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KABBALAH

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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KABBALAH

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF MYSTICISM AND ESOTERICISM

The development of the Kabbalah has its sources in the esoteric and theosophical currents existing among the Jews of Palestine and Egypt in the era which saw the birth of Christianity. These currents are linked with the history of Hellenistic and syncretistic religion at the close of antiquity. Scholars disagree on the measure of the influence exerted by such trends, and also by Persian religion, on the early forms of Jewish mysticism. Some stress the Iranian influence on the general development of Judaism during the period of the Second Temple, and particularly on certain movements such as the Jewish apocalyptic, a view supported by many experts on the different forms of Gnosticism, like R. Reitzenstein and G. Widengren. That there was an extensive degree of Greek influence on these currents is maintained by a number of scholars, and various theories have been adduced to explain this. Many specialists in the Gnosticism of the first three centuries of the common era see it as basically a Greek or Hellenistic phenomenon, certain aspects of which appeared in Jewish circles, particularly in those sects on the fringes of rabbinic Judaism – *ha-minim*. The position of Philo of Alexandria and his relationship with Palestinian Judaism is of especial weight in these controversies. In contrast to scholars like Harry Wolfson who see Philo as fundamentally a Greek philosopher in Jewish garb, others, like Hans Lewy and Erwin Goodenough, interpret him as a theosophist or even a mystic. Philo's work, they believe, should be seen as an attempt to explain the faith of Israel in terms of Hellenistic mysticism, whose crowning glory was ecstatic rapture. In his monumental book, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (13 vols. 1953–68), Goodenough maintains that, in contrast to Palestinian Judaism, which found expression in *halakhah* and *aggadah* and in the esoteric ideas which were indigenous developments, Diaspora Judaism showed little evidence of Palestinian influence. Instead, he avers, it had a specific spirituality based on a symbolism which is not rooted solely in the *halakhah*, but which is endowed with an imaginative content of a more or less mystical significance. He believes that the literary evidence, such as the writings of Philo and Hellenistic Judaism, provides extremely useful keys to an understanding of the archaeological and pictorial documentation which he has assembled in such abundance. Although considerable doubt has been cast on Goodenough's basic theories there is sufficient material in his great work to stimulate investigation into previously neglected aspects of Judaism and into evidence which has been insufficiently examined. His argument on the basically mystical significance of the pictorial symbols cannot be accepted, but he did succeed in establishing a link between certain literary evidence extant in Greek, Coptic, Armenian, and esoteric teachings prevalent in Palestinian Judaism. A similar link between Philonic ideas and the viewpoint of the *aggadah*, including the *aggadah* of the mystics, was also suggested by Yitzhak Baer.[1] Philo's book *De Vita Contempiativa* (*About the Contemplative Life*, 1895) mentions the existence of a sectarian community of "worshipers of God" (Therapeutes), who had already formulated a definitely mystical understanding of the Torah as a living body, and this paved the way for a mystical exegesis of Scripture.

An important element common to both Alexandrian and Palestinian Judaism is the speculation on Divine Wisdom which has its scriptural roots in Proverbs 8 and Job 28. Here wisdom is seen as an intermediary force by means of which God creates the world. This appears in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (7:25) as "a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty . . . For she is an effulgence from everlasting light and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, And an image of His goodness" (Charles). In the Slavonic Book of Enoch God commands His Wisdom to create man. Wisdom is here the first attribute of God to be given concrete form as an emanation from the Divine Glory. In many circles this Wisdom soon became the Torah itself, the "word of God," the form of expression of the Divine Power. Such views of the mystery of Wisdom demonstrate how parallel development could take place, on the one hand through rabbinic exegesis of the words of Scripture, and on the other through the influence of Greek philosophical speculations on the Logos. It should be noted that there is no definite proof that Philo's writings had an actual direct influence on rabbinic Judaism in the post-tannaitic period, and the attempt to prove that the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* of the Zohar is nothing but a Hellenistic Midrash (S. Belkin, in: *Sura,* 3 (1958), 25–92) is a failure. However, the fact that the Karaite Kirkisānī (tenth century) was familiar with certain quotations drawn from Philonic writings shows that some of his ideas found their way, perhaps through Christian-Arab channels, to members of Jewish sects in the Near East.[2] But it should not be deduced from this that there was a continuous influence up to this time, let alone up to the time of the formulation of the Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. Specific parallels between Philonic and kabbalistic exegesis should be put down to the similarity of their exegetical method, which naturally produced identical results from time to time.

The theories concerning Persian and Greek influences tend to overlook the

inner dynamism of the development taking place within Palestinian Judaism, which was in itself capable of producing movements of a mystical and esoteric nature. This kind of development can also be seen in those circles whose historical influence was crucial and decisive for the future of Judaism, e.g., among the Pharisees, the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, that is to say, at the very heart of established rabbinic Judaism. In addition, there were similar tendencies in other spheres outside the mainstream, in the various currents whose influence on subsequent Judaism is a matter of controversy: the Essenes, the Qumran sect (if these two are not one and the same), and the different Gnostic sects on the periphery of Judaism whose existence is attested to by the writings of the Church Fathers. Some have thought to demonstrate the existence of mystical trends even in biblical times (Hertz, Horodezky, Lindblom, Montefiore), but it is almost certain that the phenomena which they connected with mysticism, like prophecy and the piety of certain psalms, belong to other strands in the history of religion. Historically speaking, organized closed societies of mystics have been proved to exist only since the end of the Second Temple era; this is clearly attested to by the struggle taking place in this period between different religious forces, and by the tendency then current to delve more deeply into original religious speculation.

APOCALYPTIC ESOTERICISM AND MERKABAH MYSTICISM

Chronologically speaking, it is in apocalyptic literature that we find the first appearance of ideas of a specifically mystical character, reserved for the elect. Scholars do not agree on whether the origins of this literature are to be found among the Pharisees and their disciples or among the Essenes, and it is quite possible that apocalyptic tendencies appeared in both. It is known from Josephus that the Essenes possessed literature which was both magical and angelological in content. His silence concerning their apocalyptic ideas can be understood as his desire to conceal this aspect of contemporary Judaism from his gentile readers. The discovery of the literary remains of the Qumran sect shows that such ideas found a haven among them. They possessed the original Book of Enoch, both in Hebrew and Aramaic, although it is quite likely that it was composed in the period preceding the split between the Pharisees and the members of the Qumran sect. In fact, traditions resembling those embedded in the Book of Enoch found their way into rabbinic Judaism at the time of the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, and it is impossible to determine precisely the breeding ground of this type of tradition until the problems presented by the discovery of the Qumran writings have been solved. The Book of Enoch was followed by apocalyptic writing up to the time of the *tannaim*, and, in different ways, even later. Esoteric knowledge in these books touched not only upon the revelation of the end of time and its awesome terrors, but also upon the structure of the hidden world and its inhabitants: heaven, the Garden of Eden, and Gehinnom, angels and evil spirits, and the fate of the souls in this hidden world. Above this are revelations concerning the Throne of Glory and its Occupant, which should apparently be identified with "the wonderful secrets" of God mentioned by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here a link can be established between this literature and the much later traditions concerning the *ma'aseh bereshit* and the *ma'aseh merkabah*.

It is not just the content of these ideas which is considered esoteric; their authors too hid their own individuality and their names, concealing themselves behind biblical characters like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Baruch, Daniel, Ezra, and others. This self-concealment, which was completely successful, has made it extremely difficult for us to determine the historical and social milieu of the authors. This pseudepigraphical pattern continued within the mystical tradition in the centuries that followed. The clear tendency toward asceticism as a way of preparing for the reception of the mystical tradition, which is already attested to in the last chapter of the Book of Enoch, becomes a fundamental principle for the apocalyptics, the Essenes, and the circle of the Merkabah mystics who succeeded them. From the start, this pietist asceticism aroused active opposition entailing abuse and persecution, which later characterized practically the whole historical development of pietist tendencies (*ḥasidut*) in rabbinic Judaism.

The mysteries of the Throne constitute here a particularly exalted subject which to a large extent set the pattern for the early forms of Jewish mysticism. It did not aspire to an understanding of the true nature of God, but to a perception of the phenomenon of the Throne on its Chariot as it is described in the first chapter of Ezekiel, traditionally entitled *ma'aseh merkabah*. The mysteries of the world of the Throne, together with those of the Divine Glory which is revealed there, are the parallels in Jewish esoteric tradition to the revelations on the realm of the divine in Gnosticism. The 14th chapter of the Book of Enoch, which contains the earliest example of this kind of literary description, was the source of a long visionary tradition of describing the world of the Throne and the visionary ascent to it, which we find portrayed in the books of the Merkabah mystics. In addition to interpretations, visions, and speculations based on the *ma'aseh merkabah*, other esoteric traditions began to crystallize round the first chapter of Genesis, which was called *ma'aseh bereshit*. These two

terms were subsequently used to describe those subjects dealing with these topics. Both Mishnah and Talmud (Ḥag. 2:1 and the corresponding *Gemara* in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud) show that, in the first century of the common era, esoteric traditions existed within these areas, and severe limitations were placed on public discussion of such subjects: "The story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, nor the chapter on the Chariot before one person, unless he is a sage and already has an independent understanding of the matter." Evidence concerning the involvement of Johanan b. Zakkai and his disciples in this sort of exposition proves that this esotericism could grow in the very center of a developing rabbinic Judaism, and that consequently this Judaism had a particular esoteric aspect from its very beginning. On the other hand, it is possible that the rise of Gnostic speculations, which were not accepted by the rabbis, made many of them tread very warily and adopt a polemical attitude. Such an attitude is expressed in the continuation of the Mishnah quoted above: "Whoever ponders on four things, it were better for him if he had not come into the world: what is above, what is below, what was before time, and what will be hereafter." Here we have a prohibition against the very speculations which are characteristic of Gnosticism as it is defined in the "Excerpts from the writings of [the Gnostic] Theodutus" (*Extraits de Théodote*, ed. F. Sagnard (1948), para. 78). In actual fact, this prohibition was largely ignored, as far as can be judged from the many statements of *tannaim* and *amoraim* dealing with these matters which are scattered throughout the Talmud and the Midrashim.

In an age of spiritual awakening and deep religious turmoil there arose in Judaism a number of sects with heterodox ideas resulting from a mixture of inner compulsion and outside influence. Whether Gnostic sects existed on the periphery of Judaism before the advent of Christianity is a matter of controversy (see below); but there is no doubt that *minim* ("heretics") did exist in the tannaitic period and especially in the third and fourth centuries. In this period a Jewish Gnostic sect with definite antinomian tendencies was active in Sepphoris. There were also of course intermediate groups from which members of these sects gained an extended knowledge of theological material on *ma'aseh bereshit* and *ma'aseh merkabah*, and among these should be included the Ophites (snake worshipers) who were basically Jewish rather than Christian. From this source a considerable number of esoteric traditions were transmitted to Gnostics outside Judaism, whose books, many of which have been discovered in our own time, are full of such material – found not only in Greek and Coptic texts of the second and third centuries but also in the early strata of Mandaic literature, which is written in colloquial Aramaic. Notwithstanding all the deep differences in theological approach, the growth of Merkabah mysticism among the rabbis constitutes an inner Jewish concomitant to Gnosis, and it may be termed "Jewish and rabbinic Gnosticism."

Within these circles theosophical ideas and revelations connected with them branched out in many directions, so that it is impossible to speak here of one single system. A particular mystical terminology was also established. Some of it is reflected in the sources of "normal" Midrashim, while part is confined to the literary sources of the mystics: the literature of the *heikhalot* and the *ma'aseh bereshit*. Verbs like *hishtakkel, ẓafah, iyyen*, and *higgi'a* have specific meanings, as do nouns like *ha-kavod, ha-kavod ha-gadol, ha-kavod ha-nistar, mara di-revuta, yoẓer bereshit, heikhalot, ḥadrei merkabah*, and others. Particularly important is the established usage of the term *Kavod* ("glory") as a name both for God when He is the object of profound mystical enquiry and also for the general area of theosophical research. This term acquires a specific meaning, distinct from its scriptural usage, as early as the Book of Tobit and the end of the Book of Enoch, and it continues to be used in this way in apocalyptic literature. In contrast, the use of the word *sod* ("mystery") in this context was relatively rare, becoming general only in the Middle Ages, whereas *raz* ("secret") is used more often in the earlier texts.

Merkabah terminology is found in a hymn-fragment in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the angels praise "the image of the Throne of the Chariot" (Strugnell). Members of the sect combined ideas concerning the song of the angels, who stand before the Chariot, with other ideas about the names and duties of the angels, and all this is common to the sect of Qumran and to later traditions of the *ma'aseh merkabah*. From the very beginning these traditions were surrounded by an aura of particular sanctity. Talmudic *aggadah* connects exposition of the Merkabah with the descent of fire from above which surrounds the expositor. In the literature of the *heikhalot* other and more daring expressions are used to describe the emotional and ecstatic character of these experiences. Distinct from the exposition of the Merkabah which the rabbis gave while on earth below was the ecstatic contemplation of the Merkabah experienced as an ascent to the heavens, namely "descent to the Merkabah," through entering *pardes* ("paradise"). This was not a matter for exposition and interpretation but of vision and personal experience. This transition, which once again connects the revelations of the Merkabah with the apocalyptic tradition, is mentioned in the Talmud alongside the exegetic traditions (Ḥag. 14b). It concerns the four sages who "entered *pardes*." Their fate demonstrates that here we are dealing with spiritual experiences which were achieved by contemplation and ecstasy. Simeon b. Azzai "looked and died"; Ben Zoma "looked and was smitten" (mentally); Elisha b. Avuyah, called *aḥer* ("other"), forsook rabbinic Judaism and "cut the shoots," apparently becoming a dualistic Gnostic; R. Akiva alone "entered in

peace and left in peace," or, in another reading, "ascended in peace and descended in peace." So R. Akiva, a central figure in the world of rabbinic Judaism, is also the legitimate representative of a mysticism within its boundaries. This is apparently why Akiva and Ishmael, who was his companion and also his adversary in halakhic matters, served as the central pillars and chief mouthpieces in the later pseudepigraphic literature devoted to the mysteries of the Merkabah. In addition, the striking halakhic character of this literature shows that its authors were well rooted in the halakhic tradition and far from holding heterodox opinions.

In mystic circles particular conditions were laid down for the entry of those fit to be initiated into the doctrines and activities bound up with these fields. The basic teachings were communicated in a whisper (Ḥag. 13b; *Bereshit Rabbah,* Theodor Albeck edition (1965), 19–20). The earliest conditions governing the choice of those suitable were of two types. In the *Gemara* (Ḥag. 13b) basically intellectual conditions were formulated, as well as age limits ("at life's half-way stage"); and in the beginning of *Heikhalot Rabbati* certain ethical qualities required of the initiate are enumerated. In addition to this, from the third and fourth centuries, according to Sherira Gaon (*Oẓar ha-Ge'onim* to *Ḥagigah* (1931), *Teshuvot*, no. 12, p. 8), they used external methods of appraisal based on physiognomy and chiromancy *(hakkarat panim ve-sidrei sirtutin). Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, chapter 29, quotes an Aramaic *baraita* from the Merkabah mystics concerning physiognomy. A fragment of a similar *baraita*, written in Hebrew in the name of R. Ishmael, has been preserved, and there is no doubt that it was a part of Merkabah literature. Its style and content prove its early date.[3] (Another fragment from the Genizah was published by I. Gruenwald.)[4]

ESOTERIC LITERATURE: THE *HEIKHALOT,* THE *MA'ASEH BERESHIT,* AND THE LITERATURE OF MAGIC

This literature occupies an extremely important place in the development of esotericism and mysticism. It is connected at innumerable points with traditions outside its boundaries, in the Talmuds and Midrashim, and these traditions sometimes explain each other. In addition, esoteric literature contains a wealth of material that is found nowhere else. Many scholars, including Zunz, Graetz, and P. Bloch, have tried to show that a vast distance, both in time and subject matter, separates the early Merkabah ideas from those embedded in Talmud and Midrash, and they ascribed the composition of Merkabah literature to the geonic era. Even though it is quite possible that some of the texts were not edited until this period, there is no doubt that large sections originated in talmudic times, and that the central ideas, as well as many details, go back as far as the first and second centuries. Many of the texts are short, and in various manuscripts there is a considerable amount of basic material quite devoid of any literary embellishment. (For a list of the books belonging to this literature see Merkabah Mysticism p. 373.) The traditions assembled here are not all of the same kind, and they indicate different tendencies among the mystics. We find here detailed descriptions of the world of the Chariot, of the ecstatic ascent to that world, and of the technique used to accomplish this ascent. As in non-Jewish Gnostic literature, there is a magical and theurgic aspect to the technique of ascent, and there are very strong connections between Merkabah literature and Hebrew and Aramaic theurgic literature from both this and the geonic period. The earliest stratum of the *heikhalot* strongly emphasizes this magical side, which in the practical application of its teachings is linked to the attainment of the "contemplation of the Chariot." It is very similar to a number of important texts preserved among the Greek magic papyri and to Gnostic literature of the *Pistis Sophia* type which originated in the second or third century C.E.

This literature refers to historical figures, whose connection with the mysteries of the Chariot is attested by Talmud and Midrash. The ascent of its heroes to the Chariot (which in the *Heikhalot Rabbati* is deliberately called "descent") comes after a number of preparatory exercises of an extremely ascetic nature. The aspirant placed his head between his knees, a physical position which can induce altered states of consciousness and self-hypnosis. At the same time, he recited hymns of an ecstatic character, the texts of which are extant in several sources, particularly in the *Heikhalot Rabbati*. These poems, some of the earliest *piyyutim* known to us, indicate that "Chariot hymns" like these were known in Palestine as early as the third century. Some of them purport to be the songs of the holy creatures (*ḥayyot*) who bear the Throne of Glory, and whose singing is already mentioned in apocalyptic literature. The poems have their own specific style which corresponds to the spirit of "celestial liturgy," and they have a linguistic affinity with similar liturgical fragments in the writings of the Qumran sect. Almost all of them conclude with the *kedushah* ("sanctification") of Isaiah 6:3, which is used as a fixed refrain. Isaac Nappaḥa, a third-century Palestinian *amora*, puts a similar poem in the mouth of the kine who bore the ark of the covenant (I Sam. 6:12), in his interpretation of "And the kine took the straight way" (*va-yisharnah*, interpreted as "they sang"; Av. Zar. 24b), for he sees a parallel between the kine who bear the ark singing and the holy creatures who bear the Throne of Glory with a glorious festive song. These hymns clearly show their authors' concept of God. He is the holy King, surrounded by "majesty, fear, and awe" in "the palaces of silence." Sovereignty, majesty, and holiness are

His most striking attributes. He is not a God Who is near but a God Who is afar, far removed from the area of man's comprehension, even though His hidden glory may be revealed to man from the Throne. The Merkabah mystics occupy themselves with all the details of the upper world, which extends throughout the seven palaces in the firmament of *aravot* (the uppermost of the seven firmaments); with the angelic hosts which fill the palaces *(heikhalot);* the rivers of fire which flow down in front of the Chariot, and the bridges which cross them; the *ofan* and *hashmal;* and with all the other details of the Chariot described by Ezekiel. But the main purpose of the ascent is the vision of the One Who sits on the Throne, "a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above" (Ezek. 1:26). This appearance of the Glory in the form of supernal man is the content of the most recondite part of this mysticism, called *Shi'ur Komah* ("measure of the body").

The teaching on the "measure of the body" of the Creator constitutes a great enigma. Fragments of it appear in several passages in the *ma'aseh merkabah* literature, and other fragments are preserved separately. They enumerate the fantastic measurements of parts of the head as well as some of the limbs. They also transmit "the secret names" of these limbs, all of them unintelligible letter combinations. Different versions of the numbers and the letter combinations have survived and so they cannot be relied upon, and, all in all, their purpose (whether literal or symbolic) is not clear to us. However, the verse which holds the key to the enumeration is Psalms 147:5: "Great is Our Lord, and mighty in power," which is taken to mean that the extent of the body or of the measurement of "Our Lord" is alluded to in the words *ve-rav ko'aḥ* ("and mighty in power") which in *gematria* amount to 236. This number (236 × 10,000 leagues, and, moreover, not terrestrial but celestial leagues) is the basic measurement on which all the calculations are based. It is not clear whether there is a relationship between speculations on "the greatness of the Lord of the world" and the title *mara di-revuta* ("Lord of greatness") which is one of the predications of God found in the Genesis Apocryphon (p. 2, line 4). The terms *gedullah* ("greatness"; e.g., in the phrase "*ofan* [wheel] of greatness") and *gevurah* ("might") occur as names for God in several texts of the Merkabah mystics. We should not dismiss the possibility of a continuous flow of specific ideas from the Qumran sect to the Merkabah mystics and rabbinic circles in the case of the *Shi'ur Komah* as well as in other fields. The paradox is that the vision of the *Shi'ur Komah* is actually hidden "from the sight of every creature, and concealed from the ministering angels," but "it was revealed to R. Akiva in the *ma'aseh merkabah*" *(Heikhalot Zutrati).* The mystic, therefore, grasps a secret which even the angels cannot comprehend.

In the second half of the second century a Hellenized version of this specula[illegible] is to be found in the Gnostic Markos' description of the "body of truth." There also exist a number of Gnostic gems which, like the Hebrew fragments of *Shi'ur Komah*, bear the figure of a man whose limbs are inscribed with magical combinations of letters, obviously corresponding to their secret names (cf. C. Bonner, *Hesperia*, 23 (1954), 151). A clear reference to this doctrine is found as early as the Slavonic Book of Enoch (13:8)[5] "I have seen the measure of the height of the Lord, without dimension and without shape, which has no end." The passage reflects the precise Hebrew terminology. At least two versions of this doctrine were current in later talmudic and post-talmudic times, one in the name of R. Akiva and one in the name of R. Ishmael (both published in the collection *Merkavah Shelemah* (Jerusalem (1922), fol. 32–43). Two manuscripts from the tenth or 11th centuries (Oxford Hebr. C. 65, and Sassoon 522) contain the oldest available texts, but even these are in different stages of corruption. According to the testimony of Origen (third century), it was not permitted to study Song of Songs in Jewish circles before the age of full maturity, obviously because of esoteric teachings like the *Shi'ur Komah* doctrine which were connected with it. The Midrashim on the Song of Songs reflect such esoteric understanding in many passages. The fragments of *Shi'ur Komah* were known in the sixth century, if not earlier, to the poet Eleazar ha-Kallir.

The provocative anthropomorphism of these passages perplexed many rabbis, and was the object of attacks by the Karaites – so much so that even Maimonides, who at first regarded the *Shi'ur Komah* as an authoritative work requiring interpretation (in his original Ms. of his commentary to the Mishnah, Sanh. 10), later repudiated it, believing it to be a late forgery (*Teshuvot ha-Rambam* (1934), no. 117). In fact, the *Shi'ur Komah* was an early and genuine part of mystic teaching in the days of the *tannaim.* The theory does not imply that God in Himself possesses a physical form, but only that a form of this kind may be ascribed to "the Glory," which in some passages is called *guf ha-Shekhinah* ("the body of the Divine Presence"). *Shi'ur Komah* is based on the descriptions of the beloved in Song of Songs (5:11–16), and it apparently became a part of the esoteric interpretation of this book. Perhaps the idea of the "tunic" and garment of God also belonged to the *Shi'ur Komah*. This "tunic" is of great significance in the *ma'aseh bereshit* of the *Heikhalot Rabbati*. and echoes of this idea can be found in the rabbinic *aggadot* concerning the garment of light in which the Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped himself at the moment of creation.

The ascent and passage through the first six palaces are described at length in the *Heikhalot Rabbati*. with details of all the technical and magical means which assist the ascending spirit and save it from the dangers lying in wait for it. These dangers were given much emphasis in all Merkabah traditions. Deceptive visions meet the ascending soul and angels of destruction try to confound it. At the

gates of all the palaces it must show the doorkeepers "the seals," which are the secret Names of God, or pictures imbued with a magical power (some of which are extant in the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*), which protect it from attack. The dangers especially increase in number at the entrance to the sixth palace where it appears to the Merkabah mystic as if "one hundred million waves pour down, and yet there is not one drop of water there, only the splendor of the pure marble stones which pave the palace." It is to this danger in the ecstatic ascent that the words of R. Akiva refer in the story of the four who entered *pardes*: "when you come to the place of pure marble stones, do not say 'water, water.'" The texts also mention a "fire which proceeds from his own body and consumes it." Sometimes the fire is seen as a danger (*Merkabah Shelemah* (1921), 1b) and at other times as an ecstatic experience which accompanies the entry into the first palace: "My hands were burned, and I stood without hands or feet" (Ms. Neubauer, Oxford 1531, 45b). The *pardes* which R. Akiva and his companions entered is the world of the celestial Garden of Eden or the realm of the heavenly palaces and the ascent or "rapture" is common to several Jewish apocalypses, and is mentioned by Paul (II Cor. 12:2–4) as something which needs no explanation for his readers of Jewish origin. In contrast to the dangers which attend those who, although unfit for them, indulge in these matters and in the magical science of theurgy, great emphasis is laid on the illumination which comes to the recipients of the revelations: "There was light in my heart like lightning," or "the world changed into purity around me, and my heart felt as if I had entered a new world" (*Merkabah Shelemah* 1a, 4b).

An early passage enumerating the basic subjects of the mystery of the Chariot is to be found in the Midrash to Proverbs 10, and, in a different version, in Azriel's *Perush ha-Aggadot* (ed. Tishby (1945), 62). The subjects mentioned are the *ḥashmal*, the lightning, the cherub, the Throne of Glory, the bridges in the Merkabah, and the measurement of the limbs "from my toenails to the top of my head." Other subjects which are of great importance in a number of sources are not mentioned. Among these are ideas concerning the *pargod* ("curtain" or "veil") which separates the One Who sits on the Throne from the other parts of the Chariot, and upon which are embroidered the archetypes of everything that is created. There are different, highly colored traditions concerning the *pargod*. Some take it to be a curtain which prevents the ministering angels from seeing the Glory (Targ. of Job 26:9), while others hold that "the seven angels that were created first" continue their ministry inside the *pargod* (*Massekhet Heikhalot*, end of ch. 7). In another form, this concept of the *pargod* was taken over by second century non-Jewish Gnostics.

There was no fixed angelology, and different views, and indeed complete systems, have been preserved, ranging from those found in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch to the Hebrew Enoch found among the literature of the *heikhalot*. These ideas occupy a considerable place in the extant Merkabah literature, and, as would be expected, they reappear in various forms of a practical nature in incantations and theurgical literature. Knowledge of the names of the angels was already part of the mysticism of the Essenes, and it developed in both rabbinic and heterodox circles up to the end of the geonic period. Together with the concept of the four or seven key angels (archangels), there developed (about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century) a new doctrine concerning the angel Metatron (*sar ha-panim*, "the prince of the Presence"). (See details in the separate section on Metatron, p. 377.)

In Merkabah literature the names of the angels easily intermingle with the secret Names of God, many of which are mentioned in the fragments of this literature still extant. Since many of these names have not been completely explained it has not yet been possible to ascertain whether they are meant to convey a specific theological idea – e.g., an emphasis on a particular aspect of God's revelation or activity – or whether they have other purposes which we cannot fathom. Fragments of *heikhalot* literature mention names like Adiriron, Zohariel, Zavodiel, Ta'zash, Akhtriel (found also in a *baraita* emanating from this circle in Ber. 7a). The formula "the Lord, God of Israel" is very often added to the particular name, but many of the chief angels also have this added to their names (e.g., in the Hebrew Enoch) so it cannot be deduced from this whether the phrase refers to the name of an angel or to the name of God. Sometimes the same name serves to designate both God and an angel. An example of this is **Azbogah** ("an eightfold name") in which each pair of letters adds up, through *gematria*, to the number eight. This "eightfold" name reflects the Gnostic concept of the *ogdoas*, the eighth firmament above the seven firmaments, where the Divine Wisdom dwells. In the *Heikhalot Zutrati* it is defined as "a name of power" *(gevurah)*, i.e., one of the names of the Divine Glory, while in the Hebrew Enoch chapter 18 it becomes the name of one of the angelic princes; its numerical significance is forgotten and it is subject to the customary aggadic interpretation of names. The same is true of the term *ziva rabba*, which from one angle is no more than an Aramaic translation of *ha-kavod ha-gadol* ("the great glory") found in the apocalypses and also in Samaritan sources as a description of the revealed God. But it also occurs in the lists of the mysterious names of the angel Metatron, and it is found with a similar meaning in Mandaic literature. Just as non-Jewish Gnostics sometimes used Aramaic formulae in their Greek writings, so Greek elements and Greek formulae found their way into Merkabah literature. The dialogue between the mystic and the angel Dumiel at the gate of the sixth palace in the *Heikhalot Rabbati* is conducted in Greek.[6] One of the

names of God in this literature is Totrossiah, which signifies the *tetras* of the four letters of the name YHWH. The reverse parallel to this is the name Arbatiao which is found frequently in the magic papyri of this period.

The different tendencies of Merkabah mysticism established ways of contemplating ascent to the heavens – ways which were understood in their literal sense. Their basic conception did not depend on scriptural interpretation but took on its own particular literary form. The magical element was strong in the early stages of *heikhalot* literature only, becoming weaker in later redactions. From the third century onward interpretations appear which divest the subject of the Chariot of its literal significance and introduce an ethical element. Sometimes the different palaces correspond to the ladder of ascent through the virtues;[7] and sometimes the whole topic of the Chariot completely loses its literal meaning. This kind of interpretation is especially evident in the remarkable mystic utterance of the third-century *amora* Simeon b. Lakish: "the patriarchs are the Chariot" (Gen. Rabbah, 475, 793, 983, with regard to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Statements like these opened the door to the type of symbolic interpretation which flourished afterward in kabbalistic literature.

The first center for this type of mysticism was in Palestine, where a large part of *heikhalot* literature was written. Mystical ideas found their way to Babylonia at least as early as the time of Rav (mid-third century), and their influence is recognizable, among other places, in the magical incantations which were inscribed on bowls to afford "protection" from evil spirits and demons, and which reflect popular Babylonian Judaism from the end of the talmudic period to the time of the *geonim*. In Babylonia, apparently, a number of magical prayers were composed, as well as treatises on magic, like the *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (ed. Gaster, 1896), *Sefer ha-Malbush* (Sassoon Ms. 290, pp. 306–11), *Sefer ha-Yashar* (British Museum, Margoliouth Ms. 752, fol. 91ff.), *Sefer ha-Ma'alot, Havdalah de-R. Akiva* (Vatican Ms. 228), *Pishra de R. Ḥanina b. Dosa* (Vatican Ms. 216, fols. 4–6), and others, some of which were written in Babylonian Aramaic. In all these the influence of Merkabah ideas was very strong. In Palestine, perhaps at the end of the talmudic period, the *Sefer ha-Razim* was composed, which contains descriptions of the firmaments greatly influenced by *heikhalot* literature, while the "practical" part, concerning incantations, has a different style, partly adopted verbatim from Greek sources. From circles such as these emanated the magical usage of the Torah and Psalms for practical purposes.[8] This practice was based on the theory that essentially these books were made up from the Sacred Names of God and His angels, an idea that first appeared in the preface to the *Shimmushei Torah*; only the midrashic introduction, with the title *Ma'yan ha-Ḥokhmah*, has been printed (Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, part 1 (1938), 58–61), but the whole work is extant in manuscript. Of the same type is the book *Shimmushei Tehillim*, which has been printed many times in Hebrew and also exists in manuscript in an Aramaic version.

The poetical content of the literature of the *ma'aseh merkabah* and the *ma'aseh bereshit* is striking; we have already noted the hymns sung by the *ḥayyot* and the ministering angels in praise of their Creator. Following the pattern of several of the Psalms, the view was developed that the whole of creation, according to its nature and order, was singing hymns of praise. A hymnology was established in the various versions of the *Perek Shirah*, which without any doubt derives from mystical circles in the talmudic period. Connected with this poetical element is the influence that the Merkabah mystics had on the development of specific portions of the order of prayer, particularly on the morning *kedushah*,[9] and later on the *piyyutim* which were written for these portions *(silluk, ofan, kedushah)*.

JEWISH GNOSIS AND THE *SEFER YEẒIRAH*

In these stages of Jewish mysticism, the descriptions of the Chariot and its world occupy a place which in non-Jewish Gnosticism is filled by the theory of the "aeons," the powers and emanations of God which fill the *pleroma*, the divine "fullness." The way in which certain *middot*, or qualities of God, like wisdom, understanding, knowledge, truth, faithfulness, righteousness, etc., became the "aeons" of the Gnostics is paralleled in the tradition of the *ma'aseh bereshit*, although it did not penetrate the basic stages of Merkabah mysticism. The ten sayings by which the world was created (Avot 5:1) became divine qualities according to Rav (Ḥag. 12a). There is also a tradition that *middot* such as these "serve before the Throne of Glory" (ARN 37), thus taking the place occupied by the *ḥayyot* and the presiding angels in the Merkabah system. The semi-mythological speculations of the Gnostics which regarded the qualities as "aeons" were not admitted into the rabbinic tradition of the Talmud or the Midrashim, but they did find a place in the more or less heterodox sects of the *minim* or *ḥizzonim*. To what extent the growth of Gnostic tendencies within Judaism itself preceded their development in early Christianity is still the subject of lively scholarly controversy. Peterson, Haenchen, and Quispel, in particular, along with several experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls, have tried to prove that Jewish forms of Gnosis, which retained a belief in the unity of God and rejected any dualistic notions, came into being before the formation of Christianity and were centered particularly around the idea of primordial man (following speculation on Gen. 1:26; "Adam Kadmon"). The image of the Messiah, characteristic of the Christian Gnostics, was absent here. These scholars have interpreted several

of the earliest documents of Gnostic literature as Gnostic Midrashim on cosmogony and Haenchen in particular has argued that their basic Jewish character is clearly recognizable in an analysis of the teaching of Simon Magus, apparently the leader of Samaritan Gnosis, a first-century heterodox Judaism. Even before this, M. Friedlaender had surmised that antinomian Gnostic tendencies (which belittled the value of the Commandments) had also developed within Judaism before the rise of Christianity. Although a fair number of these ideas are based on questionable hypotheses, nevertheless there is a considerable measure of truth in them. They point to the lack of Iranian elements in the early sources of Gnosis, which have been exaggerated by most scholars of the last two generations, whose arguments rest on no less hypothetical assumptions. The theory of "two principles" could have been the result of an internal development, a mythological reaction within Judaism itself, just as easily as a reflection of Iranian influence. The apostasy of the *tanna* Elisha b. Avuyah to a Gnostic dualism of this kind is connected in the Merkabah tradition with the vision of Metatron seated on the Throne like God. Mandaic literature also contains strands of a Gnostic, monotheistic, non-Christian character, which many believe originated in a Transjordanian Jewish heterodox sect whose members emigrated to Babylonia in the first or second century. The cosmogony of some of the most important Gnostic groups, even of those of an antinomian character, depends not only on biblical, but to a very large measure also on aggadic and esoteric Jewish elements. The earliest strata of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (see p. 312), which came from the East, prove the existence of definitely Gnostic views in a circle of believing Jews in Babylonia or Syria, who connected the theory of the Merkabah with that of the "aeons." These early sources are partly linked with the book *Raza Rabba*, which was known as an early work at the end of the geonic period; fragments of it can be found in the writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (see below). Concepts which did not originate exclusively in Jewish mysticism, like the idea of the *Shekhinah* and the hypostases of stern judgment and compassion, could easily have been interpreted according to the theory of the "aeons" and incorporated with Gnostic ideas. The "exile of the *Shekhinah*," originally an aggadic idea, was assimilated in Jewish circles at a particular stage with the Gnostic idea of the divine spark that is in exile in the terrestrial world, and also with the mystic view of the Jewish concept of the *keneset Yisrael* ("the community of Israel") as a heavenly entity that represents the historical community of Israel. In the elaboration of such motifs, Gnostic elements could be added to rabbinic theories of the Merkabah and to ideas of Jewish circles whose connection with rabbinism was weak.

THE *SEFER YEẒIRAH*

Speculation on the *ma'aseh bereshit* was given a unique form in a book, small in size but enormous in influence, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* ("Book of Creation"), the earliest extant Hebrew text of systematic, speculative thought. Its brevity – less than 2,000 words altogether even in its longer version – allied to its obscure and at the same time laconic and enigmatic style, as well as its terminology, have no parallel in other works on related subjects. The result of all these factors was that for over 1,000 years the book was expounded in a great many different ways, and not even the scientific investigations conducted during the 19th and 20th centuries succeeded in arriving at unambiguous and final results.

Sefer Yeẓirah is extant in two versions: a shorter one which appears in most editions as the book itself, and a longer version which is sometimes printed as an appendix.[10] Both versions were already in existence in the tenth century and left their imprint on the different types of the numerous manuscripts, the earliest of which (from the 11th century?) was found in the Cairo *Genizah* and published by A. M. Habermann (1947). In both versions the book is divided into six chapters of *mishnayot* or *halakhot*, composed of brief statements which present the author's argument dogmatically, without any explanation or substantiation. The first chapter in particular employs a sonorous, solemn vocabulary, close to that of the Merkabah literature. Few biblical verses are quoted. Even when their wording is identical, the different arrangement of the *mishnayot* in the two versions and their resultant altered relationship one with the other color the theoretical appreciation of the ideas.

The central subject of *Sefer Yeẓirah* is a compact discourse on cosmology and cosmogony (a kind of *ma'aseh bereshit*, "act of creation," in a speculative form), outstanding for its clearly mystical character. There is no foundation for the attempts by a number of scholars to present it as a kind of primer for schoolchildren,[11] or as the first Hebrew composition on Hebrew grammar and orthography (according to P. Mordell). The book's strong link with Jewish speculations concerning divine wisdom *(ḥokhmah)* is evident from the beginning, with the declaration that God created the world by means of "32 secret paths of wisdom." These 32 paths, defined as "ten *Sefirot beli mah*" and the "22 elemental letters" of the Hebrew alphabet, are represented as the foundations of all creation. Chapter I deals with the *Sefirot* and the other five chapters with the function of the letters. Apparently the term *Sefirot* is used simply to mean "numbers," though in employing a new term (*sefirot* instead of *misparim*), the author seems to be alluding to metaphysical principles or to stages in the creation of the world.

The use of the term *Sefirot* in *Sefer Yeẓirah* was later explained – particu-

larly in Kabbalah literature – as referring to a theory of emanation, although the book does not mention that the first *Sefirah* itself emanated from God and was not created by Him as an independent action. The author emphasizes, though ambiguously, the mystical character of the *Sefirot*, describing them in detail and discussing the order of their grading. At least the first four *Sefirot* emanate from each other. The first one is the "spirit (*ru'aḥ*) of the Living God" (the book continues to use the word *ru'aḥ* in its dual meaning of abstract spirit and air or ether). From the first *Sefirah* comes forth, by way of condensation, "one Spirit from another"; that is first the primal element of air, and from it, issuing one after the other as the third and fourth *Sefirot*, water and fire. From the primal air God created, or "engraved" upon it, the 22 letters; from the primal waters, the cosmic chaos; and from the primal fire, the Throne of Glory and the hosts of the angels. The nature of this secondary creation is not sufficiently clear because the precise terminological meaning of the verbs employed by the author – e.g., engraved, hewed, created – can be interpreted in various ways. The last six *Sefirot* are of a completely different nature, representing the six dimensions (in the language of the book the *keẓavot*, "extremities") of space, though it is not expressly said that they were created from the earlier elements. Even so it is emphasized that the ten *Sefirot* constitute a closed unit, for "their end is in their beginning and their beginning in their end" and they revolve in each other; i.e., these ten basic principles constitute a unity – although its nature is not sufficiently defined – which is not considered as identical with the divinity except insofar as the first stage of its creation expresses the ways of divine "Wisdom."

The author, no doubt intentionally, employs expressions borrowed from the description of the *hayyot* ("living creatures") who carry the Throne of Glory in the chariot (*merkavah*; Ezek. 1), and seems to be establishing a certain correlation between the "living beings" and the *Sefirot*, describing the latter as the king's servants who obey his commands and prostrate themselves before his throne. At the same time they are also the dimensions *(amakim)* of all existence, of good and even of evil. The fact that the theory of the significance of the 22 letters as the foundation of all creation in chapter 2 partly conflicts with chapter 1 has caused many scholars to attribute to the author a conception of a double creation: the one ideal and pure brought about by means of the *Sefirot*, which are conceived in a wholly ideal and abstract manner; and the other one real, effected by the interconnection of the elements of speech, which are the letters. According to some views, the obscure word *"belimah,"* which always accompanies the word *Sefirot*, is simply a composite, *beli mah* – without anything, without actuality, ideal. However, judging from the literal meaning, it would seem that it should be understood as signifying "closed," i.e., closed within itself. The text offers no more detailed explanation of the relationship between the *Sefirot* and the letters, and the *Sefirot* are not referred to again. Some scholars have believed that two separate cosmogonic doctrines basically differing from one another were fused in the book, and were united by a method resembling neo-Pythagorean theory current in the second and third century B.C.E.

All the real beings in the three strata of the cosmos: in the world, in time, and in man's body (in the language of the book: world, year, soul) came into existence through the interconnection of the 22 letters, and especially by way of the "231 gates"; i.e., the combinations of the letter into groups of two perhaps representing the roots of the Hebrew verb (it appears that the author held that the Hebrew verb is based on two consonants, but see N. Aloni). The logical number of 231 combinations does not appear in the earliest manuscripts, which fixed 221 gates or combinations, and which are enumerated in a number of manuscripts. Every existing thing somehow contains these linguistic elements and exists by their power, whose foundation is one name; i.e., the Tetragrammaton, or, perhaps, the alphabetical order which in its entirety is considered one mystical name. The world-process is essentially a linguistic one, based on the unlimited combinations of the letters. In chapters 3–5 the 22 basic letters are divided into three groups, according to the author's special phonetic system. The first contains the three matrices – *immot* or *ummot* (meaning elements, in the language of the Mishnah) – *alef, mem, shin* (אמש), which in turn represent the source of the three elements mentioned in a different context in chapter 1 – air, fire, water – and from these all the rest came into being. These three letters also have their parallel in the three seasons of the year (according to a system found among Greek and Hellenistic writers) and the three parts of the body: the head, torso, and stomach. The second group consists of seven "double" letters, i.e., those consonants which have a hard and soft sound when written with or without a *dagesh (bet, gimmel, dalet,* and *kaf, pe, resh, tav).* The presence of the letter *resh* in this group gave rise to various theories.[12] Through the medium of the "double" letters were created the seven planets, the seven heavens, the seven days of the week, and the seven orifices of the body (eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth), and they also allude to the basic opposites *(temurot)* in man's life. The 12 remaining "simple" letters *(ha-peshutot)* correspond to what the author considers as man's chief activities; the 12 signs of the zodiac in the heavenly sphere, the 12 months, and the 12 chief limbs of the body *(ha-manhigim).* In addition he gives also a completely different phonetic division of the letters, in accordance with the five places in the mouth where they are articulated (gutterals, labials, velars, dentals, and sibilants). This is the first instance in which this division appears in the history of Hebrew linguistics and it may not have been included in the first version of the book. The combination of

these "basic letters" contains the roots of all things and also the contrast between good and evil (עֹנֶג וְנֶגַע, *oneg ve-nega*).

There is an obvious connection between this linguistic-mystical cosmogony, which has close parallels in astrological speculation, and magic which is based on the creative, magical power of the letters and words. In fact it might well be said that *Sefer Yeẓirah* speaks of "the letters in which heaven and earth were created," as according to the Talmud, Bezalel, the architect of the tabernacle, possessed the knowledge of their combinations (Berakhot 55a). From this point stem the ideas connected with the creation of the *golem* by an ordered recitation of all the possible creative letter-combinations. Whether *Sefer Yeẓirah* itself initially was aimed at magical ideas of this type is a subject on which opinions differ, but it is not impossible. According to a talmudic legend (Sanh. 65b) R. Ḥanina and R. Hoshaiah (fourth century) used to occupy themselves with *Sefer Yeẓirah,* or – as an ancient variant has it – with *Hilkhot Yeẓirah;* by means of it a "calf three years old" was created for them, which they ate. Whether these *Hilkhot Yeẓirah* are simply the book in question or its early version cannot be decided for the moment, but it must be stressed that accompanying the very earliest texts of *Sefer Yeẓirah* were introductory chapters emphasizing magical practices which are presented as some kind of festive ritual to be performed on the completion of the study of the book (Judah b. Barzillai's commentary, 103–268).

TIME OF COMPOSITION

Zunz,[13] Graetz in his later works, Bacher, Block, and others were of the opinion that *Sefer Yeẓirah* was composed in the period of the *geonim,* around the eighth century. This dating was in line with the general tendency of those scholars to assign a late date to the composition of the mystical works on the mysteries of the creation and Merkabah, a trend which modern scholarship can no longer uphold. They also talked of hypothetical Arab influence (which was not actually proved). In his early work on Gnosticism and Judaism (1846), Graetz tended to correlate the time of its composition with that of the Mishnah or the beginning of the period of the Talmud, and this view was shared by Abraham Epstein, Louis Ginzberg, and others, who dated its composition between the third and sixth centuries. Leo Baeck tried to prove that *Sefer Yeẓirah* was written under the Neoplatonic influence of Proclus, possibly in the sixth century. The Hebrew style, however, points to an earlier period. Epstein already proved its proximity to the language of the Mishnah, and additions can be made to his linguistic proofs. The book contains no linguistic form which may not be ascribed to second- or third-century Hebrew. In addition, a number of links with the doctrine of divine wisdom and with various Gnostic and syncretistic views indicate an earlier period; analogies between *Sefer Yeẓirah* and the views of Markos the Gnostic of the school of Valentinus had already been noticed by Graetz.

The doctrine of the *Sefirot* and the language system hint at neo-Pythagorean and Stoic influences. Stoic is the emphasis on the double pronunciation of "*bagad kafat.*" Some of the terms employed in the book were apparently translated from Greek, in which the term στοιχεῖα indicates both elements and letters; this duality finds its expression in the Hebrew term *otiyyot yesod* ("elemental letters"), i.e., letters which are also elements. The material which F. Dornseiff [14] collected from the linguistic mysticism of Greek syncretism contains many parallels with *Sefer Yeẓirah.* Illuminating, in this connection, is *Sefer Yeẓirah's* view of the "sealing" of the six extremities of the world by the six different combinations of the name YHW (יהו) which (unlike in the Bible) occurs here as an independent, fundamental Name of God, playing the part of its corresponding name in Greek transcription ἰάω, which is extremely frequent in the documents of the Gnostics and in religious and magical syncretism. The idea that every act of creation was sealed with the name of God is one of the earliest tenets of Merkabah mysticism and is already found in *Heikhalot Rabbati* (ch. 9); in Gnostic systems and some which are close to Gnosis this name has its function in establishing the cosmos and in defining fixed boundaries for the world. Combinations of this name, which in Greek consists of vowels and not of consonants, appear frequently in Greek magical papyri. The author of *Sefer Yeẓirah* did not yet know the symbols for the Hebrew vowels and in place of the Greek vowels he employed the Hebrew consonants יהו , which are both vowel letters and components of the Tetragrammaton. There is common ground here between the speculations of *Sefer Yeẓirah* and the projections of Gnostic or semi-Gnostic speculations on the fringe of Judaism or outside it during the early centuries of the Common Era. It is difficult to decide whether the ten *Sefirot* or the rules of the 32 paths have to be explained or understood in the spirit of the Gnostic aeon doctrine or in that of the Pythagorean school, both views being possible. The function of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the construction of the world is mentioned in an ancient fragment from *Midrash Tanḥuma* dealing with the creation: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: 'I request laborers.' The Torah told Him: 'I put at Your disposal 22 laborers, namely the 22 letters which are in the Torah, and give to each one his own.' "[15] This legend is extremely close to the basic idea in *Sefer Yeẓirah,* chapter 2, and it is impossible to know which was the earlier.

To sum up, it may be postulated that the main part of *Sefer Yeẓirah*, though it contains post-talmudic additions, was written between the third and sixth centuries, apparently in Palestine by a devout Jew with leanings toward mysti-

cism, whose aim was speculative and magical rather than ecstatic. The author, who endeavored to "Judaize" non-Jewish speculations which suited his spirit, presents a parallel path to Jewish esotericism of the *Heikhalot* type of literature, which has its roots in the same period. This "Judaizing" is also apparent at the end of the book, which presents Abraham, the first to believe in the oneness of God, as the one who first studied the ideas expressed in the book and actually practiced them – maybe an allusion to the use of magic mentioned above. From this derived the late view claiming Abraham as the author of the book, called in several manuscripts *Otiyyot de-Avraham Avinu*. The attribution of *Sefer Yeẓirah* to R. Akiva only makes its appearance in the Kabbalah literature from the 13th century onward, no doubt in the wake of the late Midrash *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*.

COMMENTARIES ON SEFER YEẒIRAH

The earliest reference to *Sefer Yeẓirah* appears in the *Baraita di-Shemu'el* and the poems by Eleazar ha-Kallir (c. sixth century). Later on the book was of great importance both to the development of Jewish philosophy before Maimonides and to the Kabbalah, and scores of commentaries were written on it. Saadiah Gaon explained the book (at the beginning of the tenth century) as an early authoritative text. On the basis of the longer version which was at his disposal he introduced changes and new divisions. The Arabic text with a French translation by M. Lambert was published in Paris in 1891 and by Josef Kafiḥ, Jerusalem 1972, with a Hebrew one. Saadiah's commentary was translated into Hebrew several times from the 11th century onwards and had a considerable circulation. In 955/6 the commentary on the short version by Abu Sahl Dunash ibn Tamim was made in Kairouan. Parts of this Arabic original were discovered in the Cairo *Genizah*, and it was preserved in various editions originating from a later revision and an abbreviated form of the original version, mainly in different Hebrew translations. One of these was published by M. Grossberg in 1902. The commentary was apparently based on the lectures of Isaac Israeli, Abu Sahl's teacher. G. Vajda made a detailed study of this commentary. A third commentary from the tenth century was written in southern Italy by Shabbetai Donnolo and published by D. Castelli in 1880, with a comprehensive introduction. The most important of all literal commentaries is the one composed at the beginning of the 12th century by Judah b. Barzillai of Barcelona, published by S. Z. H. Halberstamm (Berlin, 1885). Judah Halevi commented on many parts of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* in his *Kuzari* (4:25). Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary on the first chapter, which was known to Abraham Abulafia, was lost, as were some other commentaries from the 11th and 12th centuries, including one by the rabbis of Narbonne. In the 11th century poems were even composed on the doctrines of *Sefer Yeẓirah*, e.g., by Ibn Gabirol[16] and by Ẓahallal b. Nethanel Gaon.[17]

A great many commentaries on *Sefer Yeẓirah* were written within the circles of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, among them that of Eleazar b. Judah of Worms which was published in its entirety in Przemysl in 1889, and one later attributed to Saadiah Gaon (from the beginning of the 13th century), of which only a part is printed in the usual editions; also noteworthy is the commentary by Elhanan b. Yakar of London (c. 1240), edited by G. Vajda (in *Kovez al Yad*, 6 (1966), 145–97). The number of commentaries written in the spirit of the Kabbalah and according to the kabbalists' conception of the doctrine of the *Sefirot* comes close to fifty. The earliest of these, by Isaac the Blind, is also one of the most difficult and important documents from the beginnings of Kabbalah (see below, p.42.) The commentary of Isaac's pupil Ariel b. Menahem of Gerona appears in the printed editions as the work of Naḥmanides. The actual commentary by Naḥmanides (only on the first chapter) was published by G. Scholem.[18] Almost the entire commentary by Abraham Abulafia (Munich Ms. 58) is contained in the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* (Korets, 1784, fols. 50–56). This kabbalist, in one of his works, enumerates 12 commentaries which he studied in Spain (Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, 3 (1855), 42). From the 14th century come the comprehensive commentary by Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi, written in Spain and erroneously attributed in printed editions to R. Abraham b. David;[19] the commentary by Meir b. Solomon ibn Sahula of 1331 (Rome, Angelica library, Ms. Or. 45); as well as the *Meshovev Netivot* (Ms. Oxford) by Samuel ibn Motot. Around 1405 Moses Botarel wrote a commentary citing a considerable number of false quotations from his predecessors. A number of commentaries were composed in Safed, among them one by Moses b. Jacob Cordovero (Ms. Jerusalem) and by Solomon Toriel (Ms. Jerusalem). From then on commentaries in the spirit of Isaac Luria proliferated; for example, by Samuel b. Elisha Portaleone (Ms. Jews' College, London), by David Ḥabillo (Ms. of the late Warsaw community); from among these the commentary by Elijah b. Solomon, the Gaon of Vilna (1874), and the book *Otot u-Mo'adim* by Joshua Eisenbach of Prystik (Pol. Przystyk, 1903) were printed.

PRINTED EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Sefer Yeẓirah was first printed in Mantua in 1562 with the addition of several commentaries, and has since been reprinted a great many times, with and without commentaries. In the Warsaw 1884 edition – the most popular one – the text of some commentaries is given in a considerably distorted form. *Sefer Yeẓirah* was translated into Latin by the Christian mystic G. Postel and printed

even before the Hebrew edition (Paris, 1552). Another Latin edition with commentaries was published by S. Rittangel in 1652. Translations appeared, mostly with commentaries, in English, by I. Kalisch (1873), A. Edersheim (1883), P. Davidson (1896), W. Westcott (1911), K. Stenring (1923), Akiva ben Joseph (*The Book of Formation,* 1970); in German by J. F. von Meyer (1830), L. Goldschmidt (1894; which, quite unfoundedly, professes to give a critical Hebrew text), E. Bischoff (1913); in French by Papus (1888), Duchess C. de Cimara (1913), Carlo Suarès (1968); in Italian by S. Savini (1923); in Hungarian by B. Tennen (1931); and in Czech by O. Griese (1921).

MYSTICISM IN THE GEONIC PERIOD

The mishnaic and talmudic periods were times of irrepressible creativity in the field of mysticism and esoteric inquiry. In the geonic era (from the seventh to the 11th centuries) little that was essentially original emerged, and the various streams already mentioned continued to exist and to intermingle. The center of mystical activity shifted to Babylonia, although its continuing influence in Palestine is evident in several chapters of later midrashic literature and particularly in the *Pirkei de-R. Eliezer.* The poems of Eleazar Kallir, which are influenced by Merkabah literature and the *Shi'ur Komah,* belong to the end of the earlier period or were composed between the two eras. The poet made no attempt to conceal ideas which had been transmitted through old esoteric theories. As mysticism developed in this period, in both Palestine and Babylonia, it followed the pattern of the earlier period. Apocalyptic writing continued with great momentum; examples are extant from the time of the *amoraim* almost to that of the Crusades, and they were collected in Judah Even-Shemuel's great anthology, *Midrashei Ge'ullah* (1954²), most of them from the geonic period. They display a marked connection with the Merkabah tradition and several have been preserved in manuscripts of works by mystics. Simeon b. Yoḥai appears here for the first time, side by side with R. Ishmael, as a bearer of apocalyptic tradition (in the *Nistarot de-R. Shimon b. Yoḥai*). Apocalypses were also attributed to the prophet Elijah, Zerubbabel, and Daniel.

At the other extreme there grew and flourished in these circles an angelology and a theurgy which produced a very rich literature, much of it extant from this period. Instead of, or in addition to, the contemplation of the Chariot, this presents a many-sided practical magic associated with the prince or princes of the Torah, whose names vary. Many incantations addressed to the angel Yofiel and his companions, as princes of wisdom and of Torah, are found in a large number of manuscripts of magical manuals which continue the tradition of the magical papyri. There was also a custom of conjuring up these princes particularly on the day before the Day of Atonement or even on the night of the Day of Atonement itself.[20] Formulae for more mundane purposes have also been preserved in many incantations written in Babylonian Aramaic by Jewish "Masters of the Name," and not always on behalf of Jewish customers. (See Baal Shem p. 310) This may have something to do with the origin of the medieval stereotype of the Jew as magician and sorcerer. Concepts from the Merkabah mystics' circle, as well as mythological and aggadic ideas – some unknown from other sources – filtered through to groups which were far removed indeed from mysticism and much closer to magic. A demonology, extremely rich in detail, also grew up side by side with the angelology. Many examples of these (published by Montgomery C. Gordon, and others) were found on clay bowls which were buried, according to custom, beneath the threshold of houses. They have important parallels among the incantations transmitted through literary tradition in the fragments of the *Genizah* and in the material which found its way as far as the Hasidei Ashkenaz (e.g. in the *Havdalah de-R. Akiva*). The theology and angelology of the incantations were not always explained correctly by their editors, who saw in them a heterodox theology.[21] It was in Babylonia also, apparently, that the book *Raza Rabba* ("The Great Mystery") was composed. Attacked by the Karaites as a work of sorcery, the book does indeed contain magical material but the extant fragments show that it also has some Merkabah content, in the form of a dialogue between R. Akiva and R. Ishmael. As the angelology in these fragments has no parallel in other sources, it would seem that the work is a crystallization of an early form of a theory of the "aeons" and of speculations of a Gnostic character. The style, quite different from that of the *heikhalot,* indicates a much later stage. These fragments have been published by G. Scholem in *Reshit ha-Kabbalah* (1948), 220–38.

The beginnings of new trends in this period can be discerned in three areas:

(1) The utterances employed in the creation of the world were conceived either as forces within the Chariot or as "aeons," *middot,* or hypostases. To what extent this speculation is associated with the view of the ten *Sefirot* in the *Sefer Yeẓirah* is not altogether clear. It is evident, however, that in Jewish Gnostic circles the concept of the *Shekhinah* occupied a completely new position. In the early sources *"Shekhinah"* is an expression used to denote the presence of God Himself in the world and is no more than a name for that presence; it later becomes a hypostasis distinguished from God, a distinction that first appears in the late Midrash to Proverbs (Mid. Prov. 47a: "the *Shekhinah* stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him"). In contrast to this separation of God and His *Shekhinah,* there arose another original concept – the identification of the *Shekhinah* with *kenesset Yisrael* ("the community of

Israel"). In this obviously Gnostic typology, the allegories which the Midrash uses in order to describe the relationship of the Holy One, blessed be He, to the community of Israel are transmuted into this Gnostic concept of the *Shekhinah* or "the daughter" in the eastern sources which are embedded in *Sefer ha-Bahir.*[22] Gnostic interpretations of other terms, like wisdom, and of various talmudic similies in the spirit of Gnostic symbolism, can be understood as going back to the early sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (*ibid.*, 78–107). Several of the book's similes can be understood only against an oriental background, and Babylonia in particular, as, for example, the statements concerning the date palm and its symbolic significance. The ascent of repentance to reach the Throne of Glory is interpreted in a late Midrash (*Pesikta Rabbati* 185a) as an actual ascent of the repentant sinner through all the firmaments, and so the process of repentance is closely connected here with the process of ascent to the Chariot.

(2) In this period the idea of the transmigration of souls *(gilgul)* also became established in various eastern circles. Accepted by Anan b. David and his followers (up to the tenth century) – although later rejected by the Karaites – it was also adopted by those circles whose literary remains were drawn upon by the redactors of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. For Anan (who composed a book specifically on this subject) and his followers the idea, which apparently originated among Persian sects and Islamic Mutazilites, had no mystical aspects. It is apparent, however, that the mystics' idea of transmigration drew upon other sources, for in the sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* it makes its appearance as a great mystery, alluded to only through allegory, and based on scriptural verses quite different from those quoted by the sect of Anan and repeated by Kirkisānī in his *Kitāb al-Anwār*, "Book of Lights" (pt. 3, chs. 27–28).

(3) A new element was added to the idea of the Sacred Names and angels which occupied such a prominent position in the theory of the Merkabah. This was an attempt to discover numerological links through *gematria,* between the different types of names and scriptural verses, prayers and other writings. The numerological "secrets," *sodot,* served two purposes. They ensured, firstly, that the names would be spelled exactly as the composers of *gematriot* received them through written or oral sources – though this system did not entirely save them from mutilation and variation, as is clearly shown by the mystical writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. Secondly, by this means they were able to give mystical meanings and "intentions" *(kavvanot)* to these names, which served as an incentive to deeper meditation, especially since many of the names lacked any significance. This process seems to be connected with a decline in the practical use of this material during preparation for the soul's ecstatic ascent to heaven. Names which originated through intense emotional excitement on the part of the contemplatives and visionaries were stripped of their meaning as technical aids to ...tic practice, and so required interpretations and meanings on a new level of ...*inah.* All the names, of whatever kinds, have therefore a contemplative ...ent; not that ascent to the Merkabah completely disappeared at this time, for the various treatises in many manuscripts on the methods of preparation for it testify to the continuity of their practical application. However, it is clear that this element gradually became less significant. Another new factor must be added to this: the interpretation of the regular prayers in the search for *kavvanot* of this numerical type.

It is impossible to determine with any certainty from the evidence that remains where the secrets of the names and the mysteries of prayer according to this system of *gematria* first made their appearance. The new interpretations of prayer link the words of phrases of the liturgy generally with names from the Merkabah tradition and angelology. Perhaps this link was first formulated in Babylonia; but it is also possible that it grew up in Italy, where the mysteries of the Merkabah and all the associated material spread not later than the ninth century. Italian Jewish tradition, particularly in the popular forms it assumed in the *Megillat Aḥima'aẓ* by Ahima'az of Oria, clearly shows that the rabbis were well versed in matters of the Merkabah. It also tells of the miraculous activity of one of the Merkabah mystics who emigrated from Baghdad, namely Abu Aharon (Aaron of Baghdad), who performed wonders through the power of the Sacred Names during the few years that he lived in Italy. The later tradition of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (12th century) maintained that these new mysteries were transmitted about the year 870 to R. Moses b. Kalonymus in Lucca by this same Abu Aharon, the son of R. Samuel ha-Nasi of Baghdad. Afterward, R. Moses went to Germany where he laid the foundations of the mystical tradition of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, which grew up around this new element. The personality of Abu Aharon remains obscure in all these traditions, and the recent attempts (in several papers by Israel Weinstock) to see him as a central figure in the whole development of the Kabbalah and as author and editor of many mystical works, including the *heikhalot* literature and the *Sefer ha-Bahir,* are founded on an extreme use of *gematriot* and on dubious hypotheses.[23] In any event, there is no doubt that at the end of the geonic period mysticism spread to Italy, in the form of Merkabah literature and perhaps also in the form of the above-mentioned theory of names, which served as an intermediate link between the orient and the later development in Germany and France.

These ideas reached Italy through various channels. The magical theurgic elements in them came to the fore, while the speculative side became weaker. This latter was represented in the main by the commentary of the physician Shabbetai Donnolo (913–c. 984) to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* which was indisputably influenced by

the commentary of Saadiah b. Joseph Gaon (882–942) to the same work. It is impossible to say to what extent theosophic writings of a Gnostic character, in Hebrew or Aramaic, also passed through these channels, but this possibility should not be denied.

From the numerous remains of mystical literature extant from the talmudic and geonic periods it can be deduced that these types of ideas and attitudes were widespread in many circles, wholly or partially restricted to initiates. Only on very rare occasions is it possible to establish with certainty the personal and social identity of these circles. There is no doubt that, apart from the individual *tannaim* and *amoraim* whose attachment to mystical studies is attested by reliable evidence, there were many whose names are unknown who devoted themselves to mysticism and even made it their chief preoccupation. In addition to the rabbis that have already been mentioned, R. Meir, R. Isaac, R. Levi, R. Joshua b. Levi, R. Hoshaya, and R. Inyani b. Sasson (or Sisi) were involved with mystical ideas. The identity of those who studied theurgy (who were called, in Aramaic, "users of the Name," *ba'alei ha-Shem*) is completely unknown, and most of them, of course, did not come from rabbinic circles. Our knowledge of the exponents of mysticism and esotericism in the geonic period is even more limited. Geonic responsa reveal that such traditions did spread to the leading academies, but there is no proof that the foremost *geonim* themselves were steeped in these teachings or that they actually practiced them. The material touching on Merkabah traditions in the responsa and in the commentaries of the *geonim*[24] is notable for its extreme caution, and occasionally for its forbearance. The main attempt to link the theories of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* with contemporary philosophical and theological ideas was made by Saadiah Gaon, who wrote the first extensive commentary to the book. He refrained from dealing in detail with the subject matter of the Merkabah and the *Shi'ur Komah,* but at the same time he did not disown it despite the attacks of the Karaites. In several instances Sherira b. Ḥanina Gaon and Hai Gaon set out to discuss matters in this field, but without connecting their explanations with the philosophical ideas expressed elsewhere in their writings. Hai Gaon's opinion in his responsum concerning the Secret Names, such as the 42- and 72X3-lettered Name, led others to attribute to him more detailed commentaries on these subjects, and some of these came into the possession of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.[25]

The words that Hai Gaon addressed to the rabbis of Kairouan show that the esoteric teaching on names had an impact even on the more distant Diaspora, but they also demonstrate that there was no tradition and little textual distribution of the *heikhalot* tracts, of which the *gaon* says "he who sees them is terrified by them." In Italy this literature did spread, particularly among the rabbis and the poets (*payṭanim*), and an important section of the work of Amittai b. Shephatiah

century) consists of Merkabah poems. As these traditions passed into , some circles of rabbinic scholars became once more the principal but not the only exponents of mystical teaching.

Aggadot and Midrashim with angelogical and esoteric tendencies were also written in this period. The *Midrash Avkir,* which was still known in Germany up to the end of the Middle Ages, contained material rich in otherwise unknown mythical elements concerning angels and names. The remains of it which appear in the *Likkutim mi-Midrash Avkir* were collected by S. Buber in 1883. Various parts of the *Pesikta Rabbati* also reflect the ideas of the mystics. The *Midrash Konen* is made up of different elements;[26] the first part contains a remarkable combination of ideas concerning the Divine Wisdom and its role in creation and the theory of the *Shekhinah,* while the rest of the work includes different versions of angelology and a version of *ma'aseh bereshit.* An element of *gematria* also appears. Judging from the Greek words in the first part, the extant text was edited in Palestine or in Southern Italy. In the tradition of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (British Museum Ms. 752 fol. 132b) a fragment of a Midrash survives concerning the angels active during the Exodus from Egypt, which is also based to a large extent on the exegesis of *gematriot,* and it would seem that there were other Midrashim of this type whose origin is not known.

While many ideas concerning God and His manifestation are expressed or implied in the Merkabah literature, no particular concentrated attention is paid in these early stages of mysticism to the teaching about man. The emphasis of the Merkabah mystics is on the ecstatic and contemplative side, and man interested them only insofar as he received the vision and revealed it to Israel. Their speculations contain no specific ethical theory nor any new concept of the nature of man.

ḤASIDIC MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE AND EGYPT

Religious impulses which were mystical in the sense of involving man's powerful desire for a more intimate communion with God and for a religious life connected with this developed in the Judaism of the Middle Ages in different places and by various means; not all are associated exclusively with Kabbalah. Such tendencies resulted from a fusion of internal drives with the external influence of the religious movements present in the non-Jewish environment. Since their proponents did not find the answer to all their needs in the talmudic and midrashic material which purported to bind man closer to God – although they utilized it as far as they could and also at times based far-fetched interpretations on it – they drew extensively on the literature of the Sufis, the mystics of

Islam, and on the devout Christian ascetic tradition. The intermingling of these traditions with that of Judaism resulted in tendencies which were regarded as a kind of continuation of the work of the Ḥasideans (pietists) of the tannaitic period, and they stressed the value of *ḥasidut* as a way of bringing man nearer to *devekut* ("communion" with God) although this term was not yet used to designate the culmination of *ḥasidut*. Extremism in ethical and religious behavior, which in the sayings and literature of the rabbis characterized the term *"ḥasid"* ("pious") as against *"zaddik"* ("righteous"), became the central norm of these new tendencies. They found their classical literary expression, first and foremost, in 11th-century Spain in the *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* ("Duties of the Heart") by Baḥya ibn Paquda, originally written in Arabic. The material dealing with the life devoted to communion of the true "servant" – who is none other than the *ḥasid* yearning for the mystical life – is taken from Sufi sources and the author's intention was to produce an instructional manual of Jewish pietism which culminated in a mystical intent. A Hebrew translation of the *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* was made in 1160 on the initiative of Meshullam ben Jacob and the early circle of kabbalists in Lunel. The book's great success, especially in Hebrew, shows how much it answered the religious needs of the people even beyond the confines of the Kabbalah. The obvious connection with talmudic tradition, which served as the point of departure for explanations of a remarkable spiritual intent, was a distinguishing feature in works of this kind, which also clearly reveal neoplatonic philosophical elements. Such elements facilitated formulations of a mystical character, and this philosophy became one of the most powerful means of expression. Several of the poems of Solomon ibn Gabirol, Baḥya's older contemporary, evidence this trend toward a mystical spirituality, and it is expressed particularly in the concepts of his great philosophical work, *Mekor Ḥayyim*, which is saturated with the spirit of neoplatonism. The extent to which his poems reflect individual mystical experiences is controversial.[27] In Spain, after a century or more, these tendencies intermingled with the emerging Kabbalah, where traces of Gabirol may be seen here and there, especially in the writings of Isaac b. Latif.

Parallel with this was a growth of *ḥasidut* of a mystical bent in Egypt in the days of Maimonides and his son Abraham b. Moses b. Maimon; this, however, found no echo in the Kabbalah, remaining an independent occurrence of a Jewish Sufi type which is recorded as late as the 14th or even the 15th century. No mere figure of speech, the epithet "Ḥasid" was a description of a man who followed a particular way of life, and it was appended to the names of several rabbis from the 11th century onward, in both the literary and the personal records that survived in the *Genizah*. The Egyptian trend of *ḥasidut* turned into "an ethically oriented mysticism" (S.D. Goitein), particularly in the literary

ctions of Abraham b. Moses b. Maimon (d.1237). The mystical aspect of ook *Kifāyat al-'Ābidīn*[28] is entirely based on Sufi sources and bears no nce of any similar Jewish tradition known to the author. The circle of dim which grew up around him stressed the esoteric aspect of their teaching (S.D. Goitein), and his son Obadiah also followed this path.[29] A much later work of the same kind was discussed by F. Rosenthal.[30] What remains of this literature is all written in Arabic, which may explain why it found no place in the writings of the Spanish kabbalists, most of whom had no knowledge of the language.

An essentially similar religious movement grew up in France and Germany, beginning in the 11th century. It reached its peak in the second half of the 12th and in the 13th century, but it continued to have repercussions for a long time, particularly in the Judaism of the Ashkenazi world. This movement – known as the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz – has two aspects: the ethical and the esoteric-theosophical. On the ethical plane a new ideal developed of extreme *ḥasidut* linked to a suitable mode of life, as described particularly in the *Sefer Ḥasidim* of Judah b. Samuel he-Ḥasid, extant in two versions, one short and the other long. Along with specific pietistic customs there grew up a particular method of repentance which, remarkable for its extremism, had a marked influence on Jewish ethical teaching and behavior. The common factor in all the ḥasidic movements of Spain, Egypt, and Germany was the violent opposition that they aroused, attested by the Ḥasidim themselves. A Ḥasidism which does not arouse opposition in the community cannot, according to their own definition, be considered a true one. Equanimity of spirit, indifference to persecution and ignominy; these are the distinguishing traits of the Ḥasid, to whichever particular circle he belongs. Although the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz reflect to some extent the contemporary Christian asceticism, nevertheless they developed mainly within the framework of a clear talmudic tradition, and the basic principles were often identical with the principles of this tradition. All these movements had from the beginning a social significance intended "to revive the hearts." The Ḥasidei Ashkenaz did not, relatively speaking, lay great stress on the mystical element associated with the ḥasidic ideal. Despite the paradox inherent in the situation, they tried as far as possible to integrate the Ḥasid, ostensibly an unnatural phenomenon, into the general Jewish community, and to make him responsible in practice to the community. The Ḥasid who renounced his natural impulses and always acted "beyond the limit of strict justice" was the true embodiment of the fear and love of God in their purest essence. Many of these Ḥasidim attained the highest spiritual levels, and were considered to be masters of the holy spirit, or even prophets, a term applied to several men who are known for their activity in tosafist circles, e.g. R. Ezra ha-Navi ("the prophet") of Montcontour, and also to

others who are otherwise completely unknown, e.g. R. Nehemiah ha-Navi and R. Troestlin ha-Navi from Erfurt. These men's attainment of such spiritual height was connected not only with their behavior on the ethical plane but also with the distinction they achieved in the realm of esoteric theosophy. The latter was assigned an important position; in it all earlier trends were maintained, joined and mingled with new forces. Remaining the main object of enquiry, and even a practical guide toward the "ascent to heaven," the teaching on the Merkabah became largely interwoven with number mysticism and the speculations based on it. In addition to the ecstatic or visionary ascent to heaven, there developed a tendency toward deep meditation, toward prayer and the mysteries of prayer, which were communicated orally. Philosophy introduced a new element, mainly through Saadiah Gaon's commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* (which had been translated into Hebrew as early as the 11th century), and through the early translation of his *Emunot ve-De'ot* in a style reminiscent of the *piyyutim* of the Kallir school. This was the source of the theory of the *Kavod* ("Glory"), transmitted through ḥasidic literature, which saw the Divine Glory as the first created entity, although the mystics dared speak of it only in trembling awe. Despite their distinction between God and the *Kavod* which is also called *Shekhinah*, they continued to refer to the *Shekhinah* in terms of the talmudic and midrashic conception of it as an attribute of God. An additional factor from the 12th century onward was the influence of rabbis of the neoplatonic school, especially Abraham ibn Ezra, and Abraham b. Ḥiyya. Perhaps Ibn Ezra's travels to France and his personal contacts there contributed to this influence as well as his books. In all the literature they inherited from Saadiah and the Spanish rabbis, the Ḥasidim concentrated on that part that was closest to their thought, practically turning these authors into theosophists. Arriving at no unified systemization of these disparate and contradictory elements, in formulating their ideas they contented themselves with eclectic presentations.

The ideas of the Merkabah and the *Shi'ur Komah* were already known in France at the beginning of the ninth century, as witnessed by the attacks on them by Agobard, bishop of Lyons. Here and there glimpses of these traditions appear in the writings of Rashi and the tosafists of the 12th and 13th centuries. The study of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* was looked upon as an esoteric discipline, consisting both of revelations concerning creation and the mysteries of the world, and of a profound knowledge of the mysteries of language and the Sacred Names. Traditions of this type have come down from Jacob b. Meir Tam, Isaac of Dampierre, Elhanan of Corbeil, and Ezra of Montcontour. The last, claiming divine revelation, aroused messianic excitement in France and beyond in the second decade of the 13th century.[31] These traditions were given written form in France in the *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim* (Jerusalem, 1973), written around 1200. How-

following Ibn Ezra, its basic doctrine assimilated other theosophical elements concerning the divine attributes and their place in the *Kavod* and beneath the throne whose affinity with the kabbalistic outlook is clear.

In all aspects, including the esoteric, the movement reached its peak in Germany, first within the widespread Kalonymus family from the 11th century on. In Worms, Speyer, and Mainz, and afterward in Regensburg, the main upholders of the tradition are known: Samuel b. Kalonymus, Judah b. Kalonymus of Mainz, and his son, Eleazar of Worms; his teacher, Judah b. Samuel he-Ḥasid (d. 1217); Judah b. Kalonymus of Speyer (author of *Sefer Yiḥusei Tanna'im ve-Amora'im*), and the descendants of Judah he-Ḥasid who were scattered throughout the German cities of the 13th century. They and their pupils gave a far-reaching popular expression to the movement, and several of them wrote books of wide compass which embodied a major part of their traditions and ideas. In addition to the bulk of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* Judah he-Ḥasid, the movement's central figure in Germany, wrote other books known to us only through citation in other works, particularly the *Sefer ha-Kavod.* According to J. Dan he was also the author of a large work extant in Oxford manuscript 1567. His pupil, Eleazar of Worms, included in books large and small (most of which have been preserved in manuscript) the major part of the material he had received concerning the teachings of the *ma'aseh merkabah,* the *ma'aseh bereshit,* and the doctrine of Names. They are a mixture of mythology and theology, of Midrash and speculation on one side, and of theurgy on the other. All the tendencies already mentioned above find expression in his work, existing side by side, as in his *Sodei Razayya* (considerable parts of which were published in the *Sefer Raz'el,* and all of which is extant in British Museum, Margoliouth 737) or in those texts which are arranged in the form of *halakhot: Hilkhot ha-Malakhim, Hilkhot ha-Kisse, Hilkhot ha-Kavod, Hilkhot ha-Nevu'ah* (printed under the title of *Sodei Razayya,* 1936), and also in many others that remain unpublished. The scope of this literature is very wide,[32] and it contains some fragments of traditions of an unusual type, Gnostic in character, which apparently traveled from the east by way of Italy. The mysteries of prayer and the extensive interpretation of Scripture through number mysticism were further developed in Germany, partly through the chain of tradition of the Kalonymus family and partly through other developments which went so far that the emphasis on the search for associations by way of *gematriot* was considered by Jacob b. Asher (Tur OḤ 113) to be the most characteristic feature of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. In the 13th century a very rich literature grew up, grounded on the different aspects of ḥasidic tradition but still independent of the kabbalistic literature that developed in the same period. The names of many rabbis who trod the path of ḥasidic theosophy are recorded in these sources, most of which are in manuscript. Many

of their sayings were incorporated in Eleazar Hirz Treves' commentary to the liturgy (in *Siddur ha-Tefillah,* 1560), and in the *Arugat ha-Bosem* of Abraham b. Azriel, an early 13th-century commentary on the *piyyutim* of the *maḥzor* of the Ashkenazi rite.[33] In this circle the *Sefer Yeẓirah* was nearly always interpreted in the manner of Saadiah and Shabbetai Donnolo, with an added tendency to see the book as a guide for both mystics and adepts of magic. The study of the book was considered successful when the mystic attained the vision of the *golem,* which was connected with a specific ritual of a remarkably ecstatic character. Only in later times did this inner experience assume more tangible forms in popular legend.[34]

The theological views of the Ḥasidim are summarized in the *Hilkhot ha-Kavod,* and in the *Sha'arei ha-Sod ve-ha-Yiḥud ve-ha-Emunah* [35] and in the various versions of the *Sod ha-Yiḥud* from Judah he-Ḥasid to Moses Azriel at the end of the 13th century.[36] In addition to the ḥasidic version of the concept of the *Kavod*, another view developed in a particular circle in the 11th or 12th century which is not mentioned in the writing of Judah he-Ḥasid and his school. This is the idea of *keruv meyuḥad* ("the special cherub") or *ha-keruv ha-kadosh* ("the holy cherub"). According to this view, it is not the *Kavod* pure and simple which sits upon the Throne but a special manifestation in the shape of an angel or a cherub, to whom the mysteries of the *Shi'ur Komah* refer. In the writings of Judah he-Ḥasid and Eleazar of Worms, and in the *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim,* there are a nnmber of variations on the theme of the *Kavod* and various ways of presenting the idea. Sometimes a distinction is made between the revealed and the hidden *Kavod* and so on. The special cherub appears as an emanation from the great fire of the *Shekhinah* or from the hidden *Kavod,* which has no form. In this circle the two basic divine attributes are contrasted with one another: God's "holiness," which denotes the presence of the *Shekhinah* in all things and the hidden *Kavod,* and God's "greatness" or "sovereignty," which has both appearance and size. Such an idea is somewhat reminiscent of the speculations of eastern sects, such as that of Benjamin b. Moses Nahawendi, who believed that the world was created through an angelic intermediary (a concept which also had precedents among early heterodox sects during the development of Gnosis). This idea becomes apparent among the Ḥasidim in the pseudepigraphical text called the *Baraita of Yosef b. Uzziel,* which appears, from its language, to have been written in Europe. Joseph b. Uzziel is taken to be the grandson of Ben Sira. The *baraita* is found in several manuscripts and was published in part by A. Epstein.[37] This idea was accepted by several rabbis, including Avigdor ha-Ẓarefati (12th century?); the author of *Pesak ha-Yir'ah ve-ha-Emunah,* which was mistakenly combined by A. Jellinek with the *Sha'arei ha-Sod ve-ha-Yiḥud,* the anonymous author of the commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah,* which was recently composed in France in the 13th century and printed under the name of Saadiah Gaon in the editions of the *Sefer Yeẓirah;* and finally, Elhanan b. Yakar of London, in the first half of the 13th century.[38] In the course of time such ideas, and particularly that of the special cherub, became combined and confused with Spanish Kabbalah, and in Germany in the 14th century several texts were composed which reflect this combination; some are still extant.[39]

Hasidic ideology, particularly in its French manifestations and in the form given it by Elhanan of London, adopted the theory of the five worlds. Mentioned by Abraham b. Ḥiyya in his *Megillat ha-Megalleh* and originating among the Islamic neoplatonists in Spain, this theory enumerates in order the worlds of light, of the divine, of the intellect, of the soul, and of nature.[40] Occasionally the writings of this circle incorporated material which originally came from Latin Christian literature, as G. Vajda demonstrated in connection with Elhanan of London.[41] The views of the Hasidim were reflected to a large extent in their own special prayers, composed either in the style associated with Saadia's concept of the *Kavod* (e.g. in the *Shir ha-Yiḥud* a hymn which was perhaps written by Judah he-Hasid or even earlier), or frequently based on the Secret Names, alluded to in the acronym. Many of these have survived in the writings of Eleazar of Worms, particularly in manuscripts of his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah.* There are also prayers and poems which their authors intended to represent the songs of heavenly beings, a king of continuation of the *heikhalot* hymns, the songs of the sacred *ḥayyot.* Generally speaking, these prayers were not accorded a fixed place in the liturgy, and they were apparently the preserve of a chosen few. At a much later time they were included in liturgical anthologies in Italy and Germany, collected by kabbalists in the Safed period, and many of them were finally published in the *Sha'arei Ziyyon* by Hannover (ch.3). Several of them were attributed in manuscript to Spanish kabbalists, e.g. Jacob ha-Kohen, who was in fact personally connected with the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, of Solomon Alkabez.[42]

Eleazar of Worms clearly recognized the esoteric character of those subjects that merited special study, and he enumerates with some variations the areas involved: "The mystery of the Chariot, the mystery of Creation, and the mystery of the Unity [*Sod ha-Yiḥud,* a new concept] are not to be communicated except during a fast" (*Ḥokhmat ha-Nefesh* (1876) 3c). He defines "the science of the soul," to which he devotes one of his main works, as the means and gateway to the "mystery of the Unity," which he apparently saw as the root of mystical theology. In the *Sodei Razayya* he enumerates "three kinds of mystery," those of the Chariot, the Creation, and the Commandments. The question of whether the commandments also have an esoteric purpose is also discussed in the *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Wistinetzki (1891), no. 1477). This book

(no. 984) makes mention of "the profundity of piety *[ḥasidut]*, the profundity of the laws of the Creator, and the profundity of His Glory *[Kavod]*," and initiation in these subjects depends on the fulfillment of the conditions laid down in the Talmud in connection with the *ma'aseh merkabah*. The mystics *(ḥakhmei ha-ḥidot)* are "nourished" in this world on the savor of some of the mysteries that originate in the heavenly academy, most of which are treasured up for the righteous in the world to come (no. 1056). Associated with the ḥasidic affinity for mysticism was their desire to synthesize the early material, including the anthropomorphic elements, with the spiritual interpretation that denies these elements. Aroused by this compromise, Moses Taku (writing in the early 13th century) denied the Saadian principles and defended a corporeal point of view. His attack was included in the *Ketav Tammim*, of which two extensive fragments survive (*Oẓar Neḥmad*, 3 (1860), 54–99, and *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 1, 263–8). Seeing in the new tendencies "a new religion" which smacked of heresy, he also denounced the attention that the Ḥasidim paid to the mysteries of prayer, and particularly the dissemination of these mysteries in their books. By his attack he shows how widespread the ideas and literature of the Ḥasidim were in his time.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KABBALAH IN PROVENCE

Contemporaneously with the growth of *ḥasidut* in France and Germany, the first historical stages of the Kabbalah emerged in southern France, although there is no doubt that there were earlier steps in its development which cannot now be discerned. These earlier stages were connected with the existence of a Jewish Gnostic tradition, associated in particular eastern circles with Merkabah mysticism. The main remnants were incorporated in the early parts of *Sefer ha-Bahir* (see p. 312) and also in a few records preserved in the writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ostensibly an ancient Midrash, appeared in Provence some time between 1150 and 1200 but no earlier; it was apparently edited there from a number of treatises which came from Germany or directly from the East. An analysis of the work leaves no doubt that it was not originally written in Provence,[43] and to a large extent confirms the mid-13th-century kabbalistic tradition concerning the history of the book and its sources before it reached the early Provençal mystics in a mutilated form. That the book reflects opinions which were not current in Provence and Spain is quite clearly shown by the commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* by Judah b. Barzillai, written in the first third of the 12th century and containing all that the author knew of the tra[illegible] of the *ma'aseh bereshit* and especially the *ma'aseh merkabah*. In his interpretations of the ten *Sefirot* of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* there is no mention of them as "aeons" or divine attributes, or as powers within the Merkabah, as they appear in the *Bahir*. His commentary is impregnated throughout with the spirit of Saadiah Gaon, quite unlike the *Bahir*, which is completely unconcerned with philosophical ideas or with any attempt to reconcile philosophy with the concepts it advances. Cast in the form of interpretations of scriptural verses, particularly passages of mythological character, the *Bahir* transforms the Merkabah tradition into a Gnostic tradition concerning the powers of God that lie within the Divine Glory *(Kavod)*, whose activity at the creation is alluded to through symbolic interpretation of the Bible and the *aggadah*. Remnants of a clearly Gnostic terminology and symbolism are preserved, albeit through a Jewish redaction, which connects the symbols with motifs already well known from the *aggadah*. This is especially so with regard to anything that impinges on *keneset Yisrael*, which is identified with the *Shekhinah*, with the *Kavod*, and with the *bat* ("daughter"), who comprises all paths of wisdom. There are indications in the writings of Eleazar of Worms that he too knew this terminology, precisely in connection with the symbolism of the *Shekhinah*. The theory of the *Sefirot* was not finally formulated in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and many of the book's statements were not understood, even by the early kabbalists of western Europe. The teaching of the *Bahir* is introduced as *ma'aseh merkabah*, the term "Kabbalah" not yet being used. The theory of transmigration is presented as a mystery, an idea which is self-explanatory and has no need for philosophical justification, despite the opposition of Jewish philosophers from the time of Saadiah onward.

The book *Raza Rabba* may be identified as one of the sources of the *Bahir*, but there is no doubt that there were other sources, now unknown. The earliest signs of the appearance of the Gnostic tradition, and of religious symbolism constructed upon it, are to be found in the mid-12th century and later, in the leading circle of the Provençal rabbis: Abraham b. Isaac of Narbonne, the author of *Sefer ha-Eshkol*, his son-in-law Abraham b. David (Rabad), the author of the "animadversions" (glosses) to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, and Jacob Nazir of Lunel. Their works did not deal specifically with the subject of mysticism, but fragments of their opinions scattered here and there prove their association with kabbalistic views and with kabbalistic symbolism.[44] In addition to this, according to the reliable testimony of the Spanish kabbalists, they were considered as men inspired from above, who attained "a revelation of Elijah," that is, a mystical experience of spiritual awakening, through which something novel was revealed. Since main points of the theory of the *Sefirot* in its theosophical formulation are already contained in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, it cannot be regarded as the basic content of these revelations: these were apparently connected with a

new idea of the mystical purpose of prayer, based not on *gematriot* and secret Names but on contemplation of the *Sefirot* as a means of concentrating on the *kavvanah* ("meditation") in prayer. Within this circle Jacob Nazir belonged to a special group – called *perushim* in rabbinic parlance and "nazirites" in biblical terminology – whose members did not engage in commerce, but were supported by the communities so that they could devote all their time to the Torah. From its very nature, this group was akin to the Ḥasidim, and there is evidence that several of them led a ḥasidic life. Within this group a contemplative life could develop in which mystic aspirations could easily be aroused. The rabbis mentioned above did not share one consistent system of thought: there are several different and conflicting tendencies in their writings. The idea of the *Kavod*, in its plain Saadian meaning, was not regarded particularly as a mystery, but interpretations in the spirit of the theory of the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir* were considered to be "the great mystery." In the school of Abraham b. David, traditions of this type were transmitted orally, and mysteries relating to the profundities of the Divine were added to the new theory concerning mystical *kavvanah* during prayer.

This circle of the early kabbalists in Provence worked in a highly charged religious and cultural environment. Rabbinic culture had reached a high stage of development there, and even Maimonides considered those proficient in the *halakhah* to be great exponents of the Torah. Their minds were open to the philosophical tendencies of their age. Judah ibn Tibbon, head of the renowned family of translators, worked in this circle, and translated for his colleagues many of the greatest philosophical books, among them works of a distinctly neoplatonic tendency. He also translated Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* from Arabic, and its profound influence derived from this circle. The early kabbalists absorbed the *Kuzari's* ideas concerning the nature of Israel, prophecy, the Tetragrammaton, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and its meaning, in the same way as they assimilated the writings of Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham b. Ḥiyya, with their tendency toward neoplatonism. Jewish versions of neoplatonic theories of the Logos and the Divine Will, of emanation and of the soul, acted as a powerful stimulus. But philosophical theories concerning the Active Intellect as a cosmic force, association with which could be attained by the prophets and the select few, also penetrated these circles. The close proximity of this theory to mysticism stands out clearly in the history of medieval Islamic and Christian mysticism, and not surprisingly it acts as an important link in the chain which connects many kabbalists with the ideas of Maimonides. The influence of the asceticism of *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* has already been mentioned, and it continued to play an active role in the ethics of the Kabbalah and in its theory of mystical communion. In the last thirty years of the 12th century the Kabbalah spread beyond

circle of Abraham b. David of Posquières. The encounter between the mystic tradition contained in the *Bahir* and neoplatonic ideas concerning God, emanation, and man's place in the world, was extremely fruitful, leading to a deep penetration of these ideas into earlier mystical theories. The Kabbalah, in its historical significance, can be defined as the product of the interpenetration of Jewish Gnosticism and neoplatonism.

In addition, Provence in these years was the scene of a powerful religious upheaval in the Christian world, when the Catharist sect gained control of a large part of the Languedoc, where the first centers of Kabbalah were to be found. It is not yet clear to what extent if any there was a connection between the new upsurge in Judaism in the circles of the *perushim* and the Ḥasidim, and the profound upheaval in Christianity which found expression in the Catharist movement. In their ideology there is practically nothing in common between the ideas of the kabbalists and those of the Cathari, except for the theory of transmigration, which kabbalists in fact took from the eastern sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. The dualistic theology of the Cathari was clearly opposed to the Jewish view; nevertheless, it remains a possibility that there were some contacts which can no longer be discerned between the different groups, united as they were by a deep and emotional religious awakening. There is some evidence that the Jews of Provence were well aware of the existence and the beliefs of the sect as early as the first decades of the 13th century.[45] Points of possible doctrinal contacts between the *Bahir* and Catharism regarding the nature of evil have been discussed by Sh. Shachar.[46]

Fragments of the kabbalist tradition that was familiar to Abraham b. David and Jacob Nazir are found in the writings of the kabbalists, and the clear contradictions between them and later ideas, whether on the teaching on God or on the question of the *kavvanah* testifies to their authenticity. Abraham b. David's statement in his criticism of Maimonides (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3,7) defending those who believe in God's corporality becomes clarified when it is seen against the background of his kabbalistic views, which distinguish the "Cause of Causes" from the Creator, who is the subject of the *Shi'ur Komah* in the early *baraita*. His interpretation of the *aggadah* in *Eruvim* 18a, that Adam was at first created with two faces, also reflects kabbalistic speculation on the divine attributes – the *Sefirot*.

Abraham b. David's son, Isaac the Blind (d. c. 1235), who lived in or near Narbonne, was the first kabbalist to devote his work entirely to mysticism. He had many disciples in Provence and Catalonia, who spread kabbalistic ideas in the form they had received them from him, and he was regarded as the central figure of the Kabbalah during his lifetime. His followers in Spain have left some record of his sayings and his habits, and a few letters and treatises written at his

dictation are also extant: their style is quite different from that of any of his known disciples. Generally he couched his ideas elliptically and obscurely, and he used his own peculiar terminology. Something of his opinions can be learned from the common elements in the writings of his pupils. At all events, he is the first kabbalist whose historical personality and basic ideas clearly emerge. Entrusting his writings only to a few chosen individuals, he definitely opposed the public dissemination of the Kabbalah, seeing in this a dangerous source of misunderstanding and distortion. At the close of his life he protested in a letter to Naḥmanides and Jonah Gerondi against popularization of this sort in Spain, in which several of his pupils were engaged.[47] When the Spanish kabbalists of the 13th century speak of "the Ḥasid" they refer to Isaac the Blind. He developed a contemplative mysticism leading to communion with God through meditation on the *Sefirot* and the heavenly essences *(havayot)*. The earliest instructions on detailed meditations associated with basic prayers, according to the concept of the *Sefirot* as stages in the hidden life of God, came from him. There is no doubt that he inherited some of his main ideas from his father, on whom he sometimes relied, but he had also recognized the value of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* and he built on its symbolism. His commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*[48] is the first work to explain the book in the light of a systematic *Sefirot* theory in the spirit of the Kabbalah. At the head of the world of divine qualities he puts the "thought" *(maḥashavah)*, from which emerged the divine utterances, the "words" by means of which the world was created. Above the "thought" is the Hidden God, who is called for the first time by the name *Ein-Sof* ("the Infinite"; see below). Man's thought ascends through mystic meditation until it reaches, and is absorbed into, Divine "Thought." Along with the theory of the *Sefirot* he developed the concept of the mysticism of language. The speech of men is connected with divine speech, and all language, whether heavenly or human, derives from one source – the Divine Name. Profound speculations on the nature of the Torah are found in a long fragment from Isaac's commentary on the beginning of the *Midrash Konen*. The neoplatonic character of his ideas is striking, and distinguishes them completely from the *Bahir*.[49]

There were other circles in Provence who spread the kabbalistic tradition on the basis of material which perhaps reached them directly from anonymous eastern sources. On the one hand they continue the neoplatonic, speculative trend of Isaac the Blind, especially in his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and on the other hand they connect his trend with new ideas concerning the world of the Merkabah and the spiritual powers from which it is composed. There is a marked tendency to particularize and name these powers, and the theory of the *Sefirot* occupies only an incidental place among other attempts to delineate the world of emanation and the forces which constitute it. While Isaac the Blind and disciples revealed their identities and refrained from writing pseudepigraphically, these circles concealed their identities as far as possible, both in Provence and in Spain, and produced a rich kabbalistic pseudepigrapha imitating literary forms used in Merkabah literature and the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. One portion of this pseudepigraphic literature is neoplatonic and speculative in character, while another is angelogical, demonological, and theurgic. This latter tendency in particular found a home in some Castilian communities, e.g. Burgos and Toledo. Among the early kabbalists of Toledo are mentioned the Ḥasid Judah ibn Ziza, Joseph ibn Maẓah, and Meir b. Todros Abulafia.[50] How, and in what circumstances, the Kabbalah arrived there around the year 1200 is not known, but there is evidence linking the Provençal kabbalists with the citizens of Toledo. The Provençal scholar Samuel ben Mordecai mentions as sources the traditions of the Provençal teachers, Abraham b. David and his father-in-law, Ḥasidim of Germany, and Judah ibn Ziza from Toledo.[51] The pseudepigraphic literature used names from the time of Moses up to the later *geonim* and the Ḥasidim of Germany. Provence was undoubtedly the place of composition of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* ascribed to Rav Ḥamai Gaon, the *Ma'ayan ha-Ḥokhmah*, which was communicated by an angel to Moses, the *Midrash Shimon ha-Ẓaddik*, and other texts, while the home of most of the writings attributable to the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* could have been either Provence or Castile. More than 30 texts of this kind are known, most of them very short.[52] New interpretations of the ten *Sefirot* are found side by side with notes and expositions of the "32 paths of wisdom," the Tetragrammaton, and the 42-lettered Name of God, as well as various cosmogonic speculations. Platonic and Gnostic tendencies are interwoven in them. Knowledge of the "intellectual lights," which fill the place previously occupied by the Chariot, competes with theories of the ten *Sefirot* and of the mystical names. The authors of these works had their own solemn, abstract terminology, but the terms are given differing interpretations as they recur in various places. The order of emanation varies from time to time, and it is clear that these speculations had not yet reached their final state. There were considerable differences of opinion within this circle, and each individual author seems to have been trying to define the content of the world of emanation as it was disclosed to his vision or contemplation. Even where the theory of the *Sefirot* was accepted it underwent remarkable changes. One group of texts interprets the 13 attributes of divine mercy as the sum of the powers which fill the world of emanation, some authors adding three powers to the end of the list of *Sefirot*, while in other texts the three powers are added to the top, or are considered to be intellectual lights shining within the first *Sefirah*. This view, which stimulated many speculations as the development of the Kabbalah con-

tinued, occurs in the responsa attributed to Hai Gaon on the relationship of the ten *Sefirot* to the 13 attributes.

There are clear connections leading from Saadiah's theory of the *Kavod* and his concept of "the ether which cannot be grasped," stated in his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah,* to his circle, which made use of his ideas through the early translation of the *Emunot ve-De'ot.* The circle seems to have had little use for the *Sefer ha-Bahir.* The stress on the mysticism of the lights of the intellect is near in spirit, although not in detail, with later neoplatonic literature, e.g., the "Book of the Five Substances of Pseudo-Empedocles" (from the school of Ibn Masarra in Spain). For example, the supernal essences which are revealed, according to the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* and several other texts, from "the highest hidden mystery" or "the primeval darkness," are: primeval wisdom, wonderful light, the *ḥashmal,* the mist *(arafel),* the throne of light, the wheel *(ofan)* of greatness, the cherub, the wheel of the Chariot, the surrounding ether, the curtain, the throne of glory, the place of souls, and the outer place of holiness. This mixture of terms from widely different fields is characteristic of the blending of sources and of a hierarchical arrangement that does not depend on the theory of the *Sefirot,* although it too is incorporated in some of the writings of this circle. A theurgic tendency also appears along with a desire to indulge in philosophical speculations on the Sacred Names. In addition to the influence of Arab neoplatonism, there are indications of some links with the Christian Platonic tradition transmitted through the *De Divisione Naturae* of John Scotus Erigena, but this question needs further research.

THE KABBALIST CENTER OF GERONA

Under the influence of the first kabbalists, their ideas spread from Provence to Spain, where they found a particular response in the rabbinic circle of Gerona, in Catalonia, between the Pyrenees and Barcelona. Here, from the beginning of the 13th century, a center of great and far-ranging importance came into being which fulfilled an essential role in the establishment of the Kabbalah in Spain and in the development of kabbalistic literature. For the first time, books were written here which, despite their emphasis on the esoteric side of Kabbalah, sought to bring its major ideas to a wider public. Sometimes allusions to these ideas are found in works which are not basically kabbalistic – e.g., works of *halakhah,* exegesis, ethics, or homiletics – but there were a number of books which were entirely or largely devoted to the Kabbalah. Several letters from

ngs and their participation in contemporary disputes and discussions. The n figures in this group were a mysterious individual by the (pseudonymous?) e Ben Belimah;[53] Judah b. Yakar, Naḥmanides's teacher and for a certain *dayyan* in Barcelona (1215), whose commentary to the liturgy[54] contains balistic statements; Ezra b. Solomon and Azriel; Moses b. Naḥman (Naḥman-s); Abraham b. Isaac Gerondi, the *ḥazzan* of the community; Jacob b. Sheshet rondi; and the poet Meshullam b. Solomon Da Piera[55] (his poems were col-ed in *Yedi'ot ha-Makhon le-Ḥeker ha-Shirah,* 4(1938)). In addition, their ils should also be included, although many of them spread further afield to Aragonese communities.

A personal and literary link between the kabbalists of Provence and those of rona may be seen in Asher b. David, a nephew of Isaac the Blind. A number his writings were very widely scattered in manuscript.[56] In content, his tings are very similar to thoses of Ezra and Azriel, who were apparently ong the first to write works entirely devoted to Kabbalah and composed inly in the first third of the 13th century. Ezra wrote a commentary to the Song of Songs (which was published under Naḥmanides' name), interpreted the *aggadot* to several tractates of the Talmud wherever he was able to connect them with the Kabbalah, and summarized traditions, the greater part of which doubtless derived from Provençal kabbalists. His younger companion, Azriel, made an independent rendering of his interpretation of the *aggadot* (ed. Tishby, 1943), wrote a commentary to the liturgy (*Perush ha-Tefillot;* French translation by G. Séd, 1973) according to the theory of *kavvanot*, a commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* published in editions of that work under the name of Naḥmanides, and two small books on the nature of God, *Be'ur Eser Sefirot* (also entitled *Sha'ar ha-Sho'el*), and *Derekh ha-Emunah ve-Derekh ha-Kefirah.* These two kabbalists also left separate "mysteries" on several subjects (e.g. "the mystery of sacrifices"), and letters on kabbalistic questions, including a long letter from Azriel to the kabbalists of Burgos.[57] Azriel stands out above other members of the group because of the systematic nature of his thought and the depth of his intellect. He is the only one of the group whose work is connected in style and content with the writings of the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* mentioned above. In his books, the interpretation of neoplatonic and Gnostic elements reached their first apex. The neoplatonic element came largely from the writings of Isaac b. Solomon Israeli, some of which were undoubtedly known in Gerona.[58] Jacob b. Sheshet, in his polemical work against Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim* (ed. Vajda, 1968), combined philosophical enquiry with kabbalistic speculation. Two of his books were devoted to the latter: *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitaḥon,* later attributed to Naḥmanides and published under

his name, and *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim,* a rhymed summary of kabbalistic ideas (*Oẓar Neḥmad,* 3 (1860), 133–65).

It is doubtful if these kabbalists, who were known only to a small circle and who composed no works outside the field of Kabbalah, would have had the great influence that they did if it had not been for the stature of their colleague Naḥmanides (c.1194–1270), the highest legal and religious authority of his time in Spain. The fact that he joined the ranks of the kabbalists as a young man prepared the way for reception of the Kabbalah in Spain, just as the personality of Abraham b. David had prepared the way for the reception of the Kabbalah in Provence. The names of these two men were a guarantee to most of their contemporaries that, despite their novelty, kabbalistic ideas did not stray from the accepted faith and the rabbinic tradition. Their undisputed conservative character protected the kabbalists from accusations of deviation from strict monotheism or even heresy. Charges of this kind were made, provoked mainly by the wider publicity given the earlier works of Kabbalah and to their oral propagation in a number of communities. Isaac the Blind refers to polemics between the kabbalists and their opponents in Spain, and evidence of similar arguments in Provence (between 1235 and 1245) is extant in the accusations of Meir b. Simeon of Narbonne, a reply to which, in defense of the Kabbalah, is included in the works of Asher b. David.[59]

From the very beginning two opposing tendencies appear among the kabbalists, the first seeking to limit the Kabbalah to closed circles as a definitely esoteric system, and the second wishing to spread its influence among the people at large. Throughout the history of the Kabbalah right down to recent times these two tendencies have been in conflict. Parallel with this, from the time of the appearance of the Kabbalah in Gerona, two attitudes developed concerning the relationships of the bearers of rabbinic culture to the Kabbalah. The kabbalists were accepted as proponents of a conservative ideology and as public defenders of tradition and custom, but at the same time they were suspected, by a substantial number of rabbis and sages, of having non-Jewish leanings and of being innovators whose activities must be curtailed wherever possible. Most of the kabbalists themselves saw their role in terms of the preservation of tradition, and in fact their first public appearance was associated with their taking the traditionalists' side in the controversy over Maimonides' writings and the study of philosophy in the 13th century.[60] In these disputes the Kabbalah of the Gerona scholars seemed to be a symbolic interpretation of the world of Judaism and its way of life, based on a theosophy which taught the inner secrets of the revealed Godhead and on a rejection of rationalist interpretations of the Torah and the Commandments. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the system of thought elaborated by a man like Azriel did not invalidate the philosophic teaching of

time but rather added to it a new dimension, that of theosophy, as its wning glory. In particular this school contributed a new spiritual dimension he exegesis of Genesis I, one of the main topics of Jewish philosophical ght.[61]

n several of his works Naḥmanides gives room to the Kabbalah, particularly is commentary to the Torah, where his many veiled and unexplained allu- to interpretations "according to the true way" were meant to arouse the osity of those readers who had never heard of that "way." He also used balistic symbolism in some of his *piyyutim.* And his views on the fate of the after death and the nature of the world to come, expressed in *Sha'ar emul* at the end of his halakhic work *Toledot Adam,* represent the ideas of ircle and are in contrast to Maimonides' views on this subject. His com- tary to the book of Job is based on the theory of transmigration (without tioning the term *gilgul* itself) and on the views of his companion, Ezra, cerning the *Sefirah Ḥokhmah.* Naḥmanides wrote no works specifically on Kabbalah, apart from a commentary to the first chapter of the *Sefer Yeẓi-* and, rather surprisingly, a sermon on the occasion of a wedding.[63] Since 14th century, several books by other authors were attributed to him. In the ings of the Gerona kabbalists there is a definite, well-established symbolic ework which is related first and foremost to the theory of the *Sefirot* and to way in which this theory interprets scriptural verses and homilies dealing the acts of God. This symbolism served as the main basis for the develop- of the Kabbalah in this group, and numerous anonymous kabbalists of this later periods made out lists and tables, mostly brief, of the order of the *ot,* and of the nomenclature in Scripture and *aggadah* which fitted them. In ts of detail practically every kabbalist had his own system but there was a measure of agreement on fundamentals.[64]

ontacts were made between the Spanish kabbalists and the Ḥasidei Ash- z, either through individual Ḥasidim who visited Spain or through books h were brought there, e.g., the works of Eleazar of Worms. Abraham Axel- of Cologne, who traveled through the Spanish communities between 1260 1275 approximately, wrote *Keter Shem Tov* dealing with the Tetra- maton and the theory of the *Sefirot.* It exists in various versions, one of h was published in Jellinek's *Ginzei Ḥokhmat ha-Kabbalah* (1853), while her gives the author's name as Menahem, a pupil of Eleazar of Worms. This bination of the theory of the Sacred Names and speculations using the ods of *gematria* with the theory of the *Sefirot* of the Gerona kabbalists ains, at least in a third version of the book, a powerful renewal of ecstatic encies, which took on the new form of "prophetic Kabbalah."[65] Other

kabbalists from Castile also established contacts with one of the pupils of Eleazar of Worms who lived in Narbonne in the middle of the 13th century.

It is almost certain that an anonymous kabbalist from the Gerona circle, or one of the Provençal kabbalists, was the author of the book *Temunah* (written before 1250), which was attributed several generations later to R. Ishmael, the high priest. The style of the book is very difficult, and its contents are obscure at many points. An interpretation of the "image of God" through the shapes of the Hebrew letters, it became the basis of several other texts, composed in a similar fashion and perhaps even by the same author; e.g., interpretations of the secret 72-lettered Name of God mentioned in the mystical literature of the geonic period. The importance of the book lies in its detailed though enigmatic explanation of the theory of *shemittot* (see below), to which the Gerona kabbalists alluded without a detailed explanation. The difficult style of the *Temunah* was elucidated to some extent by an old commentary, also anonymous (published with the book itself in 1892), which was written at the end of the 13th century. *Temunah* had a distinct influence on Kabbalah up to the 16th century.

OTHER CURRENTS IN 13TH CENTURY SPANISH KABBALAH

The combination of theosophic-Gnostic and neoplatonic-philosophical elements, which found expression in Provence and Gerona, led to the relative, or sometimes exaggerated, dominance of one element over the other in other currents from 1230 onward. On one side there was an extreme mystical tendency, expressed in philosophical terms and creating its own symbolism which was not based on the theory or nomenclature of the *Sefirot* found among the Gerona kabbalists. Refuting some of the suppositions of the latter (e.g. the theory of transmigration), nevertheless it saw itself as the true "science of Kabbalah." Its first and most important exponent was Isaac ibn Latif, whose books were written (perhaps in Toledo) between 1230 and 1270. "He had one foot inside [the Kabbalah], and one foot outside [in philosophy]" as Judah Ḥayyat said of him (preface to *Minḥat Yehudah* on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*). Becoming a kind of independent mystic, he drew his philosophical inspiration from the writings in both Arabic and Hebrew of the neoplatonists, and especially from Ibn Gabirol's *Mekor Ḥayyim* and the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, although at times he completely transformed their meaning. His main work, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (written in 1238), was intended to be, in a speculative mystical vein, both a continuation of and a substitute for Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. Together with most of the Gerona kabbalists he accorded the highest place to the Primeval Will, in it the source of all emanation. The theory of the Divine Logos, which [illegible] from the Arabic neoplatonic tradition, became divided into the Will – which remained completely within the Divine and was identified with the Divine [illegible] (Logos) which brought forth all things – and into the "first created thing," the Supreme Intellect that stands at the top of the hierarchy of all beings, and was presented in symbols which in other places belong to the Logos itself. But Ibn Latif is not consistent in his highly personal use of symbolism and often contradicts himself, even on important points. From the "first created thing" *(nivra rishon)* emanated all the other stages, called symbolically light, fire, ether, and water. Each of these is the province of one branch of wisdom: mysticism, metaphysics, astronomy, and physics. Ibn Latif created a complete and rich system of the universe, basing his views on a far-fetched allegorical interpretation of Scripture, although he was opposed to the extreme allegorists who regarded allegory as a substitute for the literal interpretation and not simply an addition to it. His ideas about prayer and true understanding have a distinctly mystical tinge, and in this respect exceed the theory of *kavvanah* and meditation prevalent among the kabbalists of Gerona. The influence of Ibn Gabirol is most noticeable in his *Ẓurat ha-Olam* (1860) which contains specific criticisms of kabbalistic theosophy. Nevertheless, Ibn Latif regards Kabbalah as superior to philosophy both in nature and efficacy, in particular because it takes hold of truth which is of a temporal nature, whereas philosophical truth is atemporal (*Rav Pe'alim* (1885), no. 39). Ibn Latif had personal connections with exponents of Kabbalah whose conceptions were completely opposed to his, and he dedicated *Ẓeror ha-Mor* to Todros Abulafia of Toledo, one of the leaders of the Gnostic trend of Kabbalah. His books were read by kabbalists and philosophers alike, e.g. the philosopher Isaac Albalag (Vatican Ms, 254, fol. 97b), who criticized his *Ẓurat ha-Olam*. According to Ibn Latif, the highest intellectual understanding reaches only the "back" of the Divine, whereas a picture of the "face" is disclosed only in a supra-intellectual ecstacy, which involves experience superior even to that of prophecy (*Ginzei ha-Melekh*, chs. 37 and 41). This perception he calls "the beatitude of supreme communion." True prayer brings the human intellect into communion with the Active Intellect "like a kiss," but from there it ascends even to union with the "first created thing"; beyond this union, achieved through words, is the union through pure thought intended to reach the First Cause, i.e., the Primeval Will, and at length to stand before God Himself (*Ẓeror ha-Mor*, ch. 5).

The second exponent of philosophic-mystical tendencies distinct from the theosophical Kabbalah of the Gerona school and aspiring toward an ecstatic Kabbalah was Abraham Abulafia (1240–after 1292). The striking image of this man derives from his outstanding personality. He came into contact with a group

whose technique of letter combination and number mysticism stimulated his own ecstatic experiences. At least part of his inspiration was derived from the German Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and perhaps also through the influence of Sufi circles, whom he met with during his travels in the east in his early years. Abulafia's teacher was the *ḥazzan* Barukh Togarmi (in Barcelona?), who, judging by his name, came from the east. From him he learned the fundamental teachings of prophetic Kabbalah to whose dissemination he devoted his life, after he had attained illumination in Barcelona in 1271. His prophetic and perhaps also messianic claims aroused strong opposition both in Spain and in Italy, but his books were widely read from the end of the 13th century, especially those where he expounded his system of Kabbalah as a kind of guide to the upward journey from philosophical preoccupations of the Maimonidean type to prophecy and to those mystical experiences which he believed partook of the nature of prophecy. Abulafia was also a copious borrower of kabbalistic ideas whenever he found them relevant, but those aspects which were foreign to his nature he opposed even to the point of ridicule. A passionate admirer of Maimonides, he believed that his own system was merely a continuation and elaboration of the teaching of the *Guide of the Perplexed.* Unlike Maimonides, who dissociated himself from the possibility of prophecy in his time, Abulafia defended such a prospect, finding in "the way of the Names," i.e., a specific mystical technique also called "the science of combination," *ḥokhmat ha-ẓeruf,* a means realizing and embodying human aspirations toward prophecy.

So inspired, he himself wrote 26 prophetic books of which only one, *Sefer ha-Ot,* has survived.[66] *Derekh ha-Sefirot* ("the way of the *Sefirot*"), he believed, is useful for beginners, but is of little value compared with *Derekh ha-Shemot* ("the way of the Names"), opening up only after deep study of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and the techniques to which it alludes. Abulafia saw his Kabbalah, therefore, as another layer added to the earlier Kabbalah, which did not contradict such major works as the *Bahir,* the *Temunah,* and the writings of Nahmanides. His promise to expound a way which would lead to what he called "prophecy," and his practical application of kabbalist principles, found a distinct echo in Kabbalah from the 14th century onward, first in Italy and later in other countries. His great manuals (*Sefer he-Ẓeruf, Or ha-Sekhel* and especially *Ḥayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba,* and others), which have been copied right down to recent times, are textbooks of meditation, the objects of which are the Sacred Names and the letters of the alphabet and their combinations, both comprehensible and incomprehensible. It was precisely this kind of manual which had been lacking in the usual type of kabbalistic literature, which had confined itself to symbolic descriptions, and refrained from advancing in writing techniques for mystic experience. The work of Abulafia filled this need, and the fierce criticism of him which was heard here and there did not prevent their

tion and influence. One of Abulafia's pupils wrote (perhaps in Hebron) at nd of 1294 a small book on prophetic Kabbalah, *Sha'arei Ẓedek,* which es an important autobiographical description of his studies with his teachnd of his mystical experiences.[67]

the other side of this twofold development of the Kabbalah was a school abbalists who were more attracted to Gnostic traditions, whether genuine or apparently so, and who concentrated on the Gnostic and mythological ment rather than on the philosophical. The exponents of this trend set out to nd and assemble fragments of documents and oral traditions, and added to em just as much themselves, until their books became an astonishing mixture pseudepigrapha with the authors' own commentaries. In contrast with the abbalah of Gerona, the pseudepigraphic element was very strong in this branch, although it is not absolutely certain that the authors of these books themselves invented the sources which they quoted. This school, which might properly be called "the Gnostic reaction," includes the brothers Jacob and Isaac, sons of Jacob ha-Kohen of Soria, who traveled in Spain and Provence (c. 1260–80) and met their older kabbalist predecessors: Moses b. Simeon, their pupil and successor, rabbi of Burgos; and Todros b. Joseph Abulafia of Burgos and Toledo, one of the leaders of Castilian Jewry of his day. Their main work belongs to the second half of the 13th century. In Kabbalist circles Moses of Burgos was widely considered to be endowed with particular authority, and he was also the teacher of Isaac ibn Sahula, author of *Mashal ha-Kadmoni.* It is extraordinary that such a complete rationalist and devotee of philosophical enquiry as Isaac Albalag could see three members of this school as the true exponents of Kabbalah in his time, with Moses of Burgos at their head: "His name has spread throughout the country: Moses has received *[kibbel]* the [authentic] kabbalist tradition."[68]

The speculative side is not altogether absent in this school, and some fragments of one of Isaac ha-Kohen's books[69] in particular show some relationship between him and Ibn Latif, but its true characteristics are quite different. He developed the details of the theory of the left, demonic, emanation, whose ten *Sefirot* are the exact counterparts of the Holy *Sefirot.* A similar demonic emanation is already mentioned in the writings of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* group, and in the works of Nahmanides, and it is possible that its origins stemmed from the east. In the evidence extant, this theory appeared in pseudepigraphic texts and its roots were mainly in Provence and Castile. From these traditions came the zoharic theory of the *sitra ahra* (the "other side"). There is also a strong tendency here to arrange long lists of beings in the world below the realm of the *Sefirot* – that are given specific names – and so establish a completely new angelology. These emanations of the second rank are presented partly as "curtains" *(pargodim)* in front of the emanations of the *Sefirot,* and as "bodies" and

"garments" for the inner souls, which are the *Sefirot.* This multiplicity of personified emanations and the listing of them recall similar tendencies in the later development of several Gnostic systems, and in particular the book *Pistis Sophia.* To everything in the world below there is a corresponding force in the world above, and in this way a kind of strange mythology without precedent in other sources is created. This theme runs through all the writings of Isaac b. Jacob ha-Kohen, and through some of the work of his elder brother Jacob. The novelty of the names of these forces and their description is obvious, and some of the details of the *Sefirot* and their nomenclature occasionally assume a form different from that in the Kabbalah of Gerona. In the writings of Todros Abulafia the kabbalists who are exponents of the Gnostic trend are given the specific name of *ma'amikim* ("those who delve deeply"), in order to distinguish them from the others. The Spanish kabbalists of the 14th century made an additional distinction between the Kabbalah of the Castilian kabbalists, which belonged to the Gnostic school, and that of the Catalonian kabbalists. In this circle we can observe quite clearly the growth of the magical element and the tendency to preserve theurgic traditions of which there is no trace in the Gerona school.

This new gnostic bent did not stop the individual mystical or visionary experience. The two elements go hand in hand in the writings of Jacob ha-Kohen, who wrote the extensive *Sefer ha-Orah,* which has no link with earlier kabbalistic tradition but is based entirely on visions which "were accorded him" in heaven. The Kabbalah of these visions is completely different from the traditionalist portion of his other writings, and it is not taken up anywhere else in the history of the Kabbalah. It is based on a new form of the idea of Logos which assumes here the image of Metatron. The theory of emanation also acquires another garb, and concern with the *Sefirot* makes way for speculations on "the holy spheres" *(ha-galgalim ha-kedoshim)* through which the power of the Emanator is invisibly dispersed until it reaches the sphere of Metatron, which is the central cosmic force. This very personal theosophy, nourished and inspired by vision, has no relationship with the theosophy of the Gerona kabbalists but it has some connection with the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. Jacob ha-Kohen was the first Spanish kabbalist to build all his mystical teachings concerning the reasons for the Commandments and other matters on *gematriot.* Metatron, to be sure, was created, but came into being simultaneously with the emanation of the inner heavenly spheres, and the verse "Let there be light" alludes to the "formation of the light of the intellect" in the shape of the Metatron. There is little doubt that Jacob ha-Kohen knew about the art of "combination" as a prerequisite for mystical perception, but had no knowledge of those mysteries derived from it through rationalist interpretation characteristic of Abraham Abulafia. *Sefer ha-Orah* has not been preserved in its entirety, but large parts of it exist in various manu-

s (Milan 62, Vatican 428, etc.). Apart from Ibn Latif's writings, it is the striking example of how an entirely new Kabbalah could be created side by with the earlier one, and it is as if each one of them speaks on a different . In his *Oẓar ha-Kavod* on the legends of the Talmud (1879), and in his *ar ha-Razim* on Psalm 19 (Munich Ms. 209) Todros Abulafia strove to com- the Kabbalah of Gerona with the Kabbalah of the Gnostics, but he never ed to the revelations accorded to Jacob ha-Kohen.

E ZOHAR (see also p.213).

mingling of the two trends emanating from the Gerona school and from school of the Gnostics is to a certain extent paralleled in the main product of panish Kabbalah. This is the *Sefer ha-Zohar* written mainly between 1280 and 286 by Moses b. Shem Tov de Leon in Guadalajara, a small town northeast of drid. In this city there also lived two kabbalist brothers, Isaac and Meir b. Solomon ibn Sahula, and it is in Isaac's books that the first quotations are found from the earliest stratum of the Zohar, dating from 1281.[70] Many kabbalists were active at this time in the small communities around Toledo, and there is evidence of mystical experience even among the unlearned. An example of this is the appearance as a prophet in Avila in 1295 of Nissim b. Abraham, an ignorant artisan, to whom an angel revealed a kabbalistic work, *Pil'ot ha-Ḥokhmah,* and who was opposed by Solomon b. Abraham Adret (Responsa of Solomon b. Adret, no. 548). This was the community where Moses de Leon passed the last years of his life (d. 1305). The Zohar is the most important evidence for the stirring of a mythical spirit in medieval Judaism. The origin of the book, its literary and religious character, and the role that it has played in the history of Judaism, have been subjects of prolonged argument among scholars during the last 130 years, but most of it has not been based on historical and linguistic analysis. In an analysis of this kind we can establish a precise place for the Zohar in the development of Spanish Kabbalah, which has set its seal on the book. In so doing we must resist continually recurring apologetic attempts to antedate its composition by turning its late literary sources into evidence for the earlier existence of the book, or by proclaiming ancient strata in it – of whose presence there is no proof whatsoever (J.L. Zlotnik, Belkin, Finkel, Reuben Margaliot, Chavel, M. Kasher, and others).

The mingling of these two currents – the Kabbalah of Gerona and the Kabbalah of the "Gnostics" of Castile – became in the mind of Moses de Leon a creative encounter which determined the basic character of the Zohar. Instead of the brief allusions and interpretations of his predecessors he presents a broad canvas of interpretation and homiletics covering the whole world of Judaism as

it appeared to him. He was far removed from systematic theology, and indeed there are fundamental problems of contemporary Jewish thought which do not arise in his work at all, such as the meaning of prophecy and the questions of predestination and providence; however, he reflects the actual religious situation, and expounds it through kabbalistic interpretation. In a pseudepigraph attributed to Simeon b. Yoḥai and his friends, Moses de Leon clothed his interpretation of Judaism in an archaic garb – in the form of long and short Midrashim of the Torah and the three books Song of Songs, Ruth, and Lamentations. The explanations in the book revolve round two poles – one consisting of the mysteries of the world of the *Sefirot* that constitute the life of the Divine, which is also reflected in many symbols in the created world; and the other of the situation of the Jew and his fate both in this world and in the world of souls. The deepening and broadening of a symbolic view of Judaism was very daring in an age when the kabbalists still preserved in some measure the esoteric character of their ideas. The appearance of what purported to be an ancient Midrash which actually reflected the basic viewpoints of the Spanish kabbalists, and successfully expressed them in an impressive literary synthesis, sparked off a number of arguments among the kabbalists of the day. However, it also served to spread knowledge of the Kabbalah and ensure its acceptance. The author's viewpoint progressed from a tendency toward philosophy and allegoric interpretation to Kabbalah and its symbolic ideas. The steps in this progress can still be recognized in the differences between the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam,* the earliest part of the Zohar, and the main body of the book. There is little doubt that the aim of the book was to attack the literal conception of Judaism and the neglect of the performance of the *miẓvot,* and this was accomplished by emphasizing the supreme value and secret meaning of every word and Commandment of the Torah. As in most great mystical texts, inner perception and the way to "communion" are connected with the preservation of the traditional framework, whose value is increased sevenfold. The mystical viewpoint served to strengthen the tradition and indeed became a conscious conservative factor. On the other hand, the author of the Zohar concentrated frequently on speculations on the profundities of the nature of Divinity, which other kabbalists did not dare dwell upon, and his boldness was an important contributory factor in the renewed development of Kabbalah several generations later. When the Zohar appeared few kabbalists turned their attention to this original aspect. Instead they used the Zohar as a distinguished aid to strengthening their conservative aims. In his Hebrew books written in the years after 1286, after he had finished his major work in the Zohar, Moses de Leon himself concealed many of his more daring speculations (which the obscure Aramaic garb had suited very well). On the other hand he stressed in them the principles of *Sefirot* symbolism, with its value

comprehension of the Torah and of prayer, and also the homiletical and element of the Zohar. His Hebrew books expanded, here and there, which were first adumbrated with some variations in the Zohar. These have largely been preserved, and some of them were copied many times, only one has been published before modern times *(Sefer ha-Mishkal,* also *Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Ḥakhamah,* 1608). It is hard to say to what extent de Leon expected his work in the Zohar actually to be accepted as an and authoritative Midrash, or how far he intended to create a comdium of Kabbalah in a suitable literary form which would be perfectly clear he discerning eye. Many kabbalists in the succeeding generation used similar ms and wrote imitations of the Zohar, something which they would not have d to do in the case of genuine Midrashim, thus showing that they did not the framework of the book too seriously. This does not detract from leed it may add to) the value of the Zohar from a historical point of view, ther for its own sake of for the sake of the influence that it exerted.

Moses de Leon was certainly very closely associated with another kabbalist, who began as a disciple of Abraham Abulafia himself. This was Joseph Gikatilla, who wrote *Ginnat Egoz* in 1274 and later a number of other works under the inspiration of his first master. However, while still young he also became associated with Gnostic circles and afterward he struck up a friendship with Moses de Leon; each came under the other's influence. Turning his attention from the mysteries of letters, vowels, and names, Gikatilla embarked on a profound study of the theosophy of the *Sefirot* system, and his books provide an independent and valuable parallel to the writings of Moses de Leon. *Sha'arei Orah,* written about 1290, already shows the influence of certain parts of the Zohar, although there is no mention of it. An important summary of, and introduction to, the interpretation of *Sefirot* symbolism, this book became one of the major works of Spanish Kabbalah. It is worth noting that three different streams, the Kabbalah of Gerona, the Kabbalah of the Zohar, and the Kabbalah of Abulafia, were able to meet and be reconciled in Gikatilla's mind, a very rare occurrence in this period. His *Ginnat Egoz* in the latest source, insofar as we know, utilized by the author of the Zohar.

Two works written in the 1290s or in the earliest years of the 14th century, the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Sefer ha-Tikkunim,* compromise the latest strands in the zoharic literature. They are the work of an unknown kabbalist who was familiar with the major part of the Zohar and wrote his books as a kind of continuation of it (albeit with some change in literary style and framework). The books contain a new interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis and a tabulated explanation of the reasons for the Commandments. Elevating the importance of the Zohar as the final revelation of the mysteries, these two works

connected its appearance with the beginning of the redemption: "Through the merits of the Zohar they will go forth from exile in mercy," i.e. without the dread pains of the redemption (Zohar 3: 124b). The author exaggeratedly blends the image of the biblical Moses with Moses the revealer of the Zohar on the eve of the final redemption. It is possible that he was very close to the circle of Moses de Leon, and perhaps his name was also called Moses. These books are the first of a whole line of Kabbalistic works which were written in the pseudo-Aramaic style of the Zohar and as a continuation of it. Some authors also wrote in Hebrew, adding interpretations in the name of zoharic characters but reflecting their own ideas. In this category mention should be made of *Mar'ot ha-Ẓove'ot* (Sassoon Ms. 978) by David b. Judah he-Ḥasid, known from his other writings as a grandson of Naḥmanides (*Ohel David*, 1001–06); and *Livnat ha-Sappir* (on Gen., 1914; on Lev. British Museum Ms. 767) by Joseph Angelino, written in 1325–27, and wrongly ascribed by several kabbalists to David b. Judah Ḥasid. This latter David was the first to compose a garbled Hebrew translation and elaboration of the speculations in the *Idra Rabba* of the Zohar, called *Sefer ha-Gevul* (Jerusalem Ms.).[71] He also wrote a long commentary, *Or Zaru'a*, on the liturgy, and several other books.[72]

An important pseudepigraph written at the time of the appearance of the Zohar was *Sod Darkhei ha-Shemot*, "The Mystery of the Names, Letters, and Vowels, and the Power of the [Magical] Operations, according to the Sages of Lunel," which is found in several manuscripts under different names (Vatican Ms. 441). Attributed to the circle of Abraham b. David, the book is actually based on the works of Gikatilla and Moses de Leon, and connects speculations on the letters, vowels, and Sacred Names with the theory of practical Kabbalah. Its author, who gave the words of the late 13th century kabbalists a new pseudepigraphic frame, also compiled the kabbalist anthology *Sefer ha-Ne'lam* (Paris Ms. 817), using similar source material. An obscure figure in zoharic imitation literature is Joseph "who came from the city of Shushan" (i.e. from Hamadan in Persia). Perhaps this is a completely fictitious name concealing a Spanish kabbalist who lived about 1300 or a little later and wrote a lengthy work on the Torah section of *Terumah*, the Song of Songs, and Kohelet, which is largely written in the style of the Zohar and develops the ideas of the zoharic *idras* concerning the *Shi'ur Komah*. This extensive work is preserved (British Museum Ms. 464) and was disseminated even in comparatively late times.[73] The book is full of strange ideas not to be found in other kabbalistic texts, and the author introduces opinions which are quite foreign to the Zohar, although couched in its style. According to A. Altmann he is to be identified with the anonymous author of the *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Miẓvot*, which was used as the source of a literary plagiarism by Isaac ibn Farḥi in the 16th century.[74] This author also wrote the comprehensive work *Toledot Adam*, partly printed under the erroneous title *ha-Malkhut*.[75] The third book in this category in the *Sefer ha-She'arim* or *...lot la-Zaken* (Oxford Ms. 2396) from the first quarter of the 14th century. ...old man *(zaken)* who replies to the questions of his disciples is none other ... Moses himself. The bulk of the book is written in Hebrew and only a minor ...on in the zoharic style. Also a completely independent work, it relies a great ...on allusion without fully explaining its ideas.

THE KABBALAH IN THE 14TH CENTURY UP TO THE EXPULSION FROM SPAIN

The 14th century was a period of intellectual development which produced an extremely rich literature. The Kabbalah spread through most of the communities of Spain and beyond, in particular to Italy and the East. Once the gates were opened wide through the books that revealed mystical ideas, all the preceding trends found their continuators and their interpreters; with this expansion all the different trends mingled with one another to a certain extent, and attempts were made to find a compromise between them.

The Kabbalah of Gerona was continued through the prolific literary activity of the disciples of Naḥmanides' pupils, who were taught by Solomon b. Abraham Adret (Rashba) and Isaac b. Todros, author of a commentary to the *maḥzor* according to Kabbalah (Paris Ms. 839). Members of this school, who did not favor the prevailing pseudepigraphic style, produced many books attempting to clarify the kabbalistic passages of Naḥmanides' commentary to the Torah. An unknown author writing at the beginning of the 14th century composed *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (1558), a compendium which expounded the doctrine of Kabbalah in a terse and systematic fashion. This book was very widely read, especially in Italy, and its influence was felt as late as the 16th century. Although Solomon b. Abraham Adret was very cautious in his dealings with kabbalistic matters, he often alluded to them in his commenatry to the *aggadot* (Vatican Ms. 295), and he also composed a long prayer in the kabbalistic way. His pupils, however, assigned a central place to the Kabbalah. To this school belong: Baḥya b. Asher from Saragossa, whose commentary to the Torah contributed greatly to the dissemination of the Kabbalah and was the first kabbalistic book to be printed in its entirety (1492); Joshua ibn Shu'ayb from Tudela, author of the important *Derashot* (homilies) on the Torah (1523), the first book in this genre to assign a central place to the Kabbalah, and the real author of the *Be'ur Sodot ha-Ramban* ("Explanation of [the kabbalistic] secrets of Naḥmanides' Commentary"), which was printed (1875) under the name of his pupil, Meir b. Solomon Ibn Sahula; Ḥayyim b. Samuel of Lerida, author of

Ẓeror ha-Ḥayyim, which contains a kabbalistic exposition of halakhic matters (Ms. Musajoff); Shem Tov b. Abraham ibn Gaon from Soria, who began a large-scale literary activity on the Kabbalah between 1315 and 1325, emigrated to Erez Israel with his friend Elhanan b. Abraham ibn Eskira, and settled in Safed. Elhanan's *Yesod Olam* (Guenzburg Ms. 607), written partly in Arabic, merges the Gerona tradition with neoplatonic philosophical Kabbalah. In the school of Solomon Adret a large amount of of raw material was assembled which has been preserved in *collectanea* of considerable value (Vatican Ms. 202, Parma Mss. 68 and 1221, and others). In the same way several anonymous texts have been preserved which interpret the hidden meanings in Naḥmanides. The main storehouse for all the traditions of this school is *Me'irat Einaim* by Isaac b. Samuel of Acre, who also dealt at length in other books with completely different aspects of the Kabbalah, under the joint influence of the Zohar and the school of Abraham Abulafia. In contrast to the attempts to seek a compromise between Kabbalah and philosophy, he insisted on the independence and supreme worth of kabbalist theosophy. Parts of the collection of revelations that were granted to him in various ways were assembled in *Oẓar ha-Ḥayyim* (Guenzburg Ms. 775), parts of which have been frequently copied. He was associated with many contemporary kabbalists, and he was the first of this circle to write an autobiography, which, however, is lost.

Another kabbalist who migrated to Spain and became acquainted with the Kabbalah there was Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi, author of an extensive commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* (which has been printed in editions of the book under the name of Abraham b. David). He also wrote a commentary to the *bereshit* section of the *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* (KS, 4 (1928), 236–302), under the title *Parashat Bereshit.* The former book was already used in the works of David b. Judah Ḥasid. These works develop the theory of the *Sefirot* to the extreme, assigning to everything a precise place in the world of the *Sefirot.* Joseph b. Shalom engaged in the kabbalistic critique of philosophy, but he interpreted its principles kabbalistically in a very bold way. Like most of the kabbalists of his time he was taken much with the idea of the *shemittot* which gained much ground in this period. Among the most important versions of this theory is that lucidly presented in *Sod Ilan ha-Aẓilut* by R. Isaac.[76] Joseph b. Shalom expounded an extreme conception of the theory of transmigration of souls, turning it into a cosmic law involving a change of form which affected every part of creation from the *Sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* down to the lowest grade of inanimate objects.

Together with the influence of the Zohar and the school of Solomon Adret the Spanish Kabbalah began to spread into Italy, particularly through the writings of Menahem Recanati who wrote, early in the 14th century, a com-

mentary "according to the path of truth" on the Torah (1523) and a work on the mystical reasons for the commandments (complete ed. 1963). But there was little independence in Italian Kabbalah, and for a long time it consisted of no more than compilations and interpretations, following the Zohar and the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut,*[77] and, to an even greater extent than in Spain itself, the writings of Abraham Abulafia. One exception is the *Iggeret Purim,*[78] whose author gives an unusual symbolic interpretation of the theory of the *Sefirot.* The outstanding Italian kabbalist of the 14th century was Reuben Ẓarfati. In Germany also there was little independent creativity in the Kabbalah. German kabbalists contented themselves with mingling the Zohar and the *Ma'arekhet* with the tradition of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. Avigdor Kara (d. 1439), who achieved fame there as a kabbalist,[79] wrote *Kodesh Hillulim* on Psalm 150 (Zurich Ms. 102). In the second half of the 14th century Menahem Ẓiyyoni of Cologne wrote *Sefer Ẓiyyoni* on the Torah, and Yom Tov Lipmann Muelhausen devoted part of his literary activity to the Kabbalah, e.g. *Sefer ha-Eshkol* (ed. Judah Even-Shemuel (Kaufmann), 1927). From the beginning of the 14th century the Kabbalah also spread to the East. In Persia, Isaiah b. Joseph of Tabriz wrote *Ḥayyei ha-Nefesh* (1324; Jerusalem Ms. 8° 544; part of it was published in 1891); and in Constantinople Nathan b. Moses Kilkis, who says that he studied in Spain, wrote the voluminous *Even Sappir* (1368–70; Paris Ms. 727–8).

These last two books belong to the strain which attempted to combine Kabbalah and philosophy in more or less radical ways. Originating mainly among the Spanish kabbalists of the period, these attempts became quite common, and their proponents attacked the opposite tendency to emphasize the two sides' basic differences of approach. The unequivocal neoplatonic line of Ibn Latif was continued (about 1300) by David b. Abraham ha-Lavan in his *Masoret ha-Berit.* Joseph b. Shalom, mentioned above, linked Kabbalah with Aristotelian metaphysics and with natural philosophy, showing how even abstract philosophical concepts could be given a mystical content. Obviously, some tended toward a more philosophical view, while others concentrated on the specifically kabbalistic side. Two of the chief exponents of these tendencies wrote in Arabic, an extremely rare occurrence in kabbalistic literature. One was Judah b. Nissim ibn Malka from Fez, who wrote in 1365; his works have been analyzed by G. Vajda (1954), who has done a great deal of research on the relationship between Kabbalah and philosophy in this period. The other, who lived a generation earlier, was Joseph b. Abraham ibn Waqar of Toledo. In his lengthy work entitled *al-Maqāla al-Jamī'a bayna al-Falsafa wa-ash-Shar'i'a* ("A Synthesis of Philosophy and Kabbalah"), he set down the views of the philosophers, the kabbalists, and the astrologers, evaluated their ideas according to their relative merits, and tried to establish a basis common to them all.[80] His book also

includes a lexicon of *Sefirot* symbolism, which was translated into Hebrew and circulated widely. The author was deeply indebted to Naḥmanides and Todros Abulafia, but he warns "that many errors have crept into" the Zohar. Ibn Waqar wrote poems on the Kabbalah.[81] His personal friend was Moses Narboni, who was inclined basically toward philosophy; however, in the *Iggeret al Shi'ur Komah* and in other places in his writings, through a positive albeit somewhat reluctant approach to Kabbalah, Narboni tries to explain kabbalistic statements as if they were in agreement with philosophy.[82]

An attempt to weight the balance in favor of Kabbalah found expression in the criticism of the work of Judah ibn Malka attributed to Isaac of Acre.[83] Samuel b. Saadiah Motot in Guadalajara (c. 1370) also followed Ibn Waqar in his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* called *Meshovev Netivot,* and his commentary to the Torah, *Megalleh Amukot* (to Ex., Oxford Ms. 286, and Lev. to Deut., Jerusalem, National Library, Ms. 8° 552). But the Zohar had a very strong influence on him. In the discussions of the philosophical kabbalists a great deal of attention was paid to the question of the relationship between the theosophic theory of the *Sefirot,* the philosophers' theory of the separate intelligences, and the neoplatonic idea of the cosmic soul. Attempts were made to explain the *Guide of the Perplexed* in a kabbalistic manner, or at least to clarify certain problems in it from the standpoint of the Kabbalah, using methods different from that of Abraham Abulafia; e.g. in the critique attributed to Joseph Gikatilla,[84] or in the *Tish'ah Perakim mi-Yiḥud* attributed to Maimonides.[85] Following Abulafia, the urge to make a kabbalist of Maimonides was emphasized in the legend that he had a change of heart at the end of his life and turned to the Kabbalah,[86] a tale that was current from the year 1300 and appears in several versions. In this period the *Megillat Setarim* was also written, which was said to be a letter of Maimonides concerning the Kabbalah.[87]

Totally in contrast to these tendencies toward compromise were two important phenomena which were absolutely opposed to the world of philosophy. The first is connected with the growth of meditative movements leading to contemplation, whether of the inner world of the *Sefirot* and the innumerable hidden lights concealed therein, or of the inner world of the Sacred Names which themselves conceal mystic lights. As a rule this contemplation follows the methods of prophetic Kabbalah, but by changing it and bringing it into the realm of Gnostic theosophy. The 13th-century theory of the *Sefirot* is subordinated to the contemplation of the lights of the intellect, which originated in the writings of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* school, and produced a voluminous literature, wavering between pure inner contemplation and magic. There is no doubt that Isaac of Acre was very much inclined to this trend. Practically the whole of this literature is still concealed in manuscript form, no doubt because of the self-

orship of the kabbalists, who regarded it as the truly esoteric part of Kabh. One characteristic example, however, did find its way into print, namely *Berit Menuḥah* (1548), which dates from the second half of the 14th century was wrongly attributed to Abraham b. Isaac of Granada. It deals at length h meditations on the inner lights sparkling from the various vocalizations of Tetragrammaton. This literature represents a continuation of Abulafia's ience of combination" with the addition of the theory of *kavvanah* of the osophical Kabbalah. The *Sefer ha-Malkhut,* also a treatise on letter combations, was written about 1400 by the kabbalist David ha-Levi from Seville rinted in the collection *Ma'or va-Shemesh,* 1839). Intended as practical manuals r initiates these books are of little interest for kabbalistic theory or philosophy.

The second phenomenon is connected with the composition of two pseudepigraphic works: the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* (1784) on the first section of the Torah and the *Sefer ha-Kanah* (1786) on the (meaning of) the Commandments. The author, who wrote between 1350 and 1390, speaks in the guise of the grandson of R. Neḥunya b. ha-Kanah, the supposed author of the *Sefer ha-Bahir.* Actually, a large part of the first book consists of an anthology of earlier kabbalistic literature. The author, a considerable talmudist, adapted these sources and added a comparable amount to them. His main object was to prove,through the use of talmudic argument, that the *halakhah* has no literal meaning but mystical significance alone, and that the true literal meaning is mystical. With sweeping enthusiasm, these works go to greater lengths than the Zohar in their insistence that Judaism has no true meaning outside the world of the Kabbalah, thus representing the peak of kabbalistic extremism.[88] Clearly, in such a case there is no room for a philosophical approach. The anti-philosophical line was continued in the works of Shem Tov b. Shem Tov, who wrote two systematic books on the Kabbalah around 1400. His *Sefer ha-Emunot* (1556) demonstrates how completely the Zohar had become accepted, a century after its appearance, as the central work of Kabbalah. A large portion of the second book, whose title is unknown, is extant (British Museum Ms. 771). In this work the anti-philosophical tendency, which was perhaps influenced by contemporary events, and by the persecution of 1391, is expressed quite clearly: there is no longer any room for compromise between mysticism and the demands of rationalistic thought. It cannot be affirmed, however, that this point of view dominated the Kabbalah in its entirety, for in the years that followed, up to the beginning of the 16th century, there were various moves toward reconciliation, especially noticeable among the Italian kabbalists.

In contrast with the clear direction followed by the pseudepigraphy of the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah,* there is no obvious goal in the voluminous pseudepigraphic activity of the Provençal kabbalist Moses b. Isaac Botarel. He wrote a large

number of books around 1400, including a long commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah,* filling them with fabricated quotations from the works of kabbalists and others, both historical and imaginary figures. However, this method was not at all like that of the Zohar and he also cultivated a conciliatory attitude toward philosophy, in complete contrast to Shem Tov b. Shem Tov. While the author of *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* and *Sefer ha-Kanah* put forward the Kabbalah as the only interpretation which could save Judaism from deteriorating and disintegrating, in other circles, imbued with a distinct talmudic and ethical spirit, it was regarded as a complementary element, through a stress on its moral and ascetic ideas. It is clear that the Kabbalah had already attained a firm status in the mind of the public, and quite obvious kabbalistic elements had begun to appear in the ethical literature of the 14th and 15th centuries. In this connection the *Menorat ha-Ma'or* by Israel al-Nakawa of Toledo (d.1391) is very important. It is a comprehensive work on Judaism with a firm halakhic standpoint. Wherever ethical questions are discussed in this book, which was intended for a wide public, statements are quoted from the Zohar (in Hebrew, under the name of *Midrash Yehi Or*) and from the other kabbalists, including specifically the *Ḥibbur ha-Adam im Ishto,* a treatise on marriage and sexuality written by an anonymous kabbalist (perhaps Joseph of Hamadan) at the end of the 13th century and later attributed to Naḥmanides under the title *Iggeret ha-Kodesh.* [89]

The literature of the kabbalists themselves testifies to the continuous existence in various circles of a strong opposition to Kabbalah and its claims – among halakhisists, literalists, and philosophers. Beginning with the polemic of Meir b. Simeon of Narbonne (1250) this opposition continued to be expressed, either *en passant* as was the case with Isaac Polkar and Menahem Meiri, or in specific works; e.g., in the *Alilot Devarim* of Joseph b. Meshullam (?) who wrote in Italy in 1468 (*Oẓar Neḥmad,* 4 (1763), 179–214), and in several writings of Moses b. Samuel Ashkenazi of Candia, 1460 (in Vatican Ms. 254). Even with the expansion of the Kabbalah's influence to much wider circles these voices were not silenced, particularly not in Italy.

In Spain kabbalistic creativity diminished considerably in the 15th century. The original stimulus of the Kabbalah had already reached its fullest expression. There were many kabbalists still to be found in Spain, and the numerous manuscripts written there testify to the large numbers who were engaged in Kabbalah, but their work shows very little originality. In 1482 Joseph Alcastiel from Jativa wrote responsa to 18 questions on various kabbalistic subjects which had been addressed to him by Judah Ḥayyat, and in them he adopts a very independent approach.[90] Joshua b. Samuel ibn Naḥmias in his book *Migdol Yeshu'ot* (Musajoff Ms.), Shalom b. Saadiah ibn Zaytun from Saragossa, and the pupils of Isaac Canpanton, who occupied a central position in the Judaism of Castile in

middle of the 15th century, were among the chief exponents of Kabbalah. kabbalists had crossed into Italy even before the expulsion from Spain, Isaac Mar-Ḥayyim who wrote in 1491, en route for Erez Israel, two long rs on problems concerning the beginning of emanation.[91] Joseph ibn Shraga 508/9), who was called in his time "the kabbalist from Argenta," and Judah yat, the author of a long commentary, *Minḥat Yehudah,* on the *Ma'arekhet lohut* (1558), were also among the chief transmitters of Spanish Kabbalah Italy. The book *Ohel Mo'ed* (Cambridge Ms.) was written by an unknown balist before 1500 – in Italy or even still in Spain – in order to defend the bbalah against its detractors. Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi and Joseph Taitaẓak, began their kabbalistic activities while still in Spain. The latter's book of velations, *Sefer ha-Meshiv,* in which the speaker is said to be God Himself, was rhaps composed before the expulsion.[92] The activity of the migrants strengthed the Kabbalah, which acquired many adherents in Italy in the 14th and 15th nturies. Reuben Ẓarfati interpreted the theory of the *Sefirot;* Jonathan Alemano, who united Kabbalah with philosophy, wrote a commentary to the Torah *Einei ha-Edah* (Paris Ms.), and to the Song of Songs in *Ḥeshek Shelomo;* and he also compiled a large anthology of kabbalistic miscellanies (Ms. Oxford). He also composed an unnamed work on the Kabbalah.[93] Only the introduction of his commentary to the Song of Songs has been published (1790). Judah b. Jehiel Messer Leon of Mantua opposed the tendencies of the later kabbalists and defended the view that kabbalistic principles agreed with Platonic ideas.[94] This emphasis on kabbalistic Platonism undoubtedly suited the spiritual temperament of the humanists of the circle of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. The poet Moses Rieti devoted part of his long poem *Mikdash Me'at* to a rhymed discourse on kabbalistic ideas, and Elijah Ḥayyim of Gennazano wrote an introduction to the Kabbalah entitled *Iggeret Ḥamudot* (1912).

THE KABBALAH AFTER THE EXPULSION FROM SPAIN AND THE NEW CENTER IN SAFED

The expulsion from Spain in 1492 produced a crucial change in the history of the Kabbalah. The profound upheaval in the Jewish consciousness caused by this catastrophe also made the Kabbalah public property. Despite the fact that the Kabbalah had spread in preceding generations, it still remained the preserve of relatively closed circles, who only occasionally emerged from their aristocratic seclusion. The aims of certain individuals like the author of the Zohar or the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah,* who intended quite consciously to create a work of historical

and social importance, were not fully achieved until the 16th century. It was not until this period also that the eschatological mood prevalent among particular individuals in Spain was combined with the more basic stimuli of the Kabbalah. With the expulsion, messianism became part of the very core of Kabbalah. The earlier generations centered their thoughts on the return of man to the well-spring of his life, through the contemplation of the upper worlds, and on instruction in the method of his return through mystic communion to his original source. An ideal which could be realized in any place and at any time, this communion was not dependent on a messianic framework. Now it became combined with messianic and apocalyptic trends which laid greater stress on man's journey toward redemption than on his contemplated future return to the source of all existence in God. This combination of mysticism with messianic apocalyptic turned Kabbalah into a historic force of great dynamism. Its teachings still remained profound, abstruse, and difficult for the masses to assimilate, but its aims lent themselves easily to popularization, and many kabbalists sought to extend its influence throughout the general community. The Kabbalah penetrated many areas of popular faith and custom, overcoming the unceasing opposition of some individuals. It should be noted that the highly original development of the Kabbalah after the expulsion did not start in Italy, although that country was a center of a flourishing Jewish culture, and fruitful kabbalistic activity could be found there. The real creative force came from the new center which was established in Erez Israel about 40 years after the expulsion. The religious movement which originated in Safed, and which manifested a renewal of the Kabbalah in all its intensity, is particularly important because it was the last movement in Judaism to have such a wide scope and such a decisive and continuous influence on the Diaspora as a whole, in both Europe, Asia and North Africa. This influence was maintained even after the break-up of the Shabbatean movement, which testifies to the degree to which it had become rooted in the national consciousness.

A connection between the appearance of new aspects of the Kabbalah and its rapid dissemination, and the imminent redemption of Israel, had already been established by a few of the Spanish kabbalists, like the author of the *Ra'aya Meheimna,* and the author of the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah.* But it was only after the expulsion that this became a dynamic and all-embracing force. A clear indication of this is the statement of an unknown kabbalist: "The decree from above that one should not discuss kabbalistic teaching in public was meant to last only for a limited time – until 1490. We then entered the period called 'the last generation,' and then the decree was rescinded, and permission given . . . And from 1540 onward the most important *mizvah* will be for all to study it in public, both old and young, since this, and nothing else, will bring about the coming of Messiah" (quoted in Abraham Azulai's introduction to his *Or ha-Ḥammah* on Zohar).

The exiles themselves studied the Kabbalah mostly in its earlier forms, but they ght to respond to the interest in the Kabbalah aroused in Italy, North Africa, Turkey by means of systematic and complete presentations, which at this time, ever, did not contain any new points of view. The main exponents of the bbalah were Judah Ḥayyat, in his extensive commentary to *Ma'arekhet ha-hut* which was plagiarized by several Italian kabbalists;[95] Abraham Saba and eph Alashkar, in their commentaries to Scripture and Mishnah; Abraham rutiel, in an anthology of earlier traditions entitled *Avnei Zikkaron,*[96] and rticularly Meir b. Gabbai, in his exhaustive presentation in *Avodat ha-Kodesh* (1568), which was perhaps the finest account of kabbalistic speculation before the surgence of the Kabbalah in Safed. There was intensive activity along traditional es in Italy and Turkey in particular. Among those active in Italy were Elijah enahem Ḥalfan of Venice, Berakhiel b. Meshullam Cafman of Mantua (*Lev Adam,* 1538, in Kaufmann Ms. 218), Jacob Israel Finzi of Recanati (commentary on the liturgy, Cambridge Ms.), Abraham b. Solomon Treves ha-Ẓarfati (b. 1470) who lived in Ferrara and had "a revelation of Elijah," and Mordecai b. Jacob Rossillo (*Sha'arei Ḥayyim,* Munich Ms. 49). A panentheistic view of the relationship between God and the world was quite clearly stated in *Iggeret ha-Ziyyurim* by an unknown kabbalist of the first half of the 16th century in Italy (JTS Ms.). An important center was formed in Salonika, then in Turkey. Among the leaders there were Joseph Taitaẓak; Ḥayyim b. Jacob Obadiah de Bosal (*Be'er Mayim Ḥayyim,* 1546); Isaac Shani (*Me'ah She'arim,* 1543); and Isaac b. Abraham Farḥi, who circulated in his own name the anonymous *Ta'amei ha-Miẓvot,* which had actually been written about 1300. The kabbalist philosopher David b. Judah Messer Leon left Italy to work in Salonika, but his book *Magen David* (London Jews' College Ms. 290) on the philosophical principles of the Kabbalah was apparently written in Mantua; this work influenced several later kabbalists, including Meir ibn Gabbai and Moses Cordovero.[97] Solomon Alkabeẓ also began working in this circle before he went to Safed.

We also know of considerable kabbalistic activity in Morocco. Abraham Sabba's *Ẓeror ha-Mor* (1523), written between 1498 and 1501 in Fez, became a classic of kabbalistic exegesis on the Torah. Joseph Alashkar wrote most of his books in Tlemçen (*Ẓofenat Pa'neaḥ,* 1529, Jerusalem Ms. 2° 154; and several other books in the *Katalog der Handschriften . . . E. Carmoly,* 1876), but the main center in this area was Dra (or Dar'a), whose kabbalists were renowned. There Mordecai Buzaglo wrote the *Ma'yenot ha-Ḥokhmah,* which was hidden by the kabbalists (Goldschmidt Ms. Copenhagen), and a commentary on the liturgy (*Malkhei Rabbanan*

(1931), 86–87). This was the environment where the *Ginnat Bitan* was written, an introduction to the theory of the *Sefirot* by Isaac b. Abraham Cohen (Gaster Ms. 720). This work should not be confused with the *Ginnat ha-Bitan* which has two commentaries attributed to the Spanish kabbalists Jacob b. Todros and Shem Tov ibn Gaon (Gaster Ms. 1398), and which is, from the beginning to end (as shown by E. Gottlieb), a late 16th-century forgery based on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* and Judah Ḥayyat's commentary to it. The most important book produced by the Moroccan kabbalists in this period was *Ketem Paz* by Simeon ibn Labi of Fez, the only commentary on the Zohar that was not written under the influence of the new Kabbalah of Safed. Consequently, it is frequently closer to the primary meaning of the text (the part on Genesis was printed in 1795). Several kabbalists were working in Jerusalem and Damascus. Some of them were emigrants from Spain, and some from the Musta'rabim. Among the emigrants from Portugal was Judah b. Moses Albotini (d. 1520), who wrote an introduction to prophetic Kabbalah,[98] and devoted many chapters of his book *Yesod Mishneh Torah* on Maimonides to the Kabbalah.[99] In Damascus, in the middle of the century, Judah Ḥaleywa, a member of a Spanish family, wrote the *Sefer ha-Kavod* (Jerusalem Ms. 8° 3731). In the main, however, this was the center of activity of Joseph b. Abraham ibn Ẓayyah, one of the rabbis of the Musta'rabim who lived for several years in Jerusalem and in 1538 wrote there *Even ha-Shoham,*[100] in 1549 *She'erit Yosef* (Ms. of the Vienna community, Schwarz catalogue 260), and also several other kabbalistic works. Noteworthy for their theoretical speculations on details of the *Sefirot* system and for their profound meditation on the mysticism of the infinite number of luminaries which shine in the *Sefirot,* his books represent the culmination of a certain approach, and at the same time reveal a strong leaning toward practical Kabbalah and matters concerning the *sitra aḥra.*

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In addition to the traditional Kabbalah, during the first 40 years after th pulsion from Spain there arose a remarkable apocalyptic movement, whos ding exponents among the émigrés were active in Palestine and Italy. Abraha Eliezer ha-Levi, who traveled through many countries and settled in Jerusale out 1515, devoted most of his energies to the propagation of a kabbalist ocalyptic which was then causing a great stir. A few years after the expulsion ook appeared which affords striking evidence of this movement; called *K Ketoret* (Paris Ms. 845), it is an interpretation of the Psalms as battle-hymns f e war at the end of time, and was apparently written in Italy. At this tir essianic movements also sprang up among the Marranos in Spain,[103] a merged in Italy around the kabbalist Asher Lemlein of Reutlingen (1502). Th too was the time of the first account of the attempt of the Spanish kabbalist Jose della Reina (c. 1470) to bring about the final redemption by means of practi Kabbalah.[104] The story subsequently went through many adaptations and w very widely publicized.[105] The commentator Isaac Abrabanel also turned attention to the propagation of apocalyptic views, whose adherents fixed the d of redemption variously at 1503, 1512, 1540, and 1541. The most seric repercussion was the agitation marking the appearance of David Reuveni and supporter Solomon Molcho, whose kabbalistic expositions (*Sefer ha-Mefo* 1529) were favorably received by the Salonika kabbalists. Molcho's visions a discourses were a mixture of Kabbalah and incitement to political activity essianic purposes among the Christians. With his martyrdom (1532) he finally established in the Jewish community as one of the "saints" of the Kabbal

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For the apocalyptists the advent of Martin Luther was another portent, a sign of the break-up of the Church and the approach of the end of days.

After its failure as a propagandist movement, the apocalyptic awakening penetrated to deeper spiritual levels. Both Christian and Jewish apocalyptists began to perceive that on the eve of redemption light would be revealed through the disclosure of mysteries that had perviously been hidden. The most profound expression of this new movement was that Erez Israel became the center of Kabbalah. First Jerusalem and from 1530 onward Safed were for decades the meeting places of many kabbalists from all corners of the Diaspora; they became the leaders of the religious awakening which elevated Safed to the position of spiritual center of the nation for two generations. Here the old and the new were combined: the ancient traditions together with an aspiration to reach new heights of speculation which almost completely superseded the older forms of Kabbalah, and which in addition had a profound influence on the conduct of the kabbalistic life and on popular custom. Even such great halakhic authorities as Jacob Berab and Joseph Caro were deeply rooted in the Kabbalah, and there is no doubt that their messianic expectations set the scene for the great controversy over the reintroduction of ordination, which Jacob Berab wanted to organize in 1538 when Safed had already been established as a center. Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Musta'rabim all contributed something to this movement, which attracted sympathizers from far afield and was also responsible for a great upsurge in the Diaspora, where communities far and wide accepted the supreme religious authority of the sages of Safed. The spread of a pietistic way of life was a practical expression of the movement and it prepared the ground for the colorful legends which quickly grew up around the major kabbalists of Safed. As with the beginning of Kabbalah in Provence, so here too profound rational speculations were combined with revelations which welled up from other sources, and they took the form (especially after the expulsion from Spain) of the revelations of *maggidim*: angels or sacred souls who spoke through the lips of the kabbalists or made them write down their revelations. Far from merely a literary device, this was a specific ritual experience, as indicated by Josef Taitazak's *Sefer ha-Meshiv* (perhaps the first work of this type) and Joseph Caro's *Maggid Mesharim*.[106] Once more as in the beginning of Kabbalah in Provence and Spain, here too there were two opposing trends of a philosophic and theoretical nature on the one hand, and of a mythical and anthropomorphic kind on the other.

The earlier forms of the Kabbalah were represented by David b. Solomon ibn Zimra (known as Radbaz, d. 1573), first in Egypt and later in Safed: in *Magen David* (1713) on the shape of the letters; *Migdal David* (1883) on the Song of Songs; *Mezudat David* (1862) on the meaning of the Commandments and also in his poem *Keter Malkhut*, which is a kabbalistic imitation of the [illegible] of the

name by Solomon ibn Gabirol (in the collection *Or Kadmon*, 1703). In st, a new system was propounded by Solomon b. Moses Alkabez, who ted to Erez Israel from Salonika, and by his pupil and brother-in-law Moses ob Cordovero (known as Remak, 1522–70). In Cordovero Safed produced chief exponent of Kabbalah and its most important thinker. Combining sive religious thought with the power to expound and explain it, he was the systematic theologian of the Kabbalah. His theoretical philosophy was based that of Alkabez and was completely different from the earlier Kabbalah, cially with regard to the theory of the *Sefirot*. It also developed greatly ween his first major work *Pardes Rimmonim*, written in 1548, and the second, *mah Rabbati*, composed 19 years later; this later work followed his long mmentary on the Zohar, *Or Yakar*, which interprets the book in the light of his system. Cordovero interprets the theory of the *Sefirot* from the standpoint of immanent dialectic acting upon the process of emanation, which he sees as a causative process. According to his view there is a formative principle subject to a specific dialect, which determines all the stages in the revelation of the Divine (*Ein Sof*) through emanation. The Divine, as it reveals itself when it emerges from the depths of its own being, acts like a living organism. These and other ideas give his system quite a different appearance from that adopted in Gabbai's *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, which was written (1531) shortly before the establishment of the center at Safed, although both are based on the Zohar. It would appear that Alkabez' systematic presentation was written down only after the *Pardes Rimmonim* (*Likkutei Hakdamot le-Hokhmat ha-Kabbalah*, Oxford Ms. 1663). Cordovero was followed by his disciples, Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim, Abraham Galante, Samuel Gallico, and Mordecai Dato, who introduced his master's Kabbalah to Italy, his birthplace and the scene of his prolific kabbalistic activity. Eliezer Arikri and Elijah de Vidas, both students of Cordovero, wrote in Safed the two classical works on kabbalistic ethics which were destined to have a wide public among students of Torah: *Sefer Haredim* and *Reshit Hokhmah*. Not only did they have a great influence in their own right but these books opened the way to a whole literary genre of works on ethics and conduct in the kabbalistic manner which appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries and were widely popular. This literature did more for the mass dissemination of Kabbalah than those books dealing with Kabbalah in the narrower sense whose mystical content was comprehensible only to a few.

One book which is not dependent on Cordovero's Kabbalah, but which is saturated with the atmosphere of Safed, where the idea of transmigration held an important place, is the *Gallei Razayya* by an unknown author. Doubtfully attributed to Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim, this comprehensive book was written in 1552–53, and the most important section is devoted to the theory of the soul and

its transmigrations. Especially striking is the attempt to explain the lives of the biblical heroes, in particular their more unscrupulous deeds and their relationships with foreign women, in terms of transmigration. The book is among the more original creations of the Kabbalah; only part of it has been printed (1812), although the whole work is extant (Oxford Ms. 1820). Its daring psychology became a precedent for the paradoxical approach of the Shabbateans in their interpretation of the sins of the biblical characters. [107] Curiously enough, it did not arouse any recorded opposition.

In the magnetism of his personality and the profound impression he made on all, Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, the "Ari" (1534–72), was greater than Cordovero (see page 420). The central figure of the new Kabbalah, he was the most important kabbalistic mystic after the expulsion. Although he worked in Safed during the last two or three years of his life only, he had a profound influence on the closed circle of students – some of them great scholars – who after his death propagated and interpreted various versions of his ideas and his way of life, mainly from the end of the 16th century onward. Immediately after his death a rich tapestry of legend was woven around him, in which historical fact was intermingled with fantasy. [108] Luria's powers as a thinker cannot be compared with those of Cordovero, with whom he studied for a short while in 1570; but his personal and historical influence went far deeper, and in the whole history of Kabbalah only the influence of the Zohar can measure up to his. Developed from speculations of a mythical character on the Zohar, in general his system depended more than was previously thought on Cordovero, although he effected a kind of remythicization of the latter's theoretical concepts. In particular Cordovero's interpretations of the ideas in the *Idra* of the Zohar, voiced in his *Elimah Rabbati,* had a marked influence on Luria, who based the details of his system to a large extent on the *Idrot.* With Luria these ideas are bound up with his preoccupation with letter combinations as a medium for meditation. A large area of his system does not lend itself to complete intellectual penetration, and in many instances it can only be reached through personal meditation. Even in his theory of creation (see below), which from its inception is associated with the extreme mysticism of language and the Holy Names in which the divine power is concentrated, we quickly arrive at the point – the details of the idea of the *tikkun ha-parẓufim* ("the restoration of the faces [of God]") – which is beyond the scope of intellectual perception. Here we are dealing with an extreme case of Gnostic reaction in the Kabbalah which finds its expression in the placing of innumerable stages among the degrees of emanation, and the lights which sparkle in them. This Gnostic reaction, and with it the mythical tendency in the Kabbalah, reached its highest point in Luria, while at the same time its relationship with the philosophical trends of Spanish Kabbalah and of Cordovero also was at its most tenuous.

Those passages which are comprehensible, and which are related to the origin of the process of creation, are quite dissimilar from the starting-points of the neo-Platonists, but they are of great importance for the history of mysticism and their historical influence was astounding. It is precisely in these sections that we find important differences in the various versions of Lurianic Kabbalah. Some concealed particular parts of these speculations, as did Moses Jonah with regard to the whole theory of *ẓimẓum* ("contraction") in his *Kanfei Yonah,* and Hayyim Vital (see p.443) with the problem of *berur ha-dinim,* the progressive removal of the powers of rigor and severity from the *Ein-Sof* in the process of contraction and emanation. Some added new ideas of their own, like Israel Sarug, in his theory of the *malbush* ("garment") which is formed by the inner linguistic movement of the *Ein-Sof* and is the point of origin, preceding even the *ẓimẓum.* The original aspects of Luria's work, both in general and in particular, were both profound and extreme, and despite the fact that they were rooted in earlier ideas, they gave the Kabbalah a completely new appearance. A new terminology and a new more complex symbolism are the outstanding features of the literature of this school. There was much originality in the ideas concerning the *ẓimẓum* which preceded the whole process of emanation and divine revelation; the dual nature of the evolution of the world through the *hitpashetut* ("egression") and *histallekut* ("regression") of the divine forces, which introduced a fundamental dialectical element into the theory of emanation (already apparent in Cordovero); the five *parẓufim* ("configurations") as the principal units of the inner world, which are simply configurations of the *Sefirot* in the new arrangements in the face of which the ten *Sefirot* lose their previous independence; the growth of the world out of the necessary catastrophe which overtook Adam; and the slow *tikkun* ("restoration") of the spiritual lights which have fallen under the domination of the *kelippot* ("shells, husks"; forces of evil). The Gnostic character of these ideas, which constitute a new mythology in Judaism, cannot be doubted. Parallel to the cosmogonic drama there exists a psychological drama, just as complex, concerning the nature of original sin and the restoration of the souls condemned to transmigration because of that sin. The theory of prayer and mystical *kavvanah* ("intent") once more becomes central to the Kabbalah, and the emphasis it receives far surpasses any previously accorded to the subject. This mysticism of prayer proved to be the most important factor in the new Kabbalah because of the steady stimulus it provided for contemplative activity. A fine balance existed in Lurianic Kabbalah between theoretical speculations and this practical activity. The messianic element is far more noticeable here than in other kabbalistic systems, for the theory of *tikkun* confirmed the interpretation of the whole meaning of Judaism as an acute messianic tension. Such tension finally broke in the Shabbatean messianic movement, whose particular appeal

and historical power may be explained through the combination of messianism with Kabbalah. A messianic explosion like this was unavoidable at a time when apocalyptic tendencies could easily be resusciatated in large sections of the people because of the dominance of the Lurianic Kabbalah. Not that this form of Kabbalah was distinct from other streams in its tendency to practical application or its association with magic. These two elements also existed in other systems, even in that of Cordovero. The theory of *kavvanah* in prayer and in the performance of the *miẓvot* undoubtedly contained a strong magical element intended to influence the inner self. The *yiḥudim,* exercises in meditation based on mental concentration on the combinations of Sacred Names which Luria gave to his disciples, contained such an element of magic, as did other devices for attaining the holy spirit.

Luria's disciples saw him as the Messiah, son of Joseph, who was to prepare the way for later revelation of the Messiah, son of David,[109] but for a whole generation after his death they kept themselves in esoteric groups and did little to spread their belief among the people.[110] Only occasionally did written fragments and various anthologies or summaries of Luria's teachings penetrate beyond Erez Israel. In the meantime, in Erez Israel itself, a complete literature of "Lurianic writings" came into being, which originated in the circles of his disciples together with their own disciples. Only a minimal portion of these works come from Luria's own writings.[111] In addition to the disciples mentioned above, Joseph ibn Tabul, Judah Mishan, and others also took part in this activity, but not one of them became a propagandist or was active outside Erez Israel. This work began only at the end of the 16th century with the journeys of Israel Sarug to Italy and Poland,[112] and then through a scholar who, despite his pretensions, was not one of Luria's pupils in Safed but only a disciple in the spiritual sense. Up to about 1620 the Kabbalah remained largely under the influence of the other Safed kabbalists, Cordovero in particular.

As the Kabbalah began to radiate outward from Safed to the Diaspora it was accompanied by a great wave of religious excitement, particularly in Turkey, Italy, and Poland. In Italy particular importance attaches to the work of Mordecai Dato, who also engaged in literary messianic propaganda around the year 1575, which many considered to be the actual year of redemption.[113] Equally important was his pupil Menahem Azariah Fano (d. 1623), who was regarded for many years as the most prominent kabbalist of Italy, who produced a considerable number of works, following Cordovero first of all and later Lurianic Kabbalah in the version spread by Sarug. He and his disciples, particularly Aaron Berechiah b. Moses of Modena (d. 1639) and Samuel b. Elisha Portaleone, made Italy into one of the most important centers of Kabbalah. Preachers in Italy and Poland began to speak of kabbalistic matters in public, and kabbalistic phraseology became public property.

attempts were also made to explain kabbalistic ideas without using technical language. This is seen particularly in the writings of Judah Loew b. Bezalel (Maharal of Prague) and in the *Bet Mo'ed* of Menahem Rava of Padua (1608). The spread of the Kabbalah also brought with it a mingling of popular belief and mystic speculation, which had widespread results. The new customs of the kabbalists in Safed found their way to the wider public, especially after the appearance of *Seder ha-Yom* by Moses ibn Makhir from Safed (1599). Penitential manuals based on the practice of the Safed kabbalists and new prayers and customs became widespread. In Italy, and later in other lands too, special groups were established for their propagation. Small wonder that the movement resulted also in the revival of religious poetry, rooted in the world of the Kabbalah. Beginning in Safed too, where its main exponents were Eliezer Azikri, Israel Najara, Abraham Maimin, and Menahem Lonzano, this poetry spread to Italy and was exemplified in the works of Mordecai Dato, Aaron Berechiah Modena, and Joseph Jedidiah Carmi; in the years that followed it was echoed extensively. Many poets owed a major stimulus of their creativity to Kabbalah, especially the great Yemenite poet Shalom (Salim) Shabbazi, Moses Zacuto, and Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto. In their works they revealed the imaginative and poetic value of kabbalistic symbols, and many of their poems found their way into prayer books, both of the community and of individuals.[114]

As long as Ḥayyim Vital, Luria's chief disciple, refused to allow his writings to be publicized – a process which did not begin in earnest until after Vital's death (1620) – detailed knowledge of Lurianic Kabbalah came to the Diaspora at first through the versions of Moses Jonah and Israel Sarug. Nearly all the works of the Kabbalah which were devoted to the spread of these ideas through the press in the first half of the 17th century bear the imprint of Sarug. But in his book *Shefa Tal* (1612) Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz of Prague based his attempt to reconcile the Lurianic theory of *ẓimẓum* with the Kabbalah of Cordovero on the writings of Joseph ibn Tabul. Abraham Herrera, a pupil of Sarug who connected the teaching of his master with neoplatonic philosophy, wrote *Puerto del Cielo,* the only kabbalistic work originally written in Spanish, which came to the knowledge of many European scholars through its translations into Hebrew (1655) and (partly) into Latin (1684).

At first Lurianic ideas appeared in print in an abbreviated form only, as in the *Appiryon Shelomo* of Abraham Sasson (Venice, 1608); but in 1629–31 the two volumes by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo were published, *Ta'alumot Ḥokhmah* and *Novelot Ḥokhmah,* which also included source material from the writings of Sarug and his pupils. The latter volume also contains Delmedigo's lengthy studies of these ideas and a number of attempts to explain them philosophically. During these years manuscripts of Vital's teachings were disseminated and in 1648 there appeared in Amsterdam the *Emek ha-Melekh* of Naphtali Bacharach (see p. 394), which

contained an extremely detailed presentation of Lurianic doctrine based on a mixture of the two traditions of Vital and Sarug. It had an enormous influence although it also aroused protest and criticism. It was followed by the publication of other sources which sought to interpret the new teaching; e.g., *Hathalat ha-Ḥokhmah* from the Sarug school, published by a Polish kabbalist, Abraham Kalmanks of Lublin, who assumed authorship of the book under the title *Ma'ayan ha-Ḥokhmah* (Amsterdam, 1652). However, the books published in the field of Kabbalah, which continued to increase in number during the 17th century, only partially reflect the great tidal waves of Kabbalah which were sweeping both East and West. From Erez Israel and Egypt spread a great variety of different editions and redactions of all kinds of Lurianic teachings, which captivated those who were mystically inclined. A large amount of this output was the work of men at the center established in Jerusalem between 1630 and 1650 whose leaders, Jacob Ẓemaḥ, Nathan b. Reuben Spiro, and Meir Poppers, labored unstintingly both in editing Vital's writings and in composing their own works. Of these only the books of Nathan Spiro, who spent some of his later years in Italy, were actually printed (*Tuv ha-Arez,* 1655, *Yayin ha-Meshummar,* 1660, and *Mazzat Shimmurim,* all in Venice). The way in which the Kabbalah penetrated every aspect of life can be seen not only in the long list of homiletic works of a completely kabbalistic nature and of ethical works written under its influence (especially the *Shenei Luḥot ha-Berit* of Isaiah Horowitz), but also in the interpretations of legal and halakhic details based on kabbalistic principles. Ḥayyim b. Abraham ha-Kohen of Aleppo was particularly distinguished in this field and his book, *Mekor Ḥayyim,* with its various parts paved the way for a new type of kabbalistic literature.

The rise of the Kabbalah and its complete dominance in many circles was accompanied by some hostile reaction. It is true, of course, that the support given to the Kabbalah by men of renowned rabbinic authority prevented vituperative attacks and, in particular, open charges of heresy, but many intellectuals of a more conservative nature were suspicious of the Kabbalah and some even expressed their hostility openly in their books. Among these should be mentioned Elijah Delmedigo in his *Beḥinat ha-Dat,* and Mordecai Cercos in a special work now lost. A bitter attack on the Kabbalah was launched by Moses b. Samuel Ashkenazi of Candia (c. 1460) in a number of writings preserved in Vatican Ms. 254. An anonymous work, *Ohel Mo'ed* (of the Spanish expulsion period; Jerusalem Ms.), was written in answer to the rabbis who belittled and mocked the Kabbalah. As the Kabbalah spread more widely in the community Leone (Judah Aryeh) Modena of Venice (about 1625) wrote the classical polemical work against it, *Ari Nohem,* but he did not dare publish it in his lifetime (ed. N. Libowitz, 1929). However, his book, widely known in manuscript, provoked many reactions. Joseph Solomon Del-

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THE KABBALAH IN LATER TIMES

A generation later Lurianic Kabbalah had become widely established, the messianic tension embodied within it burst out into the Shabbatean movement. Although there were, of course, various local factors involved in the extent to which people's minds were open to the announcement of the Messiah's coming, nevertheless the growing dominance of the Kabbalah in the popular consciousness of the time, and particularly among the fervently religious, must be seen as the general background which made the movement possible and determined its mode of expression. The profound upheaval which the messianic experience brought in its wake opened the way for great changes in the world of traditional Kabbalah – or in the Kabbalah that the generations preceding Shabbateanism considered to be traditional. When large groups of people continued to hold fast to their faith in the messianic claim of Shabbetai Zevi even after hi

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apostasy, two factors combined to create an abnormal and audacious Shabbatean Kabbalah which was regarded as heretical by the more conservative kabbalists: (1) the idea that the beginning of redemption made it already possible to see the changes that redemption would effect in the structure of the worlds, and that the mystery of creation could be unraveled in terms of visionary revelations which had not been possible before; and (2) the need to fix the place of the Messiah in this process and to justify in this way the personal career of Shabbetai Ẓevi despite all its contradictions. Consequently it is clear that the whole Shabbatean Kabbalah was new, full of daring ideas which had considerable appeal. Whatever essential originality later Kabbalah contains is derived mainly from the Kabbalah of the Shabbateans, whose principle ideas were the creation of Nathan of Gaza (d. 1680), Shabbetai's prophet, and of Abraham Miguel Cardozo (d. 1706). Although their books were not printed, they were frequently copied, and the influence of their ideas on those who were secret adherents of Shabbateanism is easily recognizable, even in several works that did in fact reach the press. The fact that some of the greatest rabbis were to be counted among the concealed Shabbatean faithful meant that there was a twilight area in their printed writings. This new Kabbalah showed its strength mainly in the period from 1670 to 1730.

By contrast, originality in the work of the kabbalists who remained outside the Shabbatean camp was limited. Continuators rather than original thinkers, they concentrated their efforts in two directions: (1) to continue the way that had emerged through the development of the Kabbalah from the Zohar to Isaac Luria; to examine and interpret the works of the earlier authorities; and generally to act as if nothing had happened and as if the Shabbatean explosion had never taken place; and (2) to limit the spread of the Kabbalah among the populace, because of the dangerous consequences they feared Shabbateanism had had for traditional Judaism; and to restore the Kabbalah to its former position, not as a social force but as an esoteric teaching restricted to a privileged few. Hence the predominantly conservative character of the "orthodox" Kabbalah from 1700 onward. Careful not to burn themselves on the hot coals of messianism, its adherents emphasized rather the aspects of meditation, of praying with *kavvanah*, of theosophy, and of moral teaching in the spirit of Kabbalah. New revelations were suspect. Differences of approach began to crystallize particularly around the question of how exactly the teachings of Isaac Luria should be understood as they had been formulated in the different schools of his disciples or their disciples. There was here room for quite striking differences of opinion. There were even some kabbalists who, secretly influenced by Shabbateanism, drew a clear boundary between the traditional Lurianic Kabbalah and the area of new revelations and researches which remained closed to outsiders. It was as if there were no point of contact between these two areas, and they were [illegible] to remain side by side within the same domain. This was the case, for [illegible]mple, with Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz (one of the secret Shabbateans) in his [illegible]'arei *Gan Eden* (Koretz, 1803) and, in a different way, with Moses Ḥayyim [illegible]zzatto (d. 1747), who tried to make a distinction between his systematic [illegible]dies of Lurianic Kabbalah (in *Pithei Ḥokhmah* and *Addir ba-Marom*, etc.) and [illegible] studies based on the revelations granted to him through his *maggid*.

Most of those who were considered the foremost kabbalists devoted themselves to cultivating the Lurianic tradition, sometimes attempting to combine it [illegible]ith Cordovero's system. The enormous literary output, of which only a fraction has been printed, reflects this state of affairs. In addition to this, selections [illegible] anthologies were made, most outstanding of which was the *Yalkut Reuveni* by Reuben Hoeshke, arranged in two parts (Prague, 1660, and Wilmersdorf, 1681; see below, p. 193). This collection of the aggadic output of the kabbalists had a wide circulation. Anthologies of this type were composed mainly by the Sephardi rabbis up to recent times mostly with the addition of their own interpretations; e.g. the valuable *Midrash Talpiyyot* of Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari (Smyrna, 1736).

Apart from works of Kabbalah in the precise sense of involvement in, and presentation of, its ideas, a more popular Kabbalah began to spread from the end of the 17th century. Emphasizing mainly the basic ethical foundation and teaching concerning the soul, this popular Kabbalah chose a few isolated ideas from other kabbalistic teachings and embroidered them with general aggadic homilies. The influence of these books was no less than that of the works of technical Kabbalah. Literature of this kind was initiated by great preachers like Bezalel b. Solomon of Slutsk, Aaron Samuel Kaidanover and his son Ẓevi Hirsch, author of *Kav ha-Yashar*, and Berechiah Berakh Spira of Poland. Among the Sephardim were Ḥayyim ha-Kohen of Aleppo in his *Torat Ḥakham*, Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari of Smyrna, Ḥayyim ibn Attar of Morocco in *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, and Sassoon ben Mordecai (Shandookh) (*Davar be-Itto*, 1862–64) of Baghdad. Commentaries in this vein on midrashic literature also circulated; e.g., *Nezer ha-Kodesh* by Jehiel Mikhal b. Uzziel (on Gen. R., 1719) and *Zikkukin de-Nura* by Samuel b. Moses Heida (on *Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu*, Prague, 1676). Under the influence of the Kabbalah, the *Midrashei ha-Peli'ah* were composed in Poland in the 17th century. These extremely paradoxical and mystifying sayings, often couched in an early Midrashic style, can be understood only through a mixture of kabbalistic allusion and ingenuity. According to Abraham, the son of the Gaon of Vilna (in *Rav Pe'alim*, 97), a collection of this type, *Midrashei Peli'ah*, was printed in Venice in the 17th century. Other such collections are known from the 19th century.

In this period there were important kabbalistic centers in Morocco where a very rich literature was produced, although most of it remained in manuscript. The Kabbalah was dominant in other North African countries and the emphasis was mainly on Lurianic Kabbalah in all its ramifications. A mixture of all the systems is evident among the kabbalists of Yemen and Kurdistan, where the Kabbalah struck very deep roots, particularly from the 17th century onward. The most prominent Yemenite kabbalists, both from Sana, were the poet Shalom b. Joseph Shabbazi (17th century), who also authored the *Midrash Hemdat Yamin* on the Torah (Jerusalem, 1956) and Joseph Ẓalaḥ (d. 1806), author of the commentary *Ez Ḥayyim* on the liturgy according to the Yemeni rite (*Tikhlal,* Jerusalem, 1894). The Hariri family of kabbalists was active in Ruwandiz in Kurdistan in the 17th and 18th centuries, and most of their writings are extant in manuscript. Later centers were formed in Aleppo and Baghdad, whose kabbalists were renowned in their own lands. In all these parts, and also in Italy, religious poetry of a kabbalistic nature developed and spread widely. The main later poets were Moses Zacuto, Benjamin b. Eliezer ha-Kohen, and Moses Hayyim Luzzatto in Italy, Jacob b. Ẓur in Morocco (*Et le-Khol Ḥefeẓ,* Alexandria, 1893), Solomon Molcho (the second) in Salonika and Jerusalem (d. 1788), and Mordecai Abadi in Aleppo.

In contrast to these regional centers, a special position was occupied by the new center established in Jerusalem in the middle of the 18th century, headed by the Yemenite kabbalist Shalom Mizraḥi Sharabi (ha-Reshash; d. 1777), the most important kabbalist throughout the Orient and North Africa. He was thought to be inspired from on high and in respect equalled only by Isaac Luria himself. In his personality and in the yeshivah Bet El which continued his tradition for nearly 200 years in the Old City of Jerusalem (it was destroyed in an earthquake in 1927), a twofold approach crystallized: (1) a definite, almost exclusive, concentration on Lurianic Kabbalah based on the writings of Vital, particularly his *Shemonah She'arim,* and the adoption of the doctrine of *kavvanot* and mystical contemplation during prayer as being central to Kabbalah in both its theoretical and practical aspects; (2) a complete break with activity on the social level and a shift toward the esotericism of a spiritual elite, who embody the exclusive, pietist life. There are obvious points of similarity between this later form of Kabbalah and the type of Muslim mysticism (Sufism) prevailing in those lands from which Bet El drew its adherents. Sharabi himself wrote a prayer book (printed in Jerusalem in 1911) with detailed elaborations of the *kavvanot*, outnumbering even those transmitted in the *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* in the name of Luria. The training of the members of this circle, popularly known as the *Mekhavvenim,* required them to spend many years on the spiritual mastering of these *kavvanot,* which every member was duty-bound to copy in their

...y. From the first two generations after Bet El was founded a number of ... *hitkasherut* ("bills of association") still exist, in which the signatories ...d themselves to a life of complete spiritual partnership both in this world ... the world to come. Apart from Sharabi, the leaders of the group in the ...generation were Yom Tov Algazi (1727–1802), Ḥayyim Joseph David ...i (1724–1806) and Ḥayyim della Rosa (d. 1786). As in the case of the ...gs of Isaac Luria, Sharabi's books also gave rise to an abundant exegetical ...extual literature.[117] The supreme authority of this circle as the true center ...abbalah was quickly established throughout all Islamic countries and its ...ion was very strong. Many kabbalistic legends were woven around Sharabi. ...last of the chief mainstays of Bet El were Mas'ud Kohen Alḥadad (d. 1927), ...Zion Ḥazan (1877–1951), and Ovadiah Hadayah (1891–1969).

Only a few chosen individuals, naturally, went to the center at Bet El. Among ...e leaders of the Kabbalah who remained in their own countries in the East, ...ticular mention should be made of Abraham Azulai of Marrakesh (d. 1741), ...raham Tobiana of Algiers (d. 1793), Shalom Buzaglo of Marrakesh (d. 1780), ...eph Sadboon of Tunis (18th century), and Jacob Abiḥaẓera (d. 1880). Sassoon ...Mordecai Shandookh (1747–1830) and Joseph Ḥayyim b. Elijah (d. 1909) ...re the main kabbalists of Baghdad. Several of the Turkish and Moroccan ...bbalists of the 18th century were wavering with regard to Shabbateanism, like ...edaliah Ḥayon of Jerusalem, Meir Bikayam of Smyrna, Joseph David and Abra... Miranda of Salonika, and David di Medina of Aleppo. The classic work to ...erge from the kabbalists of these circles, who clung to all the minutiae of the ...dition but at the same time did not sever their links with Shabbateanism, was ...*mdat Yamim,* by an anonymous author (Smyrna, 1731–32), which was enor...ously influential in the East.

The later development of the Kabbalah in Poland did not lead to the establishment of a center like Bet El, but a center of a slightly similar type existed between 1740 and the beginning of the 19th century in the Klaus *(kloiyz)* at Brody. In this era the *Yoshevei ha-Klaus* ("the Sages of the Klaus") constituted an organized institution of kabbalists who worked together and were consulted as men of particular authority. At the head of this group were Ḥayyim b. Menahem Zanzer (d. 1783), and Moses b. Hillel Ostrer (from Ostrog; d. 1785). When the new ḥasidic movement developed in Podolia and became an additional and independent stage in the growth of Jewish mysticism and of the wider popularization of the kabbalistic message, the kabbalists of the Klaus remained outside it and indeed aloof from it. In this center, too, great emphasis was laid on profound study of the Lurianic Kabbalah. The only link between the two centers was provided by Abraham Gershon of Kuttow (Kuty), the brother-in-law of Israel b. Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov, who was at first a member of the Klaus

at Brody and who then went to Erez Israel and in his later years joined the kabbalists of Bet El, or at least was close to them in spirit. Many of the kabbalistic works published in Poland in the 18th century received the official approval of the Klaus group, but even before the establishment of this center the study of Kabbalah flourished in many places in Poland, as well as in Germany and other Hapsburg lands.

At this time many kabbalists came in particular from Lithuania, like Judah Leib Pohovitzer at the end of the 17th century, and Israel Jaffe, the author of *Or Yisrael* (1701). In the 18th century the foremost Lithuanian kabbalists were Aryeh Leib Epstein of Grodno (d. 1775) and R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, whose approach set the pattern for most 19th-century Lithuanian kabbalists. Especially notable among the latter were Isaac Eizik (Ḥaver) Wildmann, author of *Pithei She'arim,* and Solomon Eliashov (1841–1924), who wrote *Leshem Shevo ve-Aḥlamah;* both works are systematic presentations of Lurianic Kabbalah. Many kabbalistic works appeared in Poland and Germany from the end of the 17th century, and just as many ethical treatises based on kabbalistic principles. Attempts at systematization occur in *Va-Yakhel Moshe* by Moses b. Menahem Graf de Prague (Dessau, 1699) and several books by Eliezer Fischel b. Isaac of Stryzów. Literature which based its religious fervor on the power of "revelation from above" was generally suspected, not without reason, of Shabbatean tendencies, but books of this genre did exist within the more conservative Kabbalah, e.g., *Sefer Berit Olam* by Isaac b. Jacob Ashkenazi (vol. 1 Vilna, 1802, vol. 2 Jerusalem, 1937). The development in Poland in the 18th century was linked to a great extent with the influence of Italian kabbalists, and particularly with the *Shomer Emunim* of Joseph Ergas and the *Mishnat Ḥasidim* and *Yosher Levav* of Immanuel Ḥai Ricchi, which presented different approaches to an understanding of Lurianic teaching. The kabbalistic revelations of David Moses Valle of Modena (d. 1777) remained a closed book, but copies of the writings of Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto reached the Lithuanian kabbalists, and some of them were known to the early Ḥasidim, on whom they made a great impression. Ergas was followed by Baruch of Kosov (Kosover) in his various introductions to the Kabbalah, which remained unpublished until some 100 years after his death (*Ammud ha-Avodah,* 1854). An orthodox systematic presentation was made by the kabbalist Jacob Meir Spielmann of Bucharest in *Tal Orot* (Lvov, 1876–83). Attempts were made once again to link Kabbalah with philosophic studies, as in *Ma'amar Efsharit ha-Tiv'it* by Naphtali Hirsch Goslar, the early writings of Solomon Maimon, [118] which remained in manuscript, and particularly the *Sefer ha-Berit* of Phinehas Elijah Horowitz of Vilna (Bruenn, 1897) and the *Imrei Binah* by Isaac Satanow, one of the first *maskilim* in Berlin.

In contrast to these attempts at a deeper study of Kabbalah, the hasidic

ment broadened the canvas and strove to make kabbalistic ideas more and popular, often by means of a new and more literal interpretation of its ples. In this movement Jewish mysticism proved to be once again a living and a social phenomenon. In the Ḥabad branch of Ḥasidim an original of Kabbalah was created, which had a clear psychological objective and uced a variegated literature; but in the ḥasidic camp too there were currents went back to a study of Lurianic Kabbalah. This Kabbalah flourished anew century, particularly in the school of Ẓevi Hirsch Eichenstein of Zhidachov aczów; d. 1831) which produced a rich literature. The heads of this school Isaac Eizik Jehiel Safrin of Komarno (d. 1874), Isaac Eizik of Zhidachov 1873), and Joseph Meir Weiss of Spinka (1838–1909).

At the beginning of the nationalist ferment of the 19th century two kabbalists were active – Elijah Guttmacher in Graetz (1796–1874) and Judah Alkalai in Belgrade (1798–1878); the latter's Zionist writings are suffused with the spirit of the Kabbalah. In Central and Western Europe the influence of the Kabbalah swiftly declined, particularly after the conflict between Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eyebeschuetz concerning the latter's association with Shabbateanism. Nathan Adler in Frankfort (d. 1800) gathered around himself a circle which had strong kabbalistic tendencies, and his pupil, Sekel Löb Wormser, "the Ba'al Shem of Michelstadt" (d. 1847), was for some time removed by the government from the rabbinate of his city, "because of his superstitious kabbalistic faith" – apparently as the result of intrigue by the *maskilim*. While Phinehas Katzenelenbogen, the rabbi of Boskovice in the middle of the 18th century, was cataloging the kabbalistic dreams and experiences of his family (Oxford Ms. 2315), and in the circle of Nathan Adler, as in the circles of the later Frankists in Offenbach, claims to prophetic dreams were made, the rabbis were withdrawing further and further from any manifestation of a mystical tendency or a leaning toward the Kabbalah. When Elhanan Hillel Wechsler (d. 1894) published his dreams concerning the holocaust which was about the befall German Jewry (1881), the leading Orthodox rabbis tried to prevent him from doing so, and his kabbalistic leanings led to his being persecuted. The last book by a German kabbalist to be printed was *Torei Zahav* by Hirz Abraham Scheyer of Mainz (d. 1822) published in Mainz in 1875. However, various kinds of kabbalistic literature continued to be written in Eastern Europe and the Near East up to the time of the Holocaust, and in Israel until the present. The transformation of kabbalistic ideas into the forms of modern thought may be seen in the writings of such 20th-century thinkers as R. Abraham Isaac Kook *(Orot ha-Kodesh, Arpilei Tohar, Reish Millin)*; in the Hebrew books of Hillel Zeitlin; and in the German writings of Isaac Bernays (*Der Bibel'sche Orient,* 1821) and Oscar Goldberg (*Die Wirklichkeit de Hebraeer,* Berlin, 1925).

The fervent assault on the Kabbalah by the Haskalah movement in the 19th century limited its deep influence in Eastern Europe to a marked degree; but it succeeded hardly at all in breaking the influence of the Kabbalah in Oriental countries, where the life of the Jewish community was affected by it until recent times. An exception was the antikabbalistic movement of the Yemen known as *Dor De'ah* ("Doerde"). Headed by Yiḥya Kafaḥ (Kafiḥ) of Sana (d. 1931), it caused much strife among the Jews of Yemen. Apart from the accusatory and defamatory writings from 1914 onward, there appeared in connection with this controversy the *Milḥamot ha-Shem* of Kafaḥ and the reply of the Yemeni rabbis, authored by Joseph Jacob Zabiri, *Emunat ha-Shem* (Jerusalem, 1931 and 1938).

3

THE BASIC IDEAS OF KABBALAH

As is apparent from the preceding account, the Kabbalah is not a single system with basic principles which can be explained in a simple and straightforward fashion, but consists rather of a multiplicity of different approaches, widely separated from one another and sometimes completely contradictory. Nevertheless, from the date of the appearance of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* the Kabbalah possessed a common range of symbols and ideas which its followers accepted as a mystical tradition, although they differed from one another in their interpretation of the precise meaning of these symbols, of the philosophical implications inherent in them, and also of the speculative contexts through which it became possible to regard this common framework as a kind of mystical theology of Judaism. But even within this framework two stages must be differentiated: (1) the range of symbols of the early Kabbalah up to and including the Safed period, i.e., the theory of the *Sefirot* as it crystallized in Gerona, in the various parts of the Zohar, and in the works of kabbalists up to Cordovero; and (2) the range of symbols created by Lurianic Kabbalah, which in the main dominated kabbalistic thinking from the 17th century until recent times. The Lurianic system goes beyond the doctrine of the *Sefirot*, although it makes a wide and emphatic use of its principles, and is based on the symbolism of the *parẓufim*.

In addition to this, two basic tendencies can be discerned in kabbalistic teaching. One has a strongly mystical direction expressed in images and symbols whose inner proximity to the realm of myth is often very striking. The character of the other is speculative, an attempt to give a more or less defined ideational meaning to the symbols. To a large extent this outlook presents kabbalistic speculation as a continuation of philosophy, a kind of additional layer superimposed upon it through a combination of the powers of rational thought and meditative contemplation. The speculative expositions of kabbalistic teaching largely depended on the ideas of neoplationic and Aristotelian philosophy, as they were known in the Middle Ages, and were couched in the terminology customary to these fields. Hence the cosmology of the Kabbalah is borrowed from them and is not at all original, being expressed in the common medieval