׂיוּצָאִים מֵאוֹתוֹ כֶּלֶל:</p>	<p>טַעַם מִנִּיחוּ, אָמַר וְאֵלִין מִמָּה אֲתַעְבְּדוּ. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיין. לְבַתַּר אֶקְרִיבוּ לֵה טְרִיקֵי מְלַכִּין דְּלִישִׁין בְּדוּבְשָׂא וּמִשְׁחָא, אָמַר וְאֵלִין מִמָּה אֲתַעְבְּדוּ. אָמְרוּ מִחֲטִיין. אָמַר וְדָאֵי אֲנָא מְאָרֵי דְכָל אֵלִין, דְּאֲנָא אָכִיל עֵיקְרָא דְכָל אֵלִין דְּאִיהוּ חֶטֶה, וּבְגִין (דְּקַע"ו ע"ס) הוּוּא דַּעְתָּא, מַעֲדוּנֵי עֲלִמָּא לֹא יָדַע וְאֲתַאֲבִידוּ מִנָּה, כִּד מֵאֵן דְּנִקְיַט כֶּלְלָא וְלֹא יָדַע כֶּלְלָהוּ עֲדוּנִין דְּמַהֲנִין דְּנִפְקִין מִחֵוּא כֶּלְלָא:</p>
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¹ Zohar 2:176a-b. The wheat and its products (kernels, bread, cake, and pastry) may symbolize four levels of meaning in Torah: simple, homiletical, allegorical, and mystical. See Daniel Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah*, 207.